

Case Study: Online Form User Testing

The SDS team worked with Shepway District Council to identify a more efficient way to process applications to hold events in public places.

Background

Shepway District Council are introducing more and more online forms. When implementing such a change, it is the break in convention that can be the major stumbling block with citizens being required to change existing habits and moving away from handwritten completed forms that they have become comfortable doing.

It is for this reason that involving the user in the design of the new process is so fundamental. Shepway District Council requested the resource and expertise of the Smarter Digital Services (SDS) team to facilitate two user testing sessions. These sessions were designed to gauge the feedback from Shepway citizens to the online forms.

The feedback that SDS received from the user testing was extensive and has proved highly beneficial to Shepway when analysing citizen's feedback, thoughts and feelings towards the online forms. This has enabled Shepway to make vital enhancements to the forms before going live.

What is User Testing?

User testing is a technique used to evaluate a particular product or service by testing it on users. The user is observed while completing a task and is asked how they felt about their experience. This highlights any usability issues under actual conditions of use.

The information gained from user testing can assist with:

- Understanding customer behaviour traits.
- Gathering critical business intelligence.
- Gaining valuable insight into different users comprehension of and interaction with differing online forms.
- Assembling robust and detailed recommendations for improvements.
- Forming an action plan for implementing changes to meet the user needs.

For each online form a user tested, a specific scenario was provided to the user for them to work through in order to simulate a real-life scenario.



There were specific requirements that were The SDS team used Flashback Recorder software in order to record both audio and film during the user testing. This is excellent for reviewing a specific test and the ability to record both audio and visual provides a greater depth of knowledge as you get not only what the test user has said but also their visual expressions which can often be revealing.

What we found

Once the user testing had been completed, the SDS team reviewed both the footage and the feedback captured during the tests to develop a series of recommendations. Three examples of SDS recommendations made:

- *Phrasing and Layout* – if a questions states 'tick' the relevant box, a tick as opposed to a cross is displayed when a user selects the relevant box to them.
- *Navigation* – ensure that when a user reaches the end of the form the 'Submit' button was present at the bottom of the final page to prevent the user having to navigate up the page to locate the 'Submit' button.
- *Accessibility* – increase the font size within drop downs to both improve accessibility and ensure that the font size used in all drop down boxes throughout all online forms are standardised.

The SDS team aim to ensure that the completed user testing report is as visual and descriptive as possible to illustrate what the user has chosen to feedback to help with any enhancements that are required.

The enhancements have now been made and the forms are live, there have been **2,729** Council Tax forms completed since October 2016 and **657** Benefits forms completed since January 2017.

The Benefits

The completed form figures are expected to increase over time as more citizens become aware of the availability of the online forms. This shift to a more digital approach will have obvious benefits to both Shepway and the user.

Benefits to Shepway include:

- ✓ More efficient work processes
- ✓ Ability to track the workflow of a form
- ✓ Fewer mail correspondences and walk ins
- ✓ Reduction in time spent manually inputting citizen data
- ✓ Eliminates the need to make PDF forms available

Benefits to the citizens of Shepway include:

- ✓ Eliminates the need to make PDF forms available
- ✓ Easy to use for Citizens
- ✓ No queuing waiting times
- ✓ Ability to work through the form and save progress as appropriate without needing to submit the form
- ✓ The forms advise the user exactly what is expected of them
- ✓ The availability of the forms via an online platform provide 24/7 access for the user

