### User-centered design

A road map to usability

### THE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION EDITION

Society for Technical Communication
Atlanta Chapter
October 27, 2009

- 1. What is user-centered design?
- 2. How can user-centered design principles be applied to technical communication?

3. Where can technical communicators add value to a user-centered design process?

# What is user-centered design?

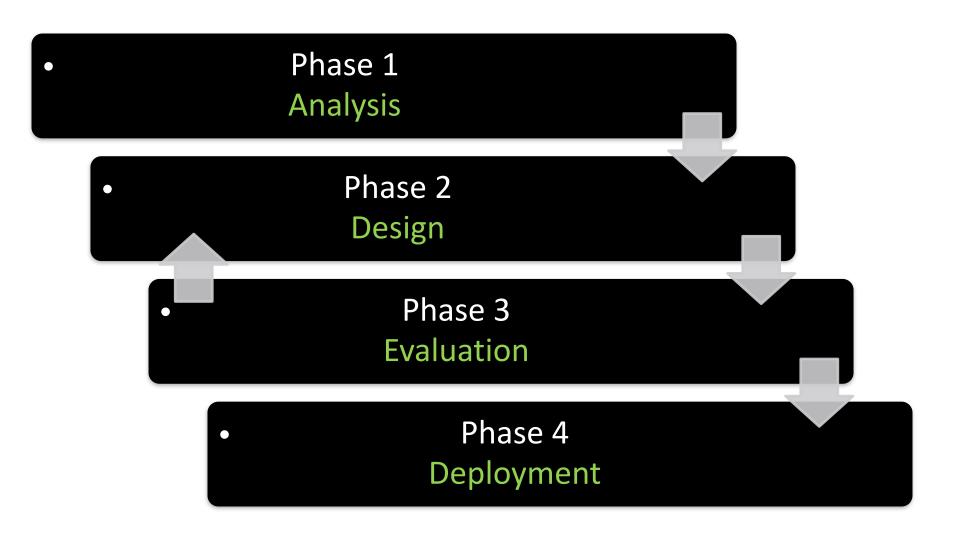
# But first, a caveat in the form of a visual cliché



User-centered design is an approach to design that grounds the process in information about the people who will use the product.



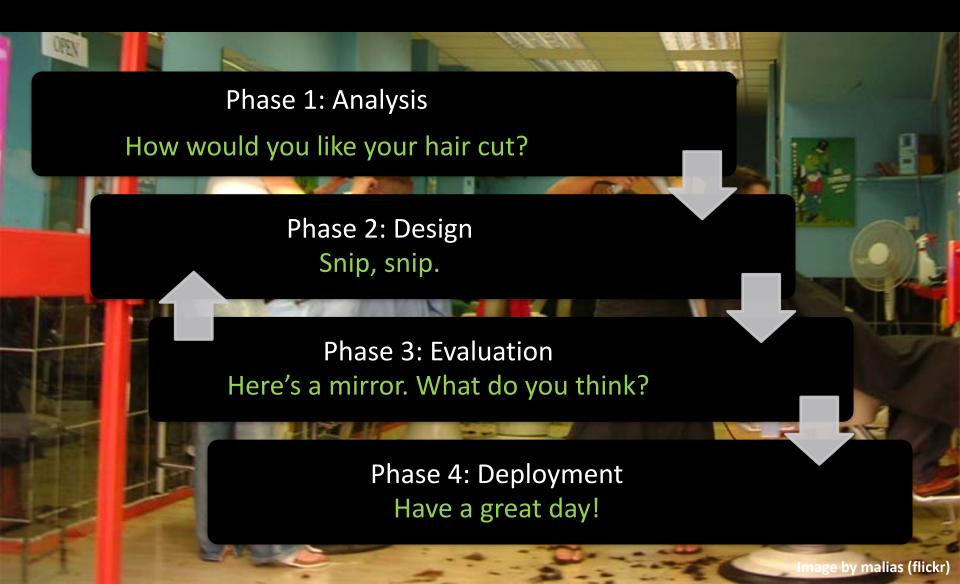
### User-centered design looks like this.



