

CHIFOO Meeting Notes

April 7, 2010

Engaging introduction by Leo Frishberg, who displayed raffle items (books) and emphasized the many cool benefits of CHIFOO membership.

Bill Scott: Designing with Lenses: Lessons from the Metacraft

Bill wrote the pattern library for Yahoo, then worked at Netflix, and starting next week is going to work for Meebo.

Inspired by the board game "Pandemic" by Matt Leacock (link below)

Chatting over lunch – what are the similarities between board games and UX?

Jesse Schell wrote the game design book, **The Art of Game Design: A book of lenses**, (link below) which uses lens cards, shows how roles work together, you can view your game 100 different ways, this is where Bill got the title Designing with Lenses.

Bill would welcome our feedback.

Think of lenses as universal principles of design.

Card example from game book: Simplicity/Complexity – has a title, figure, synopsis and focus questions (see Bill's slides).

In this talk: 4 lenses of the 136 posted on his site (still growing)

Lens: Simplicity

Questions: are the main things simple? Complexity emerges; Balance of simplicity/complexity must match context. Examples, good and bad:

Example: Simplicity card was used in the Pandemic game to make huge improvements; helped determine when to simplify game processes, and when to add complexity.

Example: Shaker furniture: elegant and simple; simplicity takes many iterations; rejects ornamentation,

Example: 2002 BMX iDrive – 700 commands in one knob/button was oversimplifying, now, seven buttons and 1 knob and 6 programmable buttons. Think of the environment you are in!

Example: use of iPhone instead of laptop because iPhone is focused on simplicity; FoodSpotting, for example. The iPad is onto something.

Example: at Netflix concept of channels – people want things to come to them, distraction-free.

Example: Netflix cinema concierge not used – hunch that it was too complex, required too much effort. Next, rate and replace: people rated, but then didn't bother to add movies to queue. Retention actually dropped! NF changed context – out R&R on its own tab, this was successful. This to illustrate importance of context.

Lens: Flow

Flow is a state of heightened mental focus (ideal to keep person in flow). Examples, good and bad:

Example – change blindness – when person is viewing one thing, they don't notice change somewhere else. Page refresh, jiggling during task interrupts flow – avoid this.

Example – yahoo photos – initially used “idiot boxes” that state the obvious (Alan Cooper also has said don't so this) – these interrupt flow, be sure to avoid.

Example – use of little “I” in flicker = good, this keeps user in flow, until they must make a choice. Avoid pogosticking, this can break flow. Another good idea is to use an overlay as a technique to avoid breaking flow.

Lens: Supporting Actor

Means adding dimensions through relationship to main character. Restraint is important, you don't want to upstage the main character, rather, enhance main character. This applies to UX too. Examples, good and bad:

Example – TurboTax – the money due goes way up and down – the surge up upstages actual number change. Why do this?

Example – site for selecting paint – stuff popping up everywhere, distracts from main purpose of just selecting paint.

Per Tufte: use the smallest effective difference. And, because you are probably overemphasizing, use the “Cut in half” rule: Cut that effect in half, and then in half again. “It will be cheesy in a year”

Lens: Interesting Moments

Think of frescoes and stained glass, comics and animation – a series of cells, show moments of a story. Think of magic, and how a mistake will destroy the moment – you want to keep the illusion going uninterrupted. Each moment matters. Examples, good and bad:

Example – Criss Angel the magician and the disappearing lady. He must've done a ton of behind the scenes work, which, if surfaced, ruins the effect. Bill showed how the inconsistent position of the hidden woman ruined the effect.

Example – iGoogle 16 events in drag/drop – “micromoments” are where you can engage users.

Example – symmetry of interaction (such as do/und to reverse behavior) iPhone the jiggle icons are stilled by using home button. Strangely, this is an anti-pattern!

Example – Bing images – photo grows, but not enough to make a difference, this is not necessary, changed to a new anti-pattern “hover and cover” -

Example – Barnes and noble “convery belt” of books – breaks the delicacy of the function.

Example – Meebo, drag and drop, sharing and click through. Note that when the object rails the cursor, it feels so much heavier and hard to use.

Example – google drag and drop tool tip.

Interesting moments must work together to create an illusion.

Example – iPad mail – letters peel up, delete expands and contracts to show response.

Lenses are still experimental, and Bill would welcome feedback and input. Should there be more lumping and splitting of lenses? Visit site and have a look, send comments.

Lenses are different from patterns. (Lenses are a way of looking)

Q&A

Comment: lenses can distort? Widen, narrow, depth of focus; Bill agreed, interesting idea.

Bill: go to designingwithlenses.com – to see about 130 lenses.

Q: are there social lenses? A: Yes, some are.

Q: who is the target for using lenses? A: Designers; open to suggestions how to make lenses useful to others, eg Executives.

Bill; Other lenses in games book include Surprise.

Audience comment: take this metaphor pretty far, it can be sued as a filter.

Resources

Design with Lenses web site

<http://www.designingwithlenses.com/>

twitter: @uxlenses

UX booth article

<http://www.uxbooth.com/blog/designing-with-lenses/>

Pandemic game

<http://www.boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/30549/pandemic>

Art of Game Design book

<http://www.amazon.com/Art-Game-Design-book-lenses/dp/0123694965>

Bill's Slides

<http://www.slideshare.net/billwscott/designing-with-lenses-chifoo>

Bill's blog

<http://looksgoodworkswell.blogspot.com/>

CHIFOO event page

http://www.chifoo.org/index.php/chifoo/events_detail/lessons_from_the_meta-craft/

Magician site

<http://www.crissangel.com/>