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Usability

Business case

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Contents

1. About Econsultancy	1
1.1. About This Guide.....	1
2. Scope	2
3. What is Usability?	3
3.1. 10 facts about Usability	3
4. Why is Usability so important?	4
4.1. 10 reasons why you should embrace Usability.....	4
5. Market Data	6
6. Usability Trends.....	7
7. Summary of Business Benefits	8
8. Costs & Resourcing	9
8.1. Charging Models	9
8.2. Costs.....	9
9. Case Study: Finance.....	10
10. Case Study: Retail	11
11. Case Study: Travel	12



1. About Econsultancy

Econsultancy's reports, events, online resources and training help an international community of more than 85,000 digital marketers make better decisions, build business cases, find the best suppliers, look smart in meetings and accelerate their careers.

Econsultancy, which has offices in London and New York, is an [award-winning online publisher of reports](#) covering best practice, user experience benchmarking, market data, trends and innovation, and supplier selection. Econsultancy is an invaluable resource for internet professionals who want practical advice on all aspects of e-business.

Econsultancy also operates a highly popular [training](#) division, used by some of the world's most prominent brands for staff education, both in-house and via public courses. Econsultancy provides training across all areas of digital marketing and at all levels from one-day courses to an MSc in Digital Marketing.

In addition, Econsultancy hosts more than 100 [conferences and events](#) a year, including the Online Marketing Masterclasses, the annual Future of Digital Marketing conference, the Peer Summit, Roundtables, Briefings and a range of social events.

Econsultancy also runs the prestigious [Innovation Awards](#) where pioneering work carried out in the world of digital marketing and e-commerce is judged by an international panel of experts from companies themselves known for innovation.

The [Econsultancy.com](#) site now attracts 175,000 unique users per month where they access research, read the blog and take part in discussions in the forums. And as a portal to the digital marketing community, Econsultancy members can also link up with other members and digital suppliers through the directories, as well as find a new job or new digital talent using the job listings.

Some of Econsultancy's members include: Google, Yahoo, Dell, BBC, BT, Shell, Vodafone, Yell.com, Oxfam, Virgin Atlantic, Barclays, Carphone Warehouse, IPC Media, Deloitte, T-Mobile and Estée Lauder.

[Join Econsultancy](#) today to learn what's happening in digital marketing – and what works. Call us to find out more on +44 (0)20 7269 1450 (London) or +1 212 699 3626 (New York). You can also [contact us online](#).

1.1. About This Guide

This business case will help you evangelise about the business benefits of usability and user experience. Use it to figure out how to persuade your boss that an investment in usability is a smart move.

We don't expect you to know everything about usability, and anything you do know is a bonus. But what's important here is that **you know** that it matters. And now you need to educate the boss.

This guide provides you with a framework for an internal presentation / argument for an usability budget. It contains lots of key facts and figures that will help you make a solid case for investment.



2. Scope

We have purposefully limited the scope of this report in order to focus on Winning The Budget. Accordingly, it will not explain the ins and outs of usability in minute detail.

What you can expect from this guide:

- We'll start off by providing you with a brief overview of usability.
- Then, we'll get into why usability is so important for businesses of all shapes and sizes, backing up our view with market data and other research.
- After that we will take a look at some recent trends in usability.
- Once we've set the scene we'll provide you with a list of business benefits. Then we'll let you know what to expect in terms of costs and resourcing.
- And finally, we'll look at a few case studies, by sector.

Further Reading

Online Customer Engagement Report 2009

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-customer-engagement-report-2009>

Usability and User Experience: A Beginner's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/usability-and-user-experience-a-beginner-s-guide>

Usability & User Experience Request for Proposal (RFP)

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/usability-user-experience-request-for-proposal-rfp>

Usability and Accessibility Buyer's Guide

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/user-experience-buyers-guide>



3. What is Usability?

We'll explain this in far greater detail in our forthcoming User Experience Best Practice Guide but for now let's distil this into the most important points...

3.1. 10 facts about Usability

1. **Usability is** – in layman's terms – the science of designing easy-to-use web interfaces.
2. **We need usability** to help us manage user expectations. If people find it hard to use your website, they will definitely leave. Your competitors on the web are a couple of clicks away.

4. Why is Usability so important?

Usability studies help site owners to identify underperforming areas on their websites in order to make improvements to the user experience. This should have the effect of improving your business in various ways...

4.1. 10 reasons why you should embrace Usability

1. **You seriously can't afford not to**
Repeat: you cannot afford to ignore the user experience. Especially if you sell online. Or if you can afford to then you aren't optimising your business performance. It's that simple.
2. **User experience 1, Brand + Price 0**
It can be argued that the user experience is more important than both brand and price. What use is a brand like Gap when there is no on-site search tool on Gap.com? What use is discounting prices when your checkout process is poor and haemorrhages prospective buyers? Conversely, a startup with no known brand and average prices can get on the map by being more user-friendly than established competition.

5. Market Data

The following data comes from various Econsultancy sources, including our [Internet Statistics Compendium](#), a useful report that aggregates internet-related research in one place.

Budgeting

Further research from Jakob Nielsen indicates that the cost of usability doesn't increase linearly with project size, since many usability activities cost about the same, regardless of how big the project is. A project that's ten times bigger, for example, typically requires only four times more usability spending. [useit]



6. Usability Trends

These are the key reasons for the growth of usability:

- **Return On Investment**

- The ROI case for usability is straightforward, particularly in the case of e-commerce sites: improve your website to increase sales (easy enough to measure). An investment in usability is normally an investment well-rewarded. Perhaps a trickier question is the extra TIME that a user-centred design process may require. The temptation is to shortcut this additional time. However, this does not work in the long run as you will only spend more time (and money) in the build and maintenance phases ‘fixing’ things that would otherwise have been avoided.

7. Summary of Business Benefits

To the converted, usability is just something that you do regularly, as part of a User Centred Design process, to get the best results from your website.

Companies can derive many benefits from embracing usability, some more obvious than others. Let's take a look at a few...

- **Increased sales**

Usability studies will help you identify and fix problem zones, to drive the right kind of user behaviour. And that, for e-commerce companies, means sales.

- **Improved conversion rates**

If you're spending a fortune on marketing to acquire prospective customers then you need to make sure you do a good job of converting them, otherwise you might as well set fire to your advertising budget. Why not spend a little of it on usability? Make sure that there are no obvious issues with your conversion path before you start buying keywords...

8. Costs & Resourcing

The previous section has revealed that usability can have a positive effect on multiple areas of your business. Perhaps there is room to spread the budget across the business, rather than allocating it purely from your development warchest?

At any rate, here is some detail on what to expect from outsourcing...

- **Retainer**

- Some clients will retain a usability agency, for ongoing work. This model is better for clients with 10+ projects per year. This is also more typical where the agency is providing not just usability expertise but combining that with other ongoing services e.g. analytics or online marketing or site maintenance.

