Case A
Participant: Designer 2 (P)
Facilitator: Xiao Zhang (R)
Date: 20120326

R: #00:00:00-0# Today we just have 3 question, the first question is what is the dominant design approach that your design team adopt for [the name of the product], like UCD?

P: #00:00:07-4# so the question that you asked me was what was this sort of dominant design approach?

P: #00:00:16-3# so I mean, I mentioned that we definitely take the user centered design approach to research or look at, we start from taking input from users, from doing contextual research, we take that as sort of the beginnings to understanding some of the boundaries for design, and then we began go and do a little bit of iteration on design work, we then bring that back to some stakeholders, sometimes, in terms of stakeholders, we show them the designs, they give feedback, and we iterate on that, and then we maybe come up with a prototype or you know a semi-complete design, and we like to do some formative usability testing on that, and we get feedback on that, and we do some iteration also on that. So that's a cycle of design in iteration, feedback, etc.etc. And we don't necessarily do summative usability test because our application is in sort of cloud-based, it's always in iteration, there is never the sense of it's complete, we don't have a shift date when we shift some software. What have you that it's not done, so I will consider like after certain specific releases we do, we do formative usability testing, and then we make some adjustments for that. So I wouldn't consider that like a design approach, I mean it is a design approach, but it's somewhat the norm I would expect in a lot of situations that you are doing research, because you are pumping in you know thousands of fund millions of dollars into a product, but in terms of a design thinking approach or I think we take, there is a few different metrics we have, one is simplicity, ensuring that what users interact with is going to be simple to understand, so simple not just in terms of it's visually layout in a simple way, but that's one principle of this sort of simplicity, two is like the organization, we try to keep it very simple, so the navigation approach is what we try to keep simple, we try to, we think about clicks, how many times a user might click on something, we think about conceptual models that are simple, that people can leverage from previous experiences, from my perspective, I definitely impacted from my understanding of what's a constructivist thinking, but that's just mostly from, that's not something we probably applied broadly, but we use similar things like trying to think about affordances and so on. But now I 'm kinda use of sort ten gentle, I think that all boils down to trying to keep the model simple, and thinking about details on demand meaning that don't provide people with too much information at first, but provide it in sort of sequence, when they need more, right? There is also this model that we have called "View Inspect Act", that's sort of, I don't know, if that's something that we could share, but the principle there is mobile first, and I think that goes inline was simple, because all mobile devices like iPhone or iPad, there is only so much screen realistic that you have, so you need to be really thinking about what are the limitations? how much stuff you can put on the screen? what are you asking someone to do? So we think about it from, Ok, well, giving somebody one thing to do for each screen, don't try to put too much, so, that's what we looked at.

R: #00:04:15-6# so this design principle, simple, come from user research or come from designer's perspective?

P: #00:04:35-1# yeah, I mean if you looked at Jonvata for example. The rules of simplicity, or something like that, that's a book I have read and I think many of the people on my team have read, you know, I was just generally agreed with the principles in there, right? I mean there is a holist of books that we can all reference, for sure, I think we leverage our previous experiences like a knowledge of design, but there isn't anyone specific saying we are following this specific design approach, but we all sort of, and I think I mentioned this in the past, like in the previous interview, where we look at apple design, that probably influence us a lot, because all of us are on Macs, our personal Macs, and we like that flavor of visual design for example, but they do a lot of great things, like even Jonvata references this in his book around the controls around in a iPod, the initial iPod, and how they really try to reduce the number of things that were on the screen, right? and keep it very simple, so there is one thing it's like on the visual side, it looked simple, so it means that you wanna come and approach it, but then there is the other of interacting with it in the model, it's there, it's easy to understand, and you can grasp. So, I would say that those are some pretty standard metrics or design approaches that we take when designing things. I mean beyond user-centered design, beyond think about the user as the primary...

R: #00:06:17-8# but the starting point that is user-centered design?

P: #00:06:23-0# Oh for sure, I mean whether we actually do that is another question, I would say that like, we like to say that we do that, but often, you know, we were trying to design the best of our abilities given the amount of time we have, what are the main things that I 'm really trying to instituted on the team as you move forward is doing prototyping and testing and gathering a group of users who are internal, you know to test things, who aren't developers, who aren't interaction designers, but who are people, who are on the second floor here, are all people in HR, people in sales, and those people are not, they might be expert users in their systems, in their own kind of systems, but they are not developers, they don't think like developers, they don't think technology, they think people, they think trying to get this task done, or however they think, you know, it's not me, that's for sure. So I 'm trying to institute that, gather people to do that, but that's something that's not easy to do in a fast pace in a working requirement.

R: #00:07:34-2# Does your design them have a standard design process?

P: #00:08:25-8# I mean we do have a process, I mean the process normally goes where we meet with product owners who understand what are the things that we should be developing and those are high level, right? I have mentioned that in another interview. You might reference another interview if you can. So just a quick synthesis of that. The product owners or product managers, they are the ones who think about the high level functionality features that are needed, right? sometimes that comes from customers, sometimes that comes from internal stakeholders, sometimes that comes from, we work in a business enterprise situation where normally the people that use the software aren't the people who pay for the software, it's actually like system administrators or people in office who never ever touch the software, we call those the choosers, but often the choosers are not the users, so the choosers sometimes have specific functionality that they are looking for, so the product owners take all of those kind of requirements from these different stakeholders, and they write these things called user stories, they bring these user stories to the designers and the developers, and they communicate that to what we call inception meetings, and we use the agile, you know agile, so we are on sprints, so in that context, we use sprints as I guess periods of time which we do development. Typically that was like last month, in our agile process, sometimes it's a week. So what will happen is that we then start to do some iteration from that initial inception meeting, we

