



RusCHI

HCI Research and Usability Engineering in Russia





RusCHI

RusCHI: Past and Present

The Russian HCI movement has a rather eccentric history. Having a long prehistory and deep roots in both academy and industry of the Soviet era, the Russian HCI and usability movement became internationally visible only in 1991 with the fall of the "iron curtain" and the First International Workshop on Human-Computer Interaction held in Moscow. Following the success of this workshop, a series of annual East-West Conferences on Human-Computer Interaction (EWHCI) took place in Moscow and St.-Petersburg in 1992-96. The EWHCI conferences were attended by many brilliant researchers from the West, and the overall quality of presentations was very high. Selected papers from EWHCI '93, '94 and '95 were published by Springer-Verlag in their *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* series. Very positive conference reports for EWHCI '92, '93 and '94 were published in the old *SIGCHI Bulletin*. No doubt, in 1992-95, EWHCI was a world-level forum in the HCI field. And in 1993, Russian local SIG of the ACM SIGCHI (MosCHI, later renamed Russia SIGCHI) was launched and Juri Gornostaev became its first Chair.

However, by the mid-90s, the situation got worse. Forced by destructive "economical reforms", drastic reduction of manufacturing industries, large-scale deindustrialization, and the grave crisis in higher education and science, many Russian researchers and practitioners gave up their HCI-related careers for new sales- and business-related jobs (not

concerned with HCI) that offered higher salaries. The "brain drain" among the Russian HCI community was considerable. 1996 became the last year of EWHCI. Somewhere after that date, Russian SIG turned into period of complete inactivity and the organized HCI movement in Russia collapsed.

This was not the end of the story, however. The new usability community has been formed gradually by February 2001, when the First Russian Workshop on Usability was held in Moscow. It became a regular event, and now the community is preparing to organize the 18th meeting in this series.

As a result of this progress, in September 2004, the ACM officially chartered the RusCHI - the Russian ACM SIGCHI local chapter.

Today, RusCHI consists of 30+ full members and several student members. The group continues conducting the regular series of usability workshops, now under RusCHI's flag. There is an idea to transform these meetings into a conference form, which would allow involving participants from Urals, Siberia and Far East. A more ambitious plan is to resurrect East-West Conferences on Human-Computer Interaction (EWHCI) that would serve as a forum for communication and collaboration of professionals from Eastern and Central Europe with their colleagues from the West.



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In the following sections of this booklet, we present a series of examples of HCI and usability work in Russian academy and business.

Moscow State University, Laboratory of Work Psychology

The Laboratory of Work Psychology (LWP) at the Moscow State University pioneered HCI research in Russia since late-80s. The activities of the laboratory cover a broad range of HCI topics. The focus of the work is research into and development of software systems with a long-term aim of producing commercially exploitable systems. An important feature of LWP is the close relationship that exists between laboratory's research and software industry. Many LWP staff members have industrial assignments in addition to the research tasks within the university.

Examples of laboratory's industry-oriented work include the organization of the usability department at the RTS Stock Exchange; the prototyping of decision support and error prevention system for operators of process industries; and the development of user interface recommendations for frequently interrupted computerized work.

Main directions of the laboratory's work are:

- applied stress research
- human error prevention
- interruptions in human-computer interaction
- eye-tracking analysis

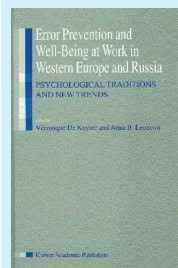
The laboratory maintains a state-of-the-art facilities for HCI/usability research, including all the necessary hardware and software for video-based and eye-tracking research and analysis.



