Evan Iwerks
iwerks@alum.mit.edu
6.831: User Interface Design
February 19, 2012

6.831: TeamTimer's Computer Prototype – Heuristic Evaluation

For the programmers behind TeamTimer, congratulations on getting the computer prototype up and running! I've attempted all of the tasks listed on your task lists that were possible within the context of this prototype. I recorded all of the UI oriented issues I encountered, and have reproduced those notes here. I have sorted the issues by order of severity, with those issues requiring the most immediate attention listed first.

High-Severity Issues:

- In the timer creation form, there is no format given for entering times (i.e., hh/mm/ss; hh/mm/ss AM/PM; or 6 o' clock). This poses a threat to learnability.

- In the timer creation form, no feedback is given when a time is entered; the user doesn't know if the time entered is acceptable or even understood. This is threat to the safety of the interface.

- The timers can display inaccurate times, where some parts are tracked as negative time and others are tracked as positive time. This poses a threat to consistency. I've included an image of this behavior below:

- Sharing of timers offers no feedback, so the user is unable to confirm that the target or targets (i.e., his employees) get their deadline timers. This is a threat to safety.

- It is unclear how to share a timer with multiple people; the auto-complete feature does not support entering multiple names. This poses a threat to learnability (or, if each timer can be shared with at most one individual, it is a threat to efficiency).

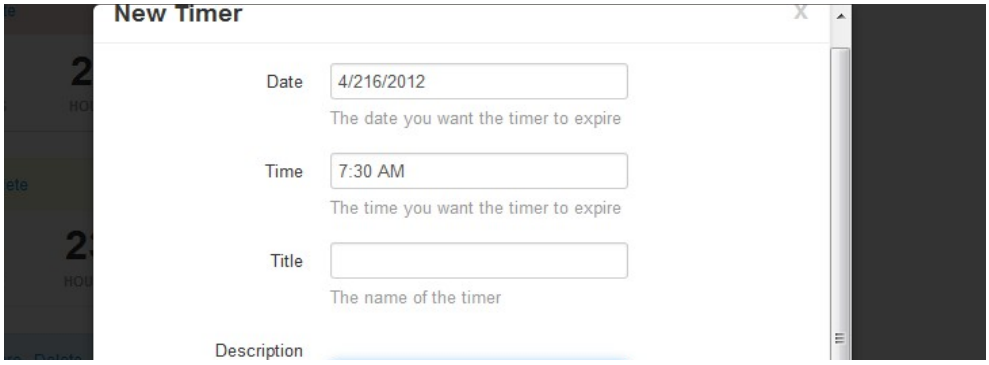
Moderate-Severity Issues:

- When the website's main page is reloaded, all timers previously added from the sidebar are still displayed. Additionally, those added timers are in the sidebar and can be added again; adding the timers again leads to redundant timers. This is a threat to simplicity.

- The "Invites" sidebar link toggles a drop-down menu of timers. The meaning of the word is unclear here. This is a threat to learnability.

- The timers display negative time, which can be very hard for users interpret. This poses a threat to the learnability of the interface. I've included an image of this behavior below:

- There is no error checking on date entry, which allows a user to insert non-existent dates. This is a threat to safety. I've included an image of this behavior below:



- While it is possible to add a description to each created timer, it is not clear how to view these descriptions on existing timers.. This is a threat to learnability.

Low-Severity Issues:

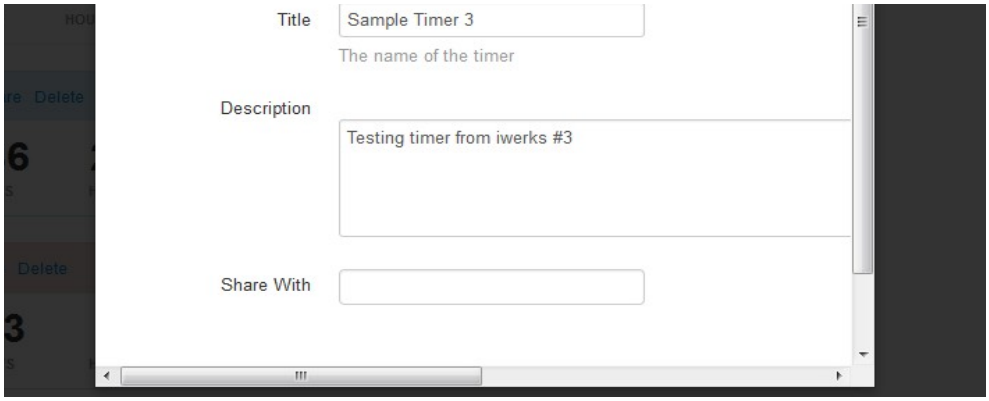
- The "Invites" drop-down toggle presently has the appearance of a link, but doesn't behave like a link (doesn't move the user to a new location). This is a threat to external consistency.

- The timer creation window saves information from old timers, using it as a default. This poses a threat to safety, where the user might accidentally create a second timer with the same (or some of the same) behavior as the first. Also, not offering other defaults creates a threat to efficiency.

Low-Severity Issues (Continued):

- In the timer creation window, The date selected from the pop-up calendar can be from before or after current date. There is no warning about creating a negative-time timer in this situation, though, which creates a threat to safety.

- In the timer creation window, the re-sizable description text field can break alignment of the page, stretching beyond the boundaries of the window. This creates a horizontal scroll for the window. This behavior is unexpected, posing to a threat to consistency. I've included an image of this behavior below:



- The coloring scheme used for the timers isn't explained or obvious (i.e., alternating, or indicating a future time vs. a past time). This is a threat to learnability.

- The sidebar has no indicators of where the shared timers are coming from, or who is sharing them with you. This is a threat to learnability.

Other Notes:

While I cannot comment on the missing functionality (editing / deleting timers), I encourage you to implement and test these features soon – their guaranteed functionality very important.

If you have any questions about the issues I've found, or would like more detail on the threats they pose to the usability of your system, please feel free to E-mail me at: iwerks@alum.mit.edu