

Step 4: Usability Goal Setting

Purpose of this step:

The purpose of this step is to give designers something concrete to aim for and something concrete to assess their design ideas. Usability goals should drive all user interface design decisions

Overview:

- Usability goals are based on the user profile and contextual task analysis, as well as on general business goals.
- **Ease-of-use** goals will take priority for complex products where highly educated users will get extensive training and will use the product frequently, such as space shuttle software or air traffic control systems.
- **Ease-of-learning** goals will be important for users of products where training is nonexistent and frequency of use is low, such as information kiosks in hotels.
- **Absolute goals** are those that have absolute quantification, for example, a specific number of seconds or minutes per task or a specific number of errors per task.
- **Relative goals** refer to a users' experience with the new product compared to the same task using a manual process or using a previous release of a product.

Practical application of these principles to your site:

- 1) **Determine qualitative usability goals:** Qualitative usability goals are formulated based on user profile and task analyses, the goals are meant to drive high-level system architecture design for related software products. Examples are:
 - a. The system should integrate people's tasks, not the underlying technology.
 - b. The system should recognize a person, independent of the whole system.
 - c. The system should facilitate group operations.
 - d. Using the system should not require knowledge of the underlying technology.
 - e. Over releases, the system should hide changes that are not relevant to the users' tasks.
 - f. The system should provide consistency across components.

- 2) Determine Quantitative usability goals:** Quantitative usability goals are objective and measurable. Transaction times and types of users can be explicitly stated. Examples are:
 - a. Experienced users should take no longer than two minutes on average to transcribe data from a certain paper form to a certain on-line data entry form.
 - b. Novice users should take no longer than three minutes to fill in a certain on-line subscription form.

- 3) Document and prioritize:** Document and prioritize your goals. It is best to define a few clear goals that can be tested and attained with minimal resources. Too many goals can make testing too complex and time consuming.

Examples: See examples of this step in the “Examples” folder.