


Why Doing User Observations First Is Wrong

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**Human
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Field studies, user observations, contextual analyses, and all procedures which aim at determining true human needs are still just as important as ever—but they should all be done outside of the product process. This is the information needed to determine what product to build, which projects to fund. Do not insist on doing them after the project has been initiated. Then it is too late, then you are holding everyone back.

—Donald Norman



Design first, on day one, if you can. Review, test, and redesign. Let the programming and marketing teams know how the product will look and behave at the very start of the project.

Have faith in our ability to design well-crafted, understandable interfaces and procedures rapidly, without the need for (lengthy) research.

—Donald Norman



Usability testing is like beta testing of software. It should never be used to determine "what users need." It is for catching bugs, and so this kind of usability testing still fits the new, iterative programming models, just as beta testing for software bugs fits the models.

I have long maintained that any company proud of its usability testing is a company in trouble, just as a company proud of its beta testing is in trouble. UI and beta testing are meant to find bugs, not to redesign.

—Donald Norman





So let's separate the field and observational studies, the conceptual design work, and the needs analyses from the actual product project. We need to discover what users need before the project starts, for once started, the direction has already been determined.

—Donald Norman



References

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Questions?

