

User-interface redesign for the coaching environment of Council of Coaches.

Using contextual inquiry and co-creation to re-design an interface and interaction metaphors for Council of Coaches to relate to older adults.

Roessingh Research and Development is working on the project Council of Coaches, a two-year running project to develop an application to assist people with chronic conditions in their everyday life. The idea is to create interactions with virtual coaches. One of the main goals for Council of Coaches is that the users can feel a personal connection with these characters. This report describes a new design proposal for the improvement of the interaction design and style of the Council of Coaches application, to better fit to the specific target group of older adults using co-design methods. This design is one example of designing for a particular segment of the population of users, which eventually could be expanded to other user segments.

In the first phase, the personalisation of the app and segmentation of the user groups that will be used in the design process were looked at. Council of Coaches has a broad target group, including older adults with age-related impairments, adults with chronic pain and adults with diabetes types 2. These users are difficult to identify in terms of design requirements, therefore different ways of segmenting these users are identified. In the second part, earlier designs were evaluated using formative qualitative research methods and contextual inquiry. This was to see if the prior assumptions that were made with regard to the old design of Council of Coaches can be justified or improved for the target group of older adults. In phase 3, co-creation was performed in workshops with older adults in Enschede and Haarlem. It was found that the participants could not relate to the current style of Council of Coaches. They wanted to be taken seriously and did not receive this from the cartoon characters in the application and they found many attributes to bear little significance and to be distracting. This resulted in the realisation that a balance should be struck between formality and informality. In the fourth phase, the findings from the co-creation sessions were incorporated into two functional prototypes which differentiated in style (one contained a photorealistic style and one a drawn style) which were compared using a questionnaire. In the final phase, a new design was created. This contained multiple variants of the user interface of the coaching environment and different interaction metaphors. Of these variants, multiple were incorporated in one functional prototype.

In the discussion, it will be discussed which aspects of this design are generic and can translate to other user segments and which aspects are specific for older adults. The approach in this report provides a thorough understanding of the intended target group, but is time intensive and possibly unrealistic if it has to be done every time for smaller user segments. In conclusion, this project presented an example of a personalized interface for a segment of the target group of Council of Coaches using principles of co-design. One of the most important insights was the importance of early testing of assumptions. In order to expand this approach to new segments, we need to take into account available resources. Therefore, a framework is recommended for designing new variations of the design for new user segments where the users can quickly be involved without taking much time.