# User-centered design is common sense.



### User-centered design is common sense.



ethnography

#### audience analysis

user research

requirements gathering

### Phase 1: Analysis

project definition

design research

contextual inquiry

field studies

ethnography

#### audience analysis

user research

requirements gathering

### Know your audience.

project definition

design research

contextual inquiry

field studies

# Listen to people who might use your design.

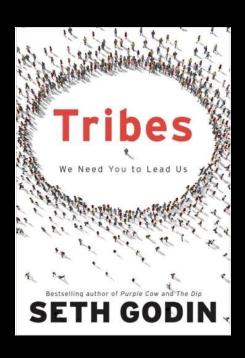


# That's probably not the people who are paying you.



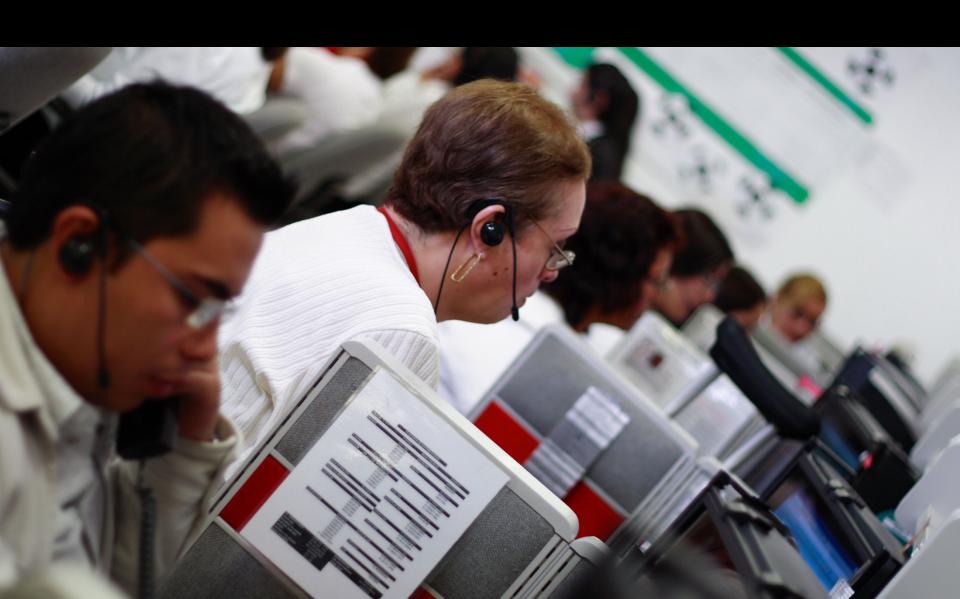


"But getting access to real, live users is almost *impossible* at my company!"



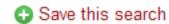
"Change isn't made by asking permission. Change is made by asking forgiveness, later."

### Tap into existing channels.



### You have more access to people than you realize.

#### Real-time results for comcast sucks





Uncle\_\_Jimbo A wise man once told me "Comcast sucks donkey balls". I have pondered these words.

10 minutes ago from TweetDeck

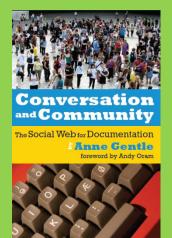
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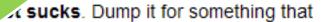


Ja gross boltpeters thats still creative, or at least clever. i just d' cr ast.sy:ks and roundtable.pizza - domains that are just





ncast sucks. See also: http://bit.ly/2CdRMF



st sucks. Get Att Uverse!



# When you have enough data, look for patterns.

		Jack	Emily	Sarah	Arnold
Age	79 years old	24 years old	17 years old	45 years old	85 years old
Quote		"I can't live without my iPhone."		/ '	"I don't know how to use it!"
Attitude toward cell phones		Intensely likes	Intensely likes	Likes	Dislikes
Frequency of making calls	·	20-30 per day	50-75 per day	5-10 per day	Once per day
Frequency of sending texts		100-150 per day	200-300 per day	> 5 per day	Never

#### Represent patterns with personas.



Why she got a cell phone:
Safety while traveling
How she uses her cell phone:

Calling a select set of contacts (friends and family)

#### **Ethel Le Duc**

82 years old

Ethel spent her adult life as a stayat-home mother and wife. Now, she is proud of being a "grr-grandma."

Having come of age during the Great Depression, Ethel is resourceful and spunky. She doesn't shy away from any challenges, and she's not afraid to try to learn new things—though she's not as quick a study as she once was.

Every decision should directly benefit one of your personas.

