Understanding Creditor Statements

Final Report

Wendy Baez
R547: Computer Mediated Learning
Summer 2006
Indiana University
Introduction

Understanding Creditor Statements

This report describes the design and development process I used to create the Understanding Creditor Statements web based course. It includes a description of the target audience, usability testing data, and revision recommendations.

Target Audience

The target audience for the Understanding Creditor Statements web based course consists of call center credit counselors whose job is to assist callers who are experiencing difficulty managing their credit card debt. All counselors have at least basic computer skills and have gone through an initial training program which includes general information on personal finance topics.

Context

A needs analysis was conducted earlier in the year which indicated that in general, counselors had a gap of knowledge and skill in their understanding of creditor statements. Specifically, counselors had difficulty with creditor statement terminology, locating statement information, and calculating finance charges. The Understanding Creditor Statements web based course seeks to address and remedy the identified counselor weaknesses.

The course will also fulfill the need of providing counselors with Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Counselors are required to obtain fifteen CEUs in personal finance topics every two years in order to maintain their credit counselor certification.

Due to the various counselor schedules and the need to handle increased call volume, it is difficult to schedule classroom training. For this reason, management has requested that the training be delivered in a web based format. Since the course will serve as a refresher, the more self-directed web based format should prove to be not only efficient but also highly effective.
Instructional Objectives

Based on interviews with counselors, supervisors, and managers, I prepared an initial Design Document for client review. The following objectives were agreed upon:

By the end of the course, learners should be able to:

- Identify credit card statement terminology.
- Identify Cardmember Agreement terminology.
- Locate information on credit card statements.
- Calculate finance charges using the average daily balance method.

Design Characteristics

I designed the course to be as relevant, practical, and interactive as possible. Many of my design decisions were based on David Merrill’s 5 Star Instructional Design Rating system (2001). The rating system considers the degree to which online courseware addresses the following areas: Problem, Activation, Demonstration, Application, and Integration.

The table below includes the questions asked by Merrill’s rating system and the design features within the Understanding Creditor Statements course that address them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merrill’s Five Star Rating</th>
<th>Design Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Is the courseware presented in the context of real world problems? | - The course presents a clear connection between the course content and the issues learners will be able to address with clients and how they can also personally benefit.  
- Learners are presented with a progression of realistic problems of increasing difficulty. |
| 2. Does the courseware attempt to activate prior knowledge or experience? | - The course refers to common client issues that learners have experienced first-hand.  
- The course interface is flexible |
and allows learners to spend as little or as much time as they need depending on their degree of previous knowledge or experience with the topic.

| 3. Does the courseware demonstrate (show examples) of what is to be learned rather than merely tell information about what is to be learned? | • Examples are provided for explaining concepts such as “universal default” and “negative amortization.”  
• Tables and visual aids, such as interactive statements, are used to expand on text explanations. |

| 4. Do learners have an opportunity to practice and apply their newly acquired knowledge or skill? | • The instructional objectives and mastery assessment are aligned.  
• Practice exercises are provided throughout the course and include recall, recognize, locate, identify, and calculate type questions.  
• Immediate feedback is provided on all practice activities. Feedback includes additional explanations to clarify understanding. |

| 5. Does the courseware provide techniques that encourage learners to integrate (transfer) the new knowledge or skill into their everyday life? | • Learners are able to immediately apply their newly acquired knowledge and skill as soon as they take their next client call.  
• Learners are directed to additional resources and applications they can use to expand their knowledge.  
• Learners are encouraged to use the information the next time they receive their own creditor statements. |
Usability Tests

Usability Subjects

Three subjects, two females, and one male, were used for the usability testing of the Understanding Creditor Statements course. All three are current telephone credit counselors with at least 6-8 months of counseling experience. All subjects have basic computer skills and experience with web based courseware. The subjects are representative of the intended audience for the course.

Testing Methodology

The usability testing was conducted on July 19, 2006 in one of the company’s training rooms. The three subjects were present at the same time. Each subject had their own computer to work on. The browser used for testing was Internet Explorer since this is the browser that all learners will use to access the course.