Anna Leonova
Head of the
Laboratory

For contacts:

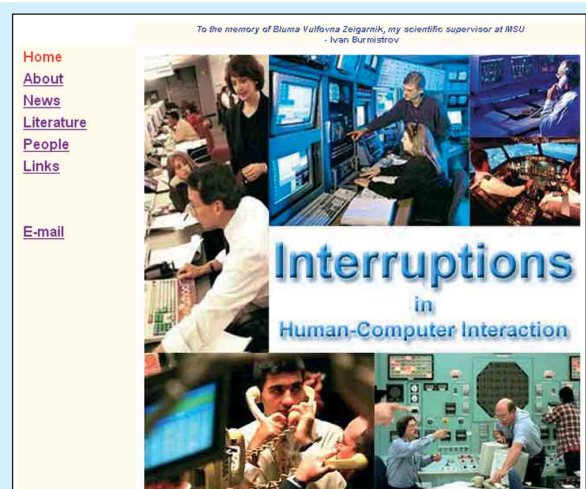
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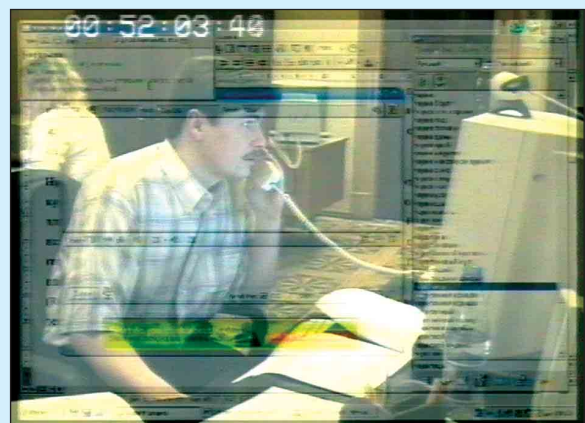
Main publication of the laboratory

V. De Keyser and A. B. Leonova (Eds.)
Error Prevention and Well-Being at Work in Western Europe and Russia: Psychological Traditions and New Trends, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001

The book involves a number of HCI-related materials



www.interruptions.net - the primary web resource on interruption in HCI, a resource maintained by LWP



Phone interruption: a frame from experimental video-protocol



usethics

Established in 2001, Usethics became the first Russian company completely specializing in usability engineering and user interface design. At that time, there were doubts about the possibility of selling "pure" usability services on the Russian market. But three years of Usethics' successful work proved that it is not only possible but also profitable.

The company was founded by Alexander Belyshkin, a researcher at the Department of Psychology, Moscow State University, and Vlad Golovach, one of the leading Russian designers and technical writers. By that time, they had many years of experience in interface design, and had completed a range of major projects, including localization of software for Microsoft, Corel, Siemens, Hewlett-Packard, and Stanford University. Vlad had created and authored the first Russian professional designers' website where many articles on the interface design had been published.

Usethics has earned a solid reputation on the Russian usability services market. Since its foundation, the company has completed over 50 projects for 30+ Russian and foreign companies. Their clients include a number of largest Russian and international companies:

- Rostelecom - the Russian landline and IP telephony giant (NYSE: ROS)
- Vimpelcom - one of the leading three Russian telecommunications service providers (NYSE: VIP)
- Surgutneftegas - one of the largest oil companies in Russia (NASDAQ: SGTPY)
- ITE Group Plc - exhibitions and conferences organizer (LSE: ITE)



Alexander
Belyshkin



Vlad
Golovach

Usethics has completed projects in a range of domains, including:

- CRM and ERP systems
- Internet banking and online payment
- GIS
- Online warehousing
- Web content management systems
- Security systems
- Stock trading
- Billing systems
- Online shopping
- Corporate websites
- WAP sites
- Courses on usability engineering

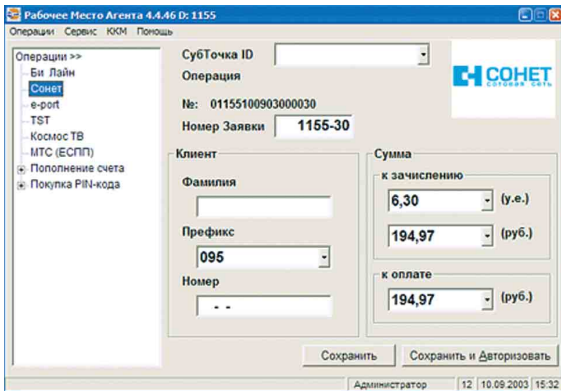
In addition to projects for the Russian market, Usethics was involved in a number of offshore projects for companies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Usethics: Clients

