WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS THINK OF YOUR SITE?

Have you ever thought of asking your customers or potential customers what they think of your site? If the answer is no then you are wasting a huge resource and opportunity to make your website more valuable to your users.

People are generally happy to offer feedback, particularly to their suppliers; they certainly understand that they will probably benefit from the exercise and apart from that people are often flattered when asked to give their opinion.

Conducting a usability test need not be a huge production on your part and it does not have to be done as a mass survey. Getting feedback from five users over two months is a worthwhile exercise.

CREATING A SIMPLE TEST
Go through your site and pick out 5 pieces of information that you would like your user to find for you.
For example this is the test we used before launching the web assets site.

USER TASKS

TASK	RESULT	EASY	DIFFICULT	IMPOSSIBLE
How much does a subscription to the resource library cost?				
Is the web assets guarantee automatic?				
Download the web assets money back guarantee claim form				
Find the titles of two e-commerce resource articles.				

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

QUESTION	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
Was the information easy to find?			
Was the information you found presented clearly?			
Did you feel that you had to wait a long time for the pages to download?			
Would you tell other people to visit this site if you knew that they were interested in the products and services we offer?			
Did you find the site easy to navigate?			
Did you find the pages easy to navigate?			
Did you relate to the information in the site?			

web | assets

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TWO MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK

When looking through the site did questions arise in your mind that did not seem to be addressed in the site? If yes, what are they?

When you used the site previously what information were you trying to find about us and our products and services?

KEEP YOUR QUESTIONS TO A MINIMUM

Often when we design test marketing questions we tend to go a bit crazy and we come up with too many questions. Asking your users too many questions may affect the honesty of the responses. Respect their time (unless you are paying them) and make sure that the response to every question you ask means something to you.

ONE TEST AT A TIME

Don't send your usability test out to lots of people; your test needs to be user tested too. Give your test to one or two people first and look closely at the results. Are the responses giving you clear information about what needs to be changed on the website to improve the user experience? If the answer is no then you should go back to your questions and refine them so that they provide clearer feedback.

ANALYSING THE RESULTS

When you feel that you have a set of meaningful responses you should go over the results carefully again. Is there a common theme to the responses? Are users having problems with the same things? Are the problems related to navigation, colours, design or layout? For example is your background just making everything on your website hard to read? Is the navigation inconsistent?

ACTION

Make your to-do list and set your priorities to eliminate any future "impossible" responses first. Give your to-do-list to your developer, ask him to give you a quote on fixing each problem, and then work out a schedule that fits your budget. Once complete it is worthwhile to see if you can get your original users to do the test again. Hopefully this time your responses will be mostly in the easy category.

SUMMARY

By following our instructions you will be able to get some good quality feedback at a very low cost. But this home grown test just scratches the surface of user testing. Large sites in particular should be thoroughly user tested throughout their development. If you want to find out more about testing we again refer you to www.useit.com; this is Jacob Nielsen's website - he is the Usability expert and has been since 1995. You will find many days of reading on this website.