



Making Wikimedia projects easier to use,  
one test subject at a time...

**Trevor Parscal**

Wikimedia Developers' Conference 2010  
Berlin, Germany

# Usability Initiative – Plans

- Environmental scan
- User testing
- Build tools
- More user testing
- Build more tools
- Even more user testing
- Improve tools
- Go default



# Usability Initiative – Actions

- Environmental scan
- User testing
- **Vector & WikiEditor**
- More user testing
- **Built template stuff**
- Even more user testing
- Improve tools
- **Default on Commons**



Demo...

# Usability Initiative - Outcome

- **Good**
  - Learned a lot!
  - Skin and Editor have clearly improved
- **“Meh”**
  - Template folding
- **Bad**
  - Grant = Limited scope
  - Tests are expensive



# Usability Initiative – Lessons Learned

- A little bit of research goes a very long way
- Agile development works well for WMF
- Feedback is interesting, user testing is useful
- We need to find faster and cheaper ways to test our user interfaces



# User Testing, DO TRY THIS AT HOME!

- **Identify** and outline what tasks you want to test and what kind of users you want to target
- **Write** a script with open-ended questions
- **Recruit** test subjects from anywhere you can
- Perform a dry-run to work out issues in your script
- Test each user using the script and recording their actions as accurately as possible (video, audio, text)
- **Synthesize** the results into actionable items

# Identify Tasks and Users

- What **specific tasks** are you trying to make possible or easier for users to accomplish with your software?
- What **kinds of users** would or actually do perform these tasks?





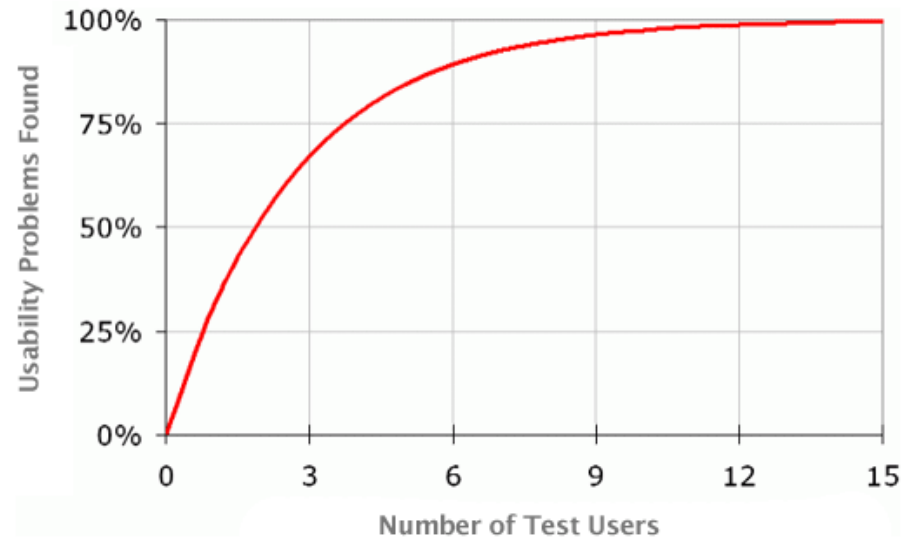
# Write A Script



- Questions should be open-ended & unbiased
- Start out with some warm-up questions
- Ask general questions that let them choose their own adventure
- End with overall impressions and feelings

# Recruit Test Subjects

- Friends, co-workers, room-mates, family, etc.
- More is better, but 5 is about all you need
- Diversity is important
- Ask the same recruitment questions to everyone
- Offer them something for their time



