

**Position Paper for:****Toward usable usability research: Building bridges between research and practice****Name and Affiliation:****Niyati Gupta, Monster Worldwide****My background in the research-practice gap**

The entire process of entering a users' mind; understanding their motivations, emotions in using various products, reducing the gap between the business objectives and user needs and thereby creating/ transforming different products intrigues me.

Graduate studies in social psychology and human factors engineered me to become a thorough researcher. I learnt how to create the "perfect" research plan outlining hypothesis, independent/dependent/confounding variables, primary/secondary goals, budget and technical constraints, participants' profiles etc. However, when I truly started practicing usability in the corporate world- creating and executing the exhaustive research plan and preparing a detailed usability research report did not seem to matter much. All that mattered was the "return of investment". When I present my findings and recommendations, all designers, developers and product managers really care about whether they have enough time to implement the design changes and which changes will add value to their product. Therefore, the key problem I face constantly in the practical world is to simplify my research plan, goals, findings and recommendations to present to the key stakeholders.

**My current work or interest in the field**

Currently, I work as a User Experience Researcher at Monster. My primary role is to make Monster's seeker, employer, internal and mobile products ease to use and efficient for the target population. I work closely with designers, developers, project managers and product managers to create easy to use and efficient designs. My secondary role is of a thought leader, i.e. to keep Monster's UX group and the larger organization informed about current and innovative UX practices, especially related to UX research.

**Critical issues that I would like to see addressed in the workshop**

- Practical ways to transform traditional usability research into practice.
- Reliable, easily available and up-to-date research resources on usability/UX methods written in an easy and simple to understand language.
- Effective ways to pull research findings from various sources on one topic and present them in one short document.

## Issues to avoid

None.

### **My view of the issue (and possibly some preliminary solutions) ....**

Efforts are being made (or at least being discussed) to reduce the gap between research and practice. I do not expect a sudden shift in thinking of both groups but it is good to know that some professionals in each group are making the effort to communicate their frustrations.

Some views and possible solutions:

1. View: Communication and interaction between researchers and practitioners is mainly through seminars, conferences and online subscriptions. Researchers' responsibility is to communicate his or her research design, findings and analysis mainly through a research paper. Practitioners' responsibility is to keep up with these research papers and extrapolate the findings to his or her work environment.  
Possible Solution: Researchers can simplify their work and present their findings in layman's terms. However, researchers are trained to write in a specific style and to publish their papers in research journals they have to follow these style guides; but practitioners are not inclined to read the lengthy research papers and most of the times are looking for quick answers.
2. View: Academics teach us theory, but theoretical knowledge is not always practical. For example, in the Human Factors degree program I learnt about working memory and the importance of reducing cognitive load for users. However, in practice, I soon realized that the key focus is on following company's design guidelines and reducing development time and cost.  
Possible solution: Practitioners need to communicate with researchers what problems they face in the work environment.

Moreover, I also share Don Norman's views on the subject that are outlined in the article – "The Research-Practice Gap" Link:

[http://jnd.org/dn.mss/the\\_research-practice\\_gap\\_1.html](http://jnd.org/dn.mss/the_research-practice_gap_1.html). I agree that researchers and practitioners concentrate on distinctive skill sets and their motivations to present research findings is very unique to their profession.