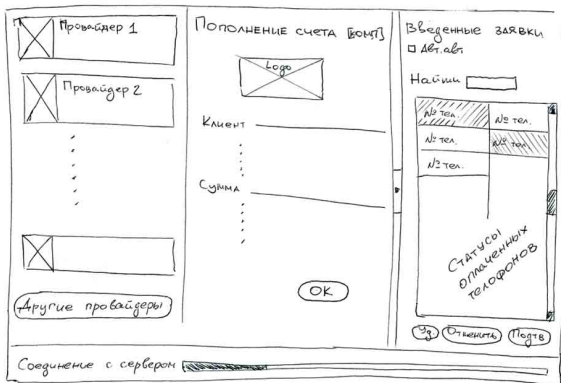
- Rostelecom
- Vimpelcom
- Surgutneftegas
- DeltaLeasing
- ITE LLC Moscow
- WildBit
- Dealine, IBS Group
- Race Communications
- Playfon
- Yandexn

Usethics: Services

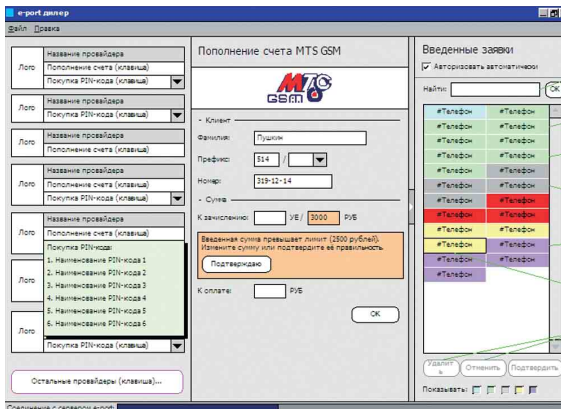
- Usability Testing and Evaluation
- Usability Testing support services
- Screen Design
- Interaction Design
- Information Architecture and Design
- Software Localization
- Guidelines and Specifications Preparation



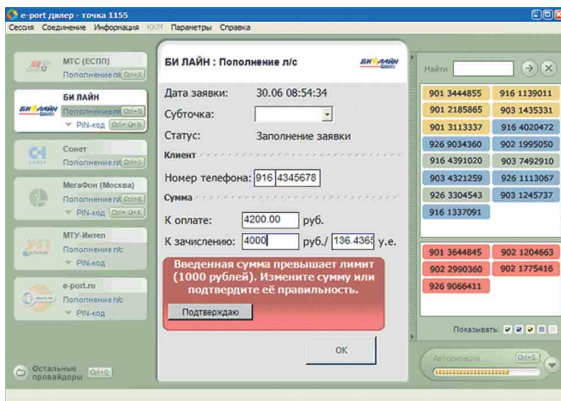
Software before redesign



Paper prototype



Working prototype



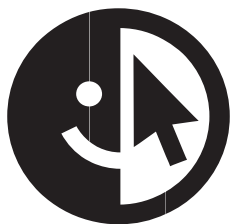
System after redesign

Usethics was the first Russian company to offer its clients usability testing services uncoupled from interface design work. Usethics provides full support for foreign companies that conduct a usability tests of their products in Russia, which includes test administration services and recruitment of participants. A high-profile example of this work is the recent collaboration with Rolf Molich (the Danish and international authority on usability) in the project for one of the largest global retailers.

Usethics makes a great effort to popularize the culture of usability in Russia. A few years ago Vlad Golovach wrote the book "User Interface Design" and published it on his website. This was the only book on the subject written in Russian for a long time. It became a usability manual for many Russian interface designers and played a great part in the formation of the new generation of usability specialists in the country.