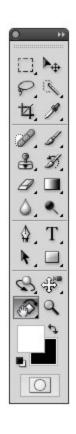


### How many targets can you hit?



### Phase 2: Design

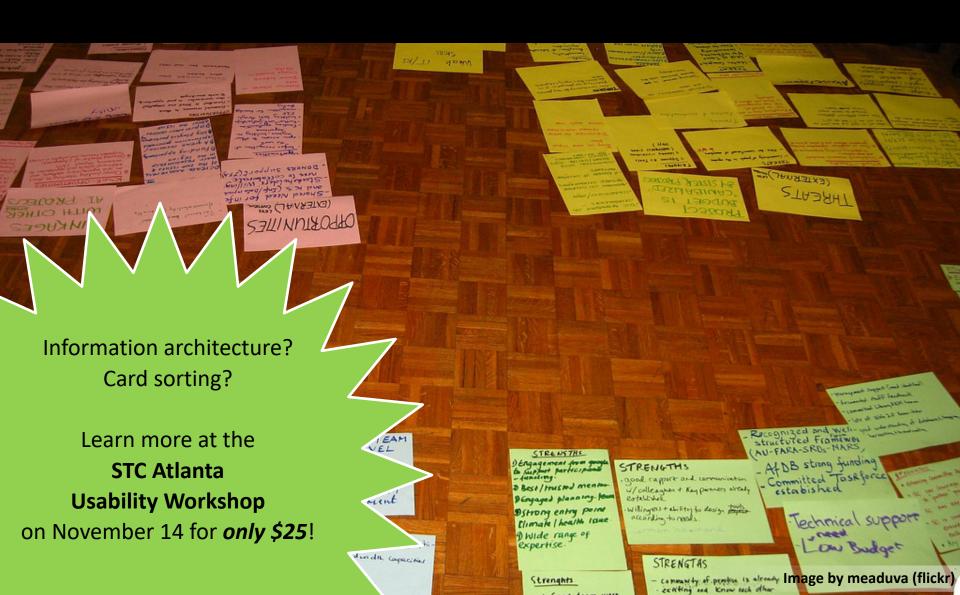
#### First, put away your safety blanket.



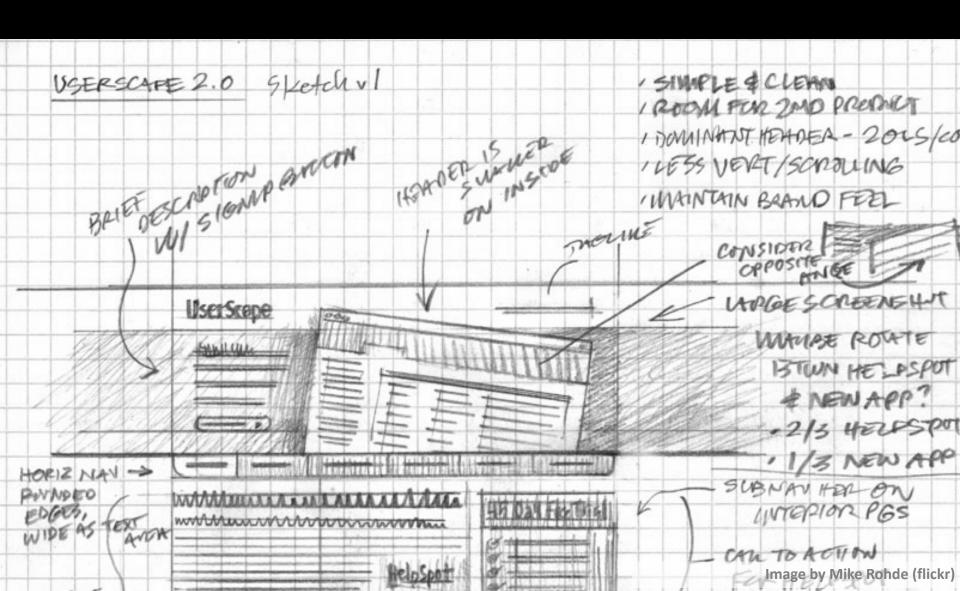


Tools are tactical. Design is strategic.

#### Look at the big picture first.



### Quickly sketch multiple ideas.



### Then throw most of them away.



### Don't design for nonsense!

#### **Lorem Ipsum**

"Consectetur adipisicing elit." "Etiam venenatis tortor sed lectus."

Lorem Ipsum Platea Porta Massa

#### Lorem Ipsum

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Interested in content strategy?

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STC Content Strategy SIG! nas elit orci,

