MOTIVATIONAL ELEMENTS IN USER INSTRUCTIONS

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User instructions

Goal of user instructions?

Instrumental versus rhetorical discourse.

Moore (1997, p.166): “Rhetorical communications and salespeople may persuade consumers to buy specific hardware and software, but after the sale, the customers require no persuading to read and apply the installation and operation procedures. External circumstances obligate them to perform those tasks so they can use their new purchases.”
Technical writers on motivational elements

- “No, I can only motivate someone by writing a clear and well-structured tekst. I don’t need to motivate users by adding fun elements.”

- “Sometimes, I include pictures, just for fun. Let’s be honest, technology is boring, and technical writers are boring too. Instructions can be much more fun.” (Schouten & Karreman, 2013)
Affective, motivational information

From the eighties:

“If a frightening message is about to pop out at them, tell people not to worry. If the next few steps are going to be complicated, admit that they are – even for you. […] Show sympathy, then. Whenever you see the program getting nasty, recognize that people will feel frightened. Crack a joke. It’s OK. After all, this is just a tutorial.”

(Price, 1984)
Affective, motivational information

From the nineties:
(Horton, 1997)

Woo and win the reader

Make small talk

Flirt with the reader
Motivational elements in instructions

Motivational elements:
Elements that aim to motivate the users to read the instructions and to perform the tasks (additions to instructive texts).

Haaksma, 2015

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Motivational elements in instructions

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Elements that aim to motivate the users to read the instructions and to perform the tasks (additions to instructive texts).

General hypothesis:
Motivational elements have positive effects on user experience.

First study:
Students preferred motivational user instructions for a telephone, but no other effects were found (Loorbach, Taal, & Steehouder, 2006).

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Motivational elements in instructions (study 2)


People are motivated to learn if four conditions are fulfilled:
- Attention
- Relevance
- Confidence
- Satisfaction

Study 2: Four different versions of user instructions compared; A-version, R-version, C-version, control version. Eighty elderly participants. (Loorbach, Karreman & Steehouder, 2007)
Elements focused on Attention

Attention refers to the extent to which learners’ curiosity is aroused and sustained over time. (Chang & Lehman, 2002)

- Using *color*.
- Using novel or incongruous elements.
Assigning speed dial.

- **Comment.** If you wish to edit the phone number that is assigned to a speed dial key, then you should first remove the assigned phone number. This means that you should detach the phone number from the speed dial key. Subsequently, you will be able to reassign the edited phone number from your number memory.

**Attention version**

*Like greased lightning*  How should you assign speed dial?

If you wish to edit the phone number that is assigned to a speed dial key, then you should first remove the assigned phone number. This means that you should detach the phone number from the speed dial key. Subsequently, you will be able to reassign the edited phone number from your number memory.
Elements focused on Relevance

Relevance refers to learners’ perception that the instruction is related to personal needs or goals. (Chang & Lehman, 2002)

- Presenting instructional objectives.
- Replacing technical terms with daily terms.
- Providing examples that show how the product can be used.
Elements focused on Relevance (examples)

Presenting instructional objectives

“What’s coming up?” sections
- Focus on relevance, e.g. useful, important

Relevant lexical markings
- e.g. comment, warning (disadvantage), risk (damage or loss)

Replacing technical terms with daily terms
- e.g. “phone book” instead of “number memory”
Elements focused on Relevance (examples)

Providing examples that show how the product can be used

*Anecdotes*: Show the reader how a certain feature of the product is used by a fictitious owner to accomplish real-life goals

*Testimonials*: A fictitious satisfied owner tells the reader how a certain feature of the product was used to accomplish real-life goals

*Scenarios*: “Imagine,” followed by a description of a situation that might happen to the reader during future use of the product.
Elements focused on Confidence

Confidence describes learners’ perceived likelihood of achieving success through personal control. (Chang & Lehman, 2002)

- Presenting instructional objectives.
- Inserting comforting passages.
- Adding verification steps to procedures.
Elements focused on Confidence (examples)

Presenting instructional objectives

“What’s coming up?” sections
- Focus on confidence, e.g. easy, simple, successful

Inserting comforting passages

Letting readers freely select subtopics
- When possible, to stimulate control and confidence

Adding verification steps to procedures

Give readers the opportunity to check whether they performed the actions correctly, to decrease possible feelings of uncertainty

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Motivational elements in instructions (study 2)

Results of study 2

- Significant effect on effectiveness: participants who used the R-version or the C-version performed more tasks correctly than participants who used the control version.

- Significant effect on persistence: participants who use the C-version tried to correctly perform the task for a longer time than participants who used the control version.

No other effects (self reported motivation, satisfaction).