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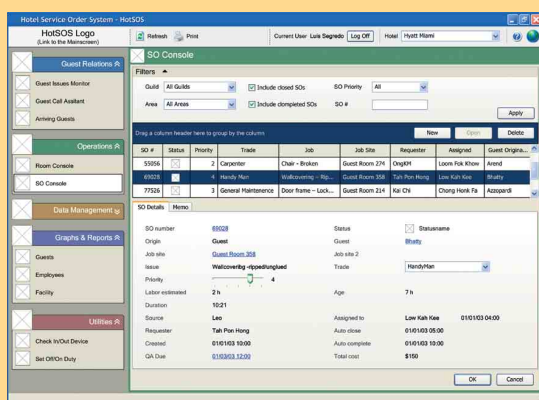
UIDesign Group

Interaction & graphic design, Usability consulting

UIDesign Group is one of the pioneers and nowadays the undisputed leaders of User Interface Design in the Russian Federation. Thanks to our great clients and partners, we have been able to accumulate vast knowledge, applied on real-life projects both at the Russian and foreign markets. We believe that sharing our knowledge is our way to thank to our clients for making us a leader and to all the application developing community for entrusting in us the user interface design of their applications.

We offer the complete package of user-centered design services:

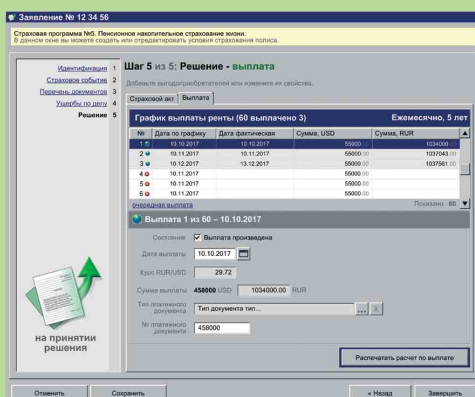
- Initial specification: problem definition, functionality definition, audience definition and persona development, task flow analysis.
- Concept development: working out initial ideas for the structure and format of the product that best match the needs of the users and the business
- Interaction design: information architecture, interface design, page transition analysis;
- Visual design: graphical style, skinning, icons and illustrations development;
- User testing: observing actual users performing real tasks with the product, recording what they do, analyzing the results, and recommending improvements
- Monitoring: implemented solutions maintenance
- Post-launch assessment: gathering and analyzing feedback and metrics after launch.



One of our projects conducted together with Aplana Software company has received **Winning Customer of the Year and Customer Experience of the Year Awards** at the Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference 2004. The awards were given for the development of HotSOS (Hotel Service Order Optimization System), a project fulfilled for M-Tech a US based supplier of quality management software for the hospitality industry.

We run Product design, Web and Application design projects for the following branches:

- Hotel business
- Banking and finance
- Insurance services
- Security services
- Telecommunications
- Cinema industry
- Information services
- Electronics
- Government organizations
- Gas industry



The Automated Insurance System for internal use of the biggest Russian insurance company 'Rosgosstrakh' is successfully introduced in 2300 companies' offices throughout Russia. Development of a new user interface **increased the efficiency of work in 3 times and decreased the amount of users' errors in more than 10 times**, that significantly enriched the company's budget.

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Offshore Usability and User Interface Design

Currently, approximately 8% of IT work for US companies is outsourced. In five years, that number will have exploded to 55 percent. Forrester Research predicts that \$136 billion in wages, about 3.3 million jobs, will move offshore in the next 15 years. Many analysts believe that actual numbers will be much higher. The current recipients of this movement of software development jobs are India and Russia (76% and 13% correspondingly in 2003).

The latest tendency in the IT-outsourcing is offshoring of usability engineering and user interface design activities (see literature references below).

Russia can become one of the most appropriate places for offshore usability work due to a number of reasons. The country has a usability community which consists of experienced professionals. Russia culturally belongs to the European civilization, and this would potentially help to manage and reconcile the cross-cultural differences during product development. Outsourcing usability to Russia would provide increase in ROI, since here usability work is generally calculated to cost \$10-20 per hour.

Of course, Russian usability specialists are aware of fundamental problems raised by offshore usability model itself, but many of them have been involved in successful offshore projects already.

Literature on offshore usability:

Henry, Pradeep (2003) Advancing UCD while facing challenges working from offshore, *Interactions*, 10 (2), 38-47

Marcus, Aaron (2004) Insights on outsourcing: What's in it for us? For them? Where are we headed?, *Interactions*, 11 (4), 12-17

For contacts:

All contacts on the previous pages will work