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Lorem Ipsum

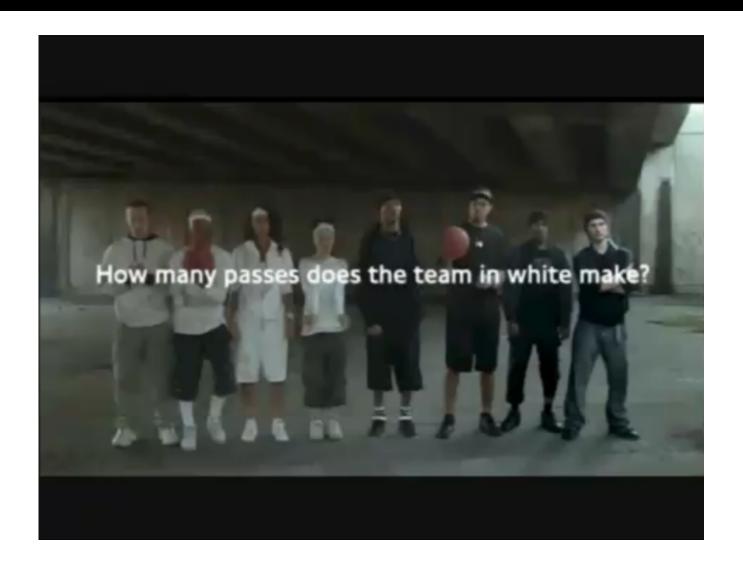
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### And don't forget Ethel.



### Phase 3: Evaluate

### Know your limitations.



#### Validate designs early and often.



### Show your draft sketches.

Perfection is not just highly overrated; it's counter-productive.

### Vet your designs with real users.



#### Rinse. Repeat.

In a healthy process, you'll cycle through design and evaluation several times.

### Phase 4: Deploy

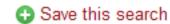


#### Deploying is only the beginning.

Listen for reactions in the marketplace, and correct as often as you can.

## Uncle\_\_Jimbo and friends can do a lot of damage to your brand.

#### Real-time results for comcast sucks





Uncle\_\_Jimbo A wise man once told me "Comcast sucks donkey balls". I have pondered these words.

10 minutes ago from TweetDeck



Jackgross @boltpeters thats still creative, or at least clever. i just dread **comcast.sucks** and roundtable.pizza - domains that are just a sentence...

about 4 hours ago from web



twhaslam Hi Bobor. Comcast sucks. See also: http://bit.ly/2CdRMF about 6 hours ago from web



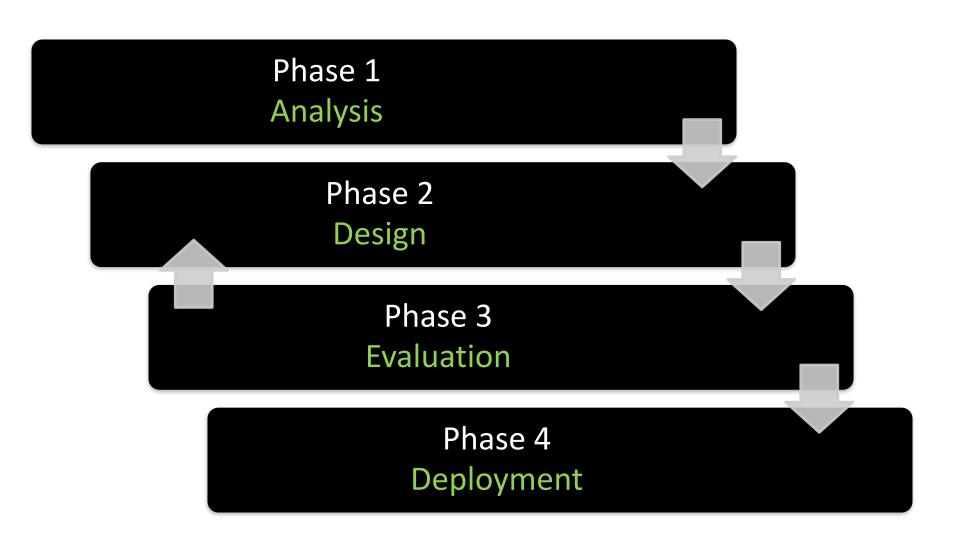
Caligati @trianglman Comcast sucks. Dump it for something that works.

about 6 hours ago from Power Twitter



aKEENone @Stevensma comcast sucks. Get Att Uverse! about 6 hours ago from bxt

#### Recap: User-centered design



"Hey, cool!
We already do
some of that!"

## Design without analysis won't solve the right problems.



You need to know why they want to fire a gun.

## Evaluation without design will find obvious flaws.



Testing what's obviously broken is a waste of time.

## Deployment without evaluation will disappoint your customers.



Don't make Ethel cry.

It's not good for business.

# "I'm way too busy already to do all of that!"

#### Focus on analysis.

Solid user research will carry you a long way.

How can user-centered design principles be applied to technical communication?

## Base your audience analysis on more than assumptions.



#### Quickly sketch your ideas.

#### For technical communication, this means:

Outline conceptual topics

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HORIZ NAV

- Sketch flow charts of procedures
- Rough out document structures

... and then show them to stakeholders.