start doing some inceptions around sketches, wireframes that kinda process. we then share among our team, we do design reviews, we critics the work to get to a point where we feel comfortable where its' a good design solution based on these, you know, simplicity, based on what we understand our users to want, but typically, we don't involve users in that process, we try to guide based upon other like other applications and how those work, and what applications those other users might be using, so for example, a lot of business users who are users use Microsoft word applications, so that's the idea, right? sometimes, depending on the scope and the timeframe that we have, we might develop a quick prototype and do a little bit of mockups and show those to some other of the users and get their feedback very quickly, right? Most of the time, we either don't have the time to do that, or it's pretty obvious that people will understand our uses, so they don't really mirror the design work, or the effort we take to do usability test, and by usability studies, like what I 'm talking about here, it's about 5-8 users in about half hour usability sessions that is really quick and dirty, it's not supposed to be quantitative, it's not supposed to be academic style, you know, you could not write any papers to like you know an HCI paper on it. And typically, the findings are not even written up in any kind of form, they are just like, ok, as a designer, you understand what the problems are, you go and iterate on that, so then what happens after that process, we didn't bring in to the thing called elaboration meeting, where we show the developers and the product owners, and maybe some other stakeholders, what the concept is, how it works, the workflow, and the UI around that, and then they might give some critics, they might give some feedback on that around the scope, of whether that's actually feasible, and they might seal back base upon time, and they might break that into different parts, so that they can develop it into different sequences, so then we go back and take that feedback, break it up, put it into a more specification so that the testing team called the ST, they can then take a look at that finished product, and then, of course, we work with the developers as they are developing it, make sure that it's in place, but once it's done, the people in ST, they use the specification that we create that's in the test system, sort of management system, and they look at that, and then they try to reproduce it and create test workflows to see if they can break the system, and they use our mockups in their work, to support their work, so that is typically, and then after like 3 months, we might do a formative usability test with our user research team in Palo Alto, and sometimes they come down here, and sometimes we go there, we do some testing around some of the features that we built, and then we get feedback, and we reincorporate that into the next iteration of the next release. So that's in another shell our defined process.

R: #00:14:05-0# So what's the routine of your current job, as a design lead?

P: #00:14:48-9# So, last time I talked about my previous role, now I move into a senior role now, and sort of leading this project. So it's change a little bit, and I can talk a little bit about that process now, because I think that the other process that I spoke about before is not part of mine anymore. so, now I come to understand that I need to think about what other people are doing to ensure that not necessarily the quality of the work, I have a certain level of trust in the work that my peers are able to achieve, right? I am not really concern about that, so it's more like thinking about what is going to be coming? what are the new things that we need to be thinking about? So I think a little bit of strategic about what is the feature holding, and then understanding what the people that I'm responsible for, that they have enough work to do, so that they are prepared for what's coming. and then as a team we better prepare so that we are not reacting to a specific things that are just like, tomorrow somebody comes into the office and says we need this new feature, so then we don't have enough time to react and design for that, right? I preferred for us to be thinking of a little bit ahead, so that we can start design and iterate on concepts before that, so part of that requires me to think about the political and the political aspects of this project, and also about what are some things that are desperately needed in the

[the name of the product] that are customers are asking for it, so it has be thinking in two different spaces, one is thinking about what users are needing, and then thinking about people who are my boss's boss, what they are thinking about, and being aware of that, so that I can help my colleagues or people that are responsible, so that they will have enough time to react, so getting back to the question of what is my routine, so I typically wake up and when I get to work, I think about what do I have to respond to immediately, my emails, typically, it revolves around understanding what are things that are needed at a high level, and then thinking about who needs to be doing those things. If we are to relate the situation around project right now, it's like an ocean that is about to be a tsunami, so it's ridiculous how busy it is, how reactionary we are, it's similar to like there is a storm going on, and we are just trying to make sure that the boat is able to stay afloat, and I think that that's the situation, because there are so many unknowns with the project that is difficult to have, to build a routine, but my goal in terms of a routine once things settle down is to, in terms of my personal routine, is to read literature, be aware of update with what's happening in terms of the social business environment, right? and being able to really understand that space a lot better, so that I can spend part of my time really thinking about strategy and thinking ahead, thinking about that kinda stuff along with like you know, reading a interaction design literature, and spending the other part of my time, I divide my time into four portions, so the one is research about interaction design, forward thinking through business and social media, and social enterprise and those kinds of spaces. the next is understanding like user research, and planning studies, getting that involved, right? so the third is actually doing some design work to support the design team, doing design work with them, and the forth is actually managing the team itself, to make sure that everybody understand what they need to do, so I kinda see my role in that fashion, and the design is probably the least the amount of stuff I'm doing, but more about the high level design, what are the big frameworks, you know, you ask before for the design approach we are taking, what are the frameworks that will guide how we think? What we are trying to solve? What are the goals? right? and I look at that as either parts of my day in that fashion, or parts of my week, but yeah, I cannot speak about my...

R: #00:20:37-9# I think that answers my question.

P: #00:20:39-0# Ok, I mean I can tell you how I approach certain design, but that's a little be different.

R: #00:20:43-8# But you have talked a lot about the routine as an interaction designer in the last interview, so I can reference that.

P: #00:20:52-4# Sure, sure.

R: #00:20:55-5# Yeah, we are done today.