

Final Group Report

Assignment instructions for COMS 363 L04, Spring 2021, Dr. A. Buckland

Instructions:

Your final report is a full featured, substantive report **of between 1500-2000 words**. It will require you to conduct both research and integrate your findings and recommendations into a formal report.

Objectives:

- Put all your knowledge of effective and professional communication into practice and demonstrate your writing competence.
- Familiarise you with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.
- Experiment with document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively.

Please note:

- Final project is due on June 18, 2021
- Project must be submitted digitally through D2L.
- All projects must include: report format, focused and relevant research, original data, analysis, suggestions and/or recommendations, visual aids (tables, graphs, images, diagram etc.), references list, appendix (if used).

Usability study:

The purpose of a usability study is to explore and measure a system capacity to meet its intended communicative purposes and usages. It includes, but not limited to, the study of a mediated services, websites or web applications, computer interfaces and devices etc., by testing how real users understand, communicate and use the system.

One of the organizations below has hired your group to relaunch their website. Write a report for your client which reviews the goals of their organization, the services it provides, its audience and the way it interact with the organization website. Does the website meet its intended communicative purposes and usages? What is the user experience? In what way does the website suitable or unsuitable for the goals of the organizations?

Research the organization and its website thoroughly and submit your usability study report to your client. Your report must include a relaunch plan for their new website.

When conducting your study, you can address the following questions:

What are the goals of the organization?

Who should be the audience of the website?

How will this audience use the website?

Is the website easy to navigate?

Does the website offer all the information needed by the audience?

What are the visual cues in the website and how do they enhance or detract from the overall message and the user experience?

What is the general tone of the website?

Content Components of the Report

The Executive Summary

The government and some companies have begun to request executive summaries at the beginning of a long report. An executive summary is a one-page statement of the problem, the purpose of the communication, and a summary of the results, conclusions, and recommendations. The same considerations of readers and situation should guide your executive summaries.

Introduction

The introduction states the problem and its significance, states the technical goals of the work, and usually contains background information that the reader needs to know in order to understand the report. Consider, as you begin your introduction, who your readers are and what background knowledge they have. For example, the information needed by someone educated in medicine could be very different from someone working in your own field of engineering.

The introduction might include any or all of the following.

- Problems that gave rise to the investigation
- The purpose of the assignment (what the writer was asked to do)
- History or theory behind the investigation Literature on the subject
- Methods of investigation

While academic reports often include extensive literature reviews, reports written in industry often have the literature review in an appendix.

Literature Review(focused and relevant research)

This section is not a “review,” as such. Rather, it is a presentation of your secondary research. It will include what other writers, experts, and scholars (that is, “the literature”) have said about the topic of usability, website design, your demographics, or other relevant findings you think useful for your analysis. This part of the report will provide an “overview” of what we need to know about the topic of webpage usability in order to make a proper assessment of a webpage.

Findings / Results(original data)

This section presents the data or the end product of the study, test, or project and includes tables and/or graphs and a brief interpretation of what the data show. When interpreting your data, be sure to consider your reader, what their situation is and how the data you have collected will pertain to them.

Analysis

This section explains what the results show, analyzes uncertainties, notes significant trends, compares results with theory, evaluates limitations or the chance for faulty interpretation, or discusses assumptions. The discussion section sometimes is a very important section of the report, and sometimes it is not appropriate at all, depending on your reader, situation, and purpose.

It is important to remember that when you are discussing the results, you must be specific. Avoid vague statements such as “the results were very promising.”

Conclusions

This section interprets the results and is a product of thinking about the implications of the results. Conclusions are often confused with results. A conclusion is a generalization about the problem that can reasonably be deduced from the results.

Be sure to spend some time thinking carefully about your conclusions. Avoid such obvious statements as “X doesn’t work well under difficult conditions.” Be sure to also consider how your conclusions will be received by your readers, and as well as by your shadow readers—those to whom the report is not addressed, but will still read and be influenced by your report.

Recommendations

The recommendations are the direction or actions that you think must be taken or additional work that is need to expand the knowledge obtained in your report. In this part of your report, it is essential to understand your reader. At this point you are asking the reader to think or do

something about the information you have presented. In order to achieve your purposes and have your reader do what you want, consider how they will react to your recommendations and phrase your words in a way to best achieve your purposes.

NOTE: Conclusions and recommendations do the following.

- They answer the question, “So what?”
- They stress the significance of the work
- They take into account the ways others will be affected by your report
- They offer the only opportunity in your report for you to express your opinions

NOTE: What are the differences between Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations?

Assume that you were walking down the street, staring at the treetops, and stepped in a deep puddle while wearing expensive new shoes. What results, conclusions, and recommendations might you draw from this situation?

Some suggested answers follow.

- Results: The shoes got soaking wet, the leather cracked as it dried, and the soles separated from the tops.
- Conclusions: These shoes were not waterproof and not meant to be worn when walking in water. In addition, the high price of the shoes is not closely linked with durability.
- Recommendations: In the future, the wearer of this type of shoe should watch out for puddles, not just treetops. When buying shoes, the wearer should determine the extent of the shoes’ waterproofing and/or any warranties on durability.

Technical Components of the Report

Title or Cover page

The title or cover page includes the title, the name of the person authorizing the report, the name of the author(s), the name and address of the institution or company issuing the report, and the date.

Table of contents

The table of contents contains a guide to the contents of the whole report. It lists the preliminary pages such as the letter of transmittal and the acknowledgements, and it includes all headings and subheadings used in the report, exactly as they appear in the report.

The table of contents also includes the page numbers for all parts. Use lower case roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) for all preliminary pages and arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) for all pages in the body of the report, starting with page 1 for the introduction of the body.

Graphics

Graphics are all the tables and figures used in a report as visual aids for the reader. They are useful, important parts of a report and must be accurate. They should also be clear so the reader can interpret them easily. Tables are all lists of data presented in rows and columns. Place the numbers and titles above the tables. Figures are any other visual presentations. Place the numbers and titles below the figures.

When tables or figures are discussed in the text, cite their numbers and the pages on which they appear. Either number them consecutively through the report or number them according to the section in which they appear (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, etc.). Put all units in the tables, and don't make the tables too long. If necessary, break them up into several short tabulations. This will help your tables be more visually appealing and will encourage your readers to look at them.

Types of illustrations.

- Line graphs—for representing continuous processes
- Bar graphs—for representing absolutes
- Pie graphs—for showing percentages
- Flow charts—for illustrating stages in a process
- Schematics—the same as flow charts, but usually used for illustrating more abstract concepts

References

References are used to cite your sources and give credit to the written work of others that you have read and used. When you refer to these published works in the text of your report, you can choose one of several formats. See the following handouts