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TOACHAW

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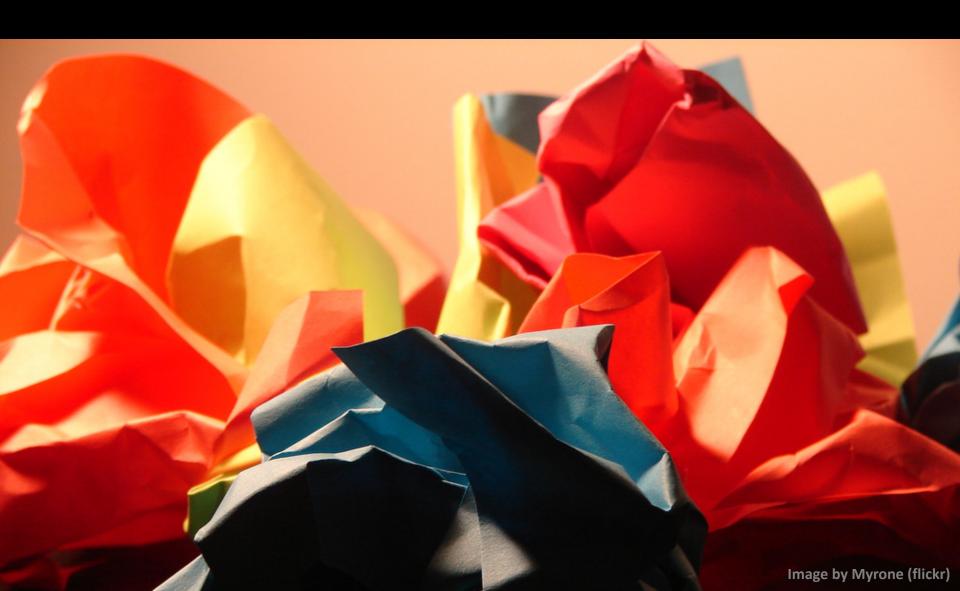
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#### Actively fight writer's block.

Write fast, even if it's crap. You'll have plenty of time to edit later.

### Edit ruthlessly.



## Create opportunities to see real people use the documentation.



Where can technical communicators add value to a user-centered design process?

#### Help with user research.

You're skilled at understanding audiences, and writing personas will come easily.

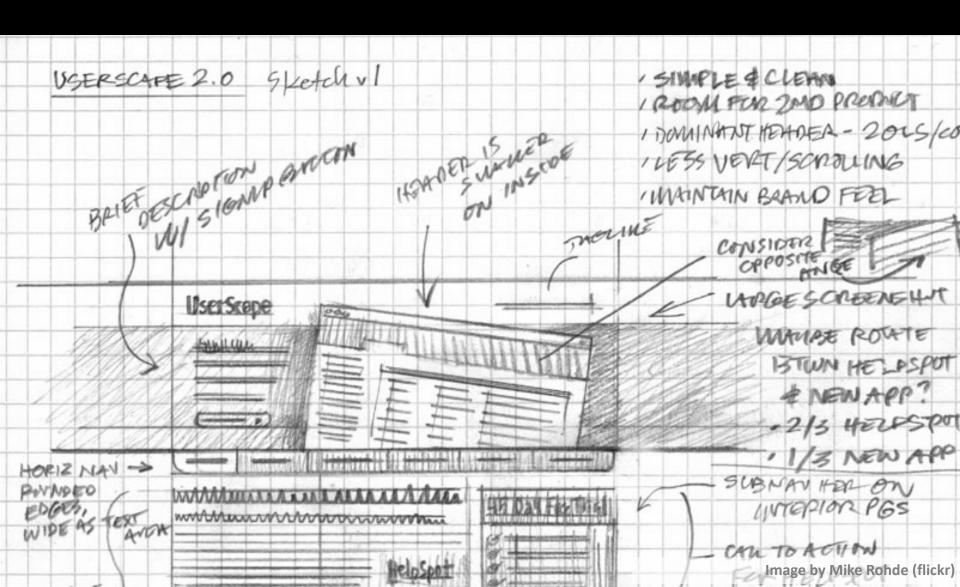


#### Help designers with task analysis.

You need it to document well, and designers need it to design well.

#### Offer to review early design sketches.

You've documented enough UI to develop a sixth sense for quality.



#### Seize control of on-screen text.

You don't write Ruby or Perl. Why should engineers write English?

## If usability testing isn't part of your process, introduce it.



## In all things, advocate for the user.

Champion their best interests, and your impact on usability will be undeniable.

## Thank you.

#### Will Sansbury

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@willsansbury