Conclusion: We should focus on various Confidence elements to get more insight in their specific effects.
Motivational elements in instructions (study 3)

Goal of the third study:
To investigate how (senior) users regard to specific elements aimed at increasing confidence: verification steps and a motivational agent.

You can now check if you have assigned the speed dial key to the chosen phone number: The display shows Key [number speed dial key you have just assigned] and a name and phone number. If this contact is assigned to this key, then the display will also show Options.

Verification step
Motivational elements in instructions (study 3)

Motivational agent
Motivational elements in instructions (study 3)

Method of the third study:
PlusMinus Method, interviews with users about their appreciation for the motivational agent and the verification steps.

Results of the third study:
- A motivational agent is not regarded as a ‘normal’ part of user instructions, but an agent is appreciated by 13 out of 20 participants.
- Verification steps are considered to be ‘normal parts’ of user instructions and they are appreciated by all participants.

(Loorbach, Karreman & Steehouder, 2013)
Fourth study: Test the effects of motivational agent and control steps (60 elderly participants).

Three different versions of user instructions were compared:
1. a version with a motivational agent,
2. a version with verification steps,
3. a control version.

Results: A motivational agent and verification steps both have some minor positive effects on effectiveness of task performance. No results on other variables.

(Loorbach, Karreman & Steehouder, 2013)
Summary of the results

- Motivational elements are appreciated.
- Elements aimed at enhancing relevance and confidence result sometimes in more effective task performance.
- Motivational elements aimed at enhancing confidence result sometimes in more persistence.
- Motivational elements do not have any effects on self reported motivation and confidence.
- Motivational elements do not have any negative effects.
Instructions

Why do I keep seeing silly faces everywhere?

Brian Haemorrhage: Brian is a really nice guy, and he is Superbrain. He's seen her around the university campus (below). Whenever he sees her, he gets a knot in his stomach and onto her doorstep on a beach in Hawaii, as their friends and fans. Jane never even notices him; this makes him very sad. The only way she'll marry him is if he becomes a statistics genius. Therefore, he's on a mission to learn statistics. It's his last chance and living happily ever after. At the moment he is about to embark on a journey that will take him from statistically pages. Along his journey he pops up and asks questions, and flouts his newly found knowledge to Jane in the hope she'll...
Motivational agents

A motivational element that is often used.

Research has shown that pedagogical agents have positive effects on learning and motivation.

(Kim & Baylor, 2015; Van der Meij, 2013)

Expert

The first subtask is mainly about the settings of channels. It lays the foundation for upcoming subtasks. Be sure to take enough attention on channels panel because it will be used frequently in the whole task.

Co-learner

Congratulations! We have just finished the first part of the task. It’s not that difficult, am I right? Let’s cheer up for the upcoming subtask.

(Yu, 2015)
Motivational elements for a target group with low literacy skills

Dag ik ben Henk.
Ik werk al 10 jaar in het groen.
Tijdens mijn werk kom ik soms teken tegen.
Ik vind het belangrijk om iedere dag
to controleren op teken.
Dat is een kleine moeite.

Wat zijn teken?
- Teken zijn heel kleine beestjes.
- Ze lijken op spinnetjes.

Verwijderen
- Als je een teek op je lijf vindt, moet je die verwijderen.

Wat kan je doen?
- Beschermer
- Controleer
- Verwijderen
- Blijven opletten

Is een teken?
- Sommige teken zijn fijn.
- Je kunt er de naam Henk van.
- Dan kun je er blijven.

Hoe herken je een teken?
- Als je de ziekte van Lyme ziet, dan weet je
- dat je moet acties ondernemen.
- Maar dit is niet altijd de geval.

Waar leven teken?
- Teken leven in het bos en in het park,
de bos, de tuin of de duinen.
- Teken leven laag bij de grond.
- Ze zitten in struiken en tussen bladeren op de grond,
maar ook op hoog gras en op dieren.

Teken en de ziekte van Lyme
- Noteer de datum en de beetplek.
- Let 3 maanden lang op of je een rode ring om de beetplek krijgt.
- Let ook op andere klachten.

Blijven opletten
- Als je een teek hebt verwijderd, moet je goed op blijven letten.
- Pak de teek bij de kop vast,
- zo dicht mogelijk op je huid.
- Trek de teek er langzaam uit.
- Smeer zalf alcohol of jodium
- op de wond.

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Motivational elements for a target group with low literacy skills

The most simple brochure, without a motivational agent and without pictograms seems to be the most usable for this target group. So, this brochure is printed and disseminated.

Using guidelines for easy to read texts may be more beneficial than adding extra elements.
(Van Norel, Karreman, Uiters and Beaujean, 2013)
To conclude

Motivational elements may have positive effects on usability and user experience dimensions. However, the effects depend on: target group, type of element, type of task, etc.