

GUI Design for an Awareness System

Context

During work people often need to interrupt each other for various reasons (like in order to make appointments, to communicate about work or simply to have a break). Each interruption process is a process, in which factors such as time demand, social relationship, urgency and more play role. The effect of rejecting or accepting interruptions has a great impact on social relationships between co-workers companies in a sense that well handled interruptions encourage people to communicate more, while badly handled ones do the opposite. Yet, people navigate through this interruption negotiation process in an implicit way and don't see the occurring communicational problems as something that can be changed (interruptions are a problem, but it's a fact of life).

Assignment

Thus the goal of this assignment is to propose a graphical interface for an awareness system supporting people at the office in correct timing of their informal communication attempts according to their information needs listed below. Those needs are incorporated into a scenario following the table.

System element	Information needs	
	<i>Interruptor</i>	<i>Interruptee</i>
Distributed	Mark taking breaks from work (e.g. going for coffee or lunch), Check notifications about others' availability for interaction, Leave traces about the interruption subject for the interruptee to check later, Store the interruption subject for yourself as a reminder, Check if the interruptee has already Attended to the interruption subject	Indicate your availability, concentration level and cumulative number of interruptions, Acknowledge that you see the interruptor's intention to interrupt, Mark critical deadlines, hard stops and absence, Provide automatic excuses when you have to refuse accepting the interruption, Acknowledge receiving interruption indicators, Provide notifications about your status,
Collocated	Indicate urgency, importance and time-demand of your interruption, Leave traces about the intention to interrupt, Call the interruptee out of the office	Present your answer to the interruption request

Scenario

Maura just received a rather unpleasant mail from the client. The client has let her know that he is not pleased with the current looks of the proposed solution and he demands changes. 'This is not a good start of the day' – thinks Maura looking at her completely filled up agenda – 'but I need to do something about it ...' She indicates to her coworkers that today is going to be frantic and she is already stressed. Now she has to find someone who could quickly fake the changes requested by the client. She can see that all her developers are busy. Alex, however, seems to be less concentrated than others. Maura remembers that he was planning to run some tests so he might be just the person to help her out. She decides to go to him rather than call or send an e-mail. She arrives at the door of the room all developers are sitting in and she informs Alex that she needs him for five minutes. As Alex doesn't want to disturb his colleagues, he indicates that he is leaving the room. Maura explains to Alex the problem and asks him for help. Alex promises to make the changes but only in the afternoon. On the way back Maura joins the project meeting for last 15 minutes. Of course that means that throughout the day some of her team members interrupt her asking for an advice. Maura marks each interruption and at some point indicates that she is not available anymore as she really needs to prepare the 3 o'clock meeting with the client. Only Alex can access her now, the rest may store their issues and she will try to get back to them later.

Alex is not very happy that he has to produce quick fixes for rather unreasonable client demands. But he understands that Maura needs to have something ready for the afternoon. During the lunch he gets an idea how to make the changes very quickly and without much effort. So, on the way from the cantina, he drops by Maura's office to tell her about it. He immediately sees that Maura is busy, so he indicates to her that the issue he wants to talk about is important to them both. Maura indicates to him that she needs 15 minutes before being able to talk to him. He decides to come later but requests a notification whenever she becomes available again. After he receives an indication that Maura can talk to him, he rushes to her office and explains his idea. She likes it a lot, so he goes back to work on it. The quick fix version is ready by 14:30, so

Maura can take it to the meeting. Alex requests to be notified when Maura is back as he is curious to hear how the meeting went.

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