The session proceeded in the following manner:

- Welcoming of subjects and explanation of purpose of pilot testing
- Administration of pre-assessment
- Online course completion (I was observing the subjects and taking notes as they went through the course)
- Completion of the course reactionnaire (survey)
- Administration of post-assessment
- Open discussion of impressions and recommendations

Reactionnaire Results

Subjects were directed to a link within the course to access the course reactionnaire and submit it anonymously. The results are outlined in the table on the following page. The ‘X’s indicate the subjects’ responses.
## Reactionnaire Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In enjoyed taking this course.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I will practice what I have learned in this course.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The course content and activities are engaging.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The course content was covered to an appropriate degree of length.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The activities helped reinforce my understanding.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The course was easy to navigate.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The course was visually pleasing.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses for the reactionnaire’s open-ended questions were as follows (responses shared as written):

8. How long did it take you to complete the course?
   - one hour and thirty minutes
   - one hour and fifteen minutes
   - 1 ½ hours

9. What did you like the most about the course?
   - The course was very informative. I learned a lot on how to accurately read creditor statements and helped me to get familiar with the creditor’s terminology. I helped clients read their statements before, but now I feel like I know so much more I want to inform all of my clients of this information.
   - It is interesting and challenging. This information was very helpful to
understand what is shown on a creditor statement.
- Self explanatory/interactive

10. What improvements could be made to the course?
- none so far
  - If you click the answer box and then click out of the box, it will automatically show the answer.
  - (blank)

11. Please share any additional comments.
- The course was very educational and the game at the end made it fun and interesting. It works as a memory refresher.
- Great course. I think everyone should take this class. It really helped me.
- Very informational.

**Satisfaction with Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reactionnaire Mean Score (Maximum is 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean 3.95**  **Std. Dev. .09**

The reactionnaire results show that the three subjects were highly satisfied with the course. The comments reflect that the course was seen as useful and relevant.
**Assessment Results**

The pre and final assessment results demonstrate learning gains by all three subjects. This establishes that the instruction was effective and that instructional objectives were met. Test results are explained below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Pre-assessment Score</th>
<th>Final Assessment Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean 66%</th>
<th>Mean 95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that before the course, the average assessment score was 66%. After instruction, the average rose to 95%. This shows a significant increase and it is an indication that learning occurred.

**Observations & Recommendations**

The usability testing went smoothly with minimal issues. The subjects were able to easily navigate through the course and required no assistance to complete it.

The major observation I made was that the subjects took more time to complete the course than I had anticipated. I had estimated that the entire course would take one hour including the final assessment. In reality, one subject took one hour and fifteen minutes and the other two took one and a half hours to complete the course. Based on this observation, I have updated the course length information in the “About the Course” section.

One of the users found a technical glitch in the course. In the fill-in the blank exercises, when a user clicked inside the text entry box and then clicked elsewhere on the screen, the feedback with the answer was revealed. This should not happen unless the user has already entered a response. I have corrected this by changing the interaction so that the learner has to click the “Submit” button to check their answer.

Another recommendation made by one of the subjects was to give users the ability to print the finance charge formula so that they can print it and keep it at their desk for future reference. Based on this recommendation, I have added this to the “Resources” section of the
course. I also added some verbiage at the end of the “Calculating Finance Charges” lesson urging users to click on a link to print the finance charge formula.

No other issues were identified or recommendations offered regarding the design of the course.

**Conclusion**

The results of the pilot test reveal that the course was well planned, designed, and executed. I am confident that the course will be well received by the client as well as the target audience.

I attribute the positive results to my cycle of constant formative evaluations and revisions. Before I began to design the course, I prepared a Design Document which outlined the instructional objectives and proposed activities. Once I obtained client approval, I designed a paper prototype of the course. This paper prototype was distributed to several peers as well as the client for review and feedback. As I began building the computer prototype I had different peers review screens for me. This helped me tweak the interface design, correct any grammar or punctuation mistakes, and improve the overall flow of the course before scheduling a usability session with members of the target audience.

**References**