# Perform Tests

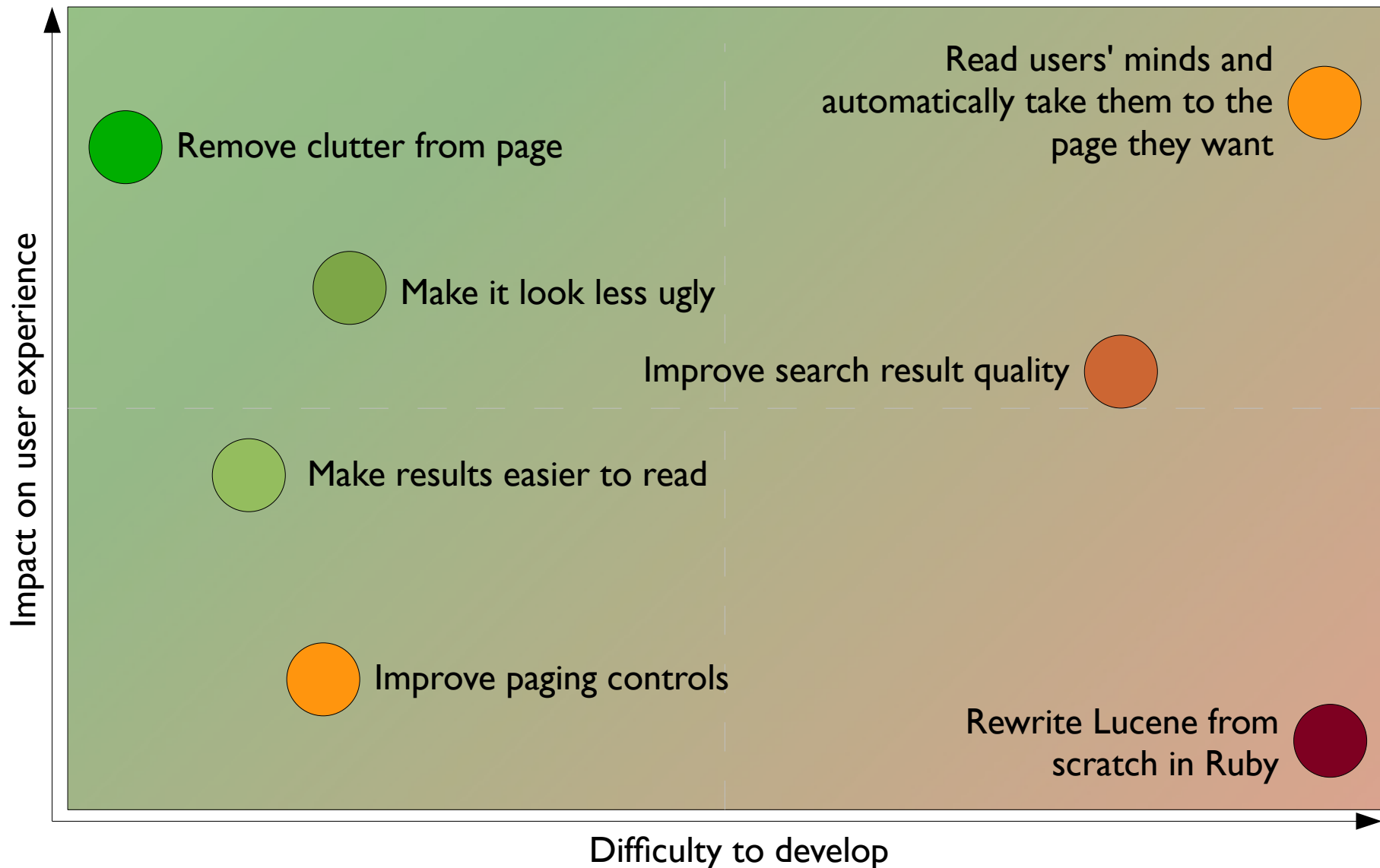
- Perform a dry-run to work out bugs
- Make sure they know they are not being tested, the software is
- Ask them to think out loud & vocalize actions
- Stick to the script as well as you can
- If possible, record a screen-cast with audio from a microphone in the room and take careful text notes later
- Otherwise, have someone else moderate while you take notes and observe carefully and quietly

# Synthesize Results

- What were users able to do the easiest?
- What did users struggle with the most?
- Which changes would have the most impact?
- Which changes would be the easiest to make?
- Low hanging fruit first



# Users can't find what they search for..



# Iteration

- Define problem
- Validate with testing
- Design and develop prototypes
- Validate with testing
- Fix problems with your prototype
- Validate with testing



# Trevor Parscal

Lead UX Software Developer  
Wikimedia Foundation

[trevor@wikimedia.org](mailto:trevor@wikimedia.org)