

User testing of Gnome and Ubuntu

Matthew Paul Thomas





Why do user testing?

- **Unit testing**
- **Performance testing**
- **Security testing**
- **Fuzz testing**
- **...Usability testing**

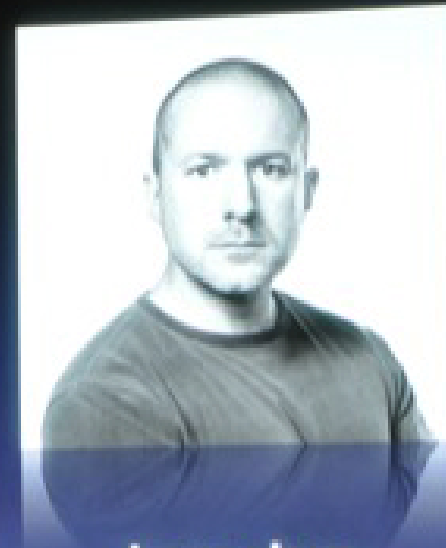
- **Learnability**
- **Efficiency**
- **Memorability**
- **Safety**
- **Satisfaction**

- **Learnability** ✓
- **Efficiency** ✓
- **Memorability**
- **Safety** ✓
- **Satisfaction** ✓



**What do we mean by
"user testing"?**

~~Focus groups~~



Jony Ive

SVP Design



**“We don’t do focus groups.
They just ensure that you
don’t offend anyone, and
produce bland inoffensive
products.”**



[Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox](#), August 5, 2001:

First Rule of Usability? Don't Listen to Users

Summary:

To design an easy-to-use interface, pay attention to what users do, not what they say. Self-reported claims are unreliable, as are user speculations about future behavior.

In past years, the greatest usability barrier was the preponderance of cool design. Most projects were ruled by usability opponents who preferred complexity over simplicity. As a result, billions of dollars were wasted on flashy designs that were difficult to use.

One of the main advantages of the "dot-bomb" downturn is that cool design has suffered a severe set back. Companies are now focused on the bottom line:

- **Public websites**, which formerly focused on building awareness, now aim at making it easy for customers to do business.
- **Intranets** are similarly refocused on [improving employee productivity](#). Many companies are attempting to create order, impose design standards, and enhance navigation on previously chaotic intranets.

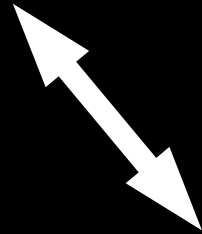
Happily, glamour-based design has lost and usability advocates have won the first and hardest victory: Companies are now paying attention to usability needs.

Unfortunately, winning a battle with usability opponents doesn't win the war with complexity. It simply moves us to a new front line: The battle is now to get companies to do usability *right*.

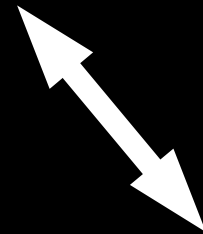
Watch Users Work

Too frequently, I hear about companies basing their designs on user input obtained through misguided methods. A typical example? Create a few alternative designs, show them to a group of users, and ask which one they prefer. *Wrong*. If the users have not actually tried to use the designs, they'll base their comments on surface features. Such input often contrasts strangely with feedback based on real use.

What you say you'd do



What you think you'd do



What you'd actually do

~~Girlfriend tests~~



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The Great Ubuntu-Girlfriend Experiment (Content Consumer)

[Posted April 28, 2008 by jake]

There is lots of Ubuntu buzz right now due to the release of Hardy, but the Content Consumer weblog has an article with wider applicability as well. If the year of the Linux desktop is ever going to happen, usability by non-technical folks is a requirement. One way to measure the usability is to [sit your girlfriend in front of a Linux desktop](#) and see what problems she encounters trying to do some normal desktop tasks. "Erin's knowledge of computers is limited to word processors, spreadsheets, Photoshop and a reasonable amount of browsing on the Web. Fairly standard stuff for a university philosophy student. All I did to the system (before leaving Erin at the log-in screen) was to install it and create a user account for her. She had no problems logging in, and loved the stylised heron background. Then I gave her one by one the tasks I'd set her. I didn't give her any help at all." (seen at [Slashdot](#))

Update: As can be seen in the comments, this item offended some of our readers. I offer my deepest apologies to anyone who was offended by it. That was certainly not the intent.

[\(Log in to post comments\)](#)

Failure

Posted Apr 28, 2008 13:58 UTC (Mon) by [elanthis](#) (subscriber, #6227) [[Link](#)]

This will not succeed for me. :)

My girlfriend wants to:
play WoW
play Oblivion
play Age of Conan
etc.

Linux usability is fine. Compatibility with games is the problem. Even Vista had/has market troubles due to incompatibilities with older Windows games - why would Linux be any different? Wine needs to be installed by default and needs to work for a wide variety of games. The "basic desktop stuff" people do pretty much equates to a Browser (and Firefox on Linux works as well as Firefox on Windows, although Flash is more of a pain in the ass on Linux and is, sadly, pretty "vital" to most home users) and Office (and OpenOffice.org's usability is Good Enough in most cases - same as it is on Windows, at any rate).

Failure

Ads by Google

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[www.justinmind.com](#)

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**One person is not a
statistically reliable sample**

F-Spot

Photo Edit View Find Tags Tools Help

Import Rotate Left Rotate Right Browse Edit Image Fullscreen Slideshow

1 of 1 Back Forward

Edit

Cro

Select the area that No Constraint

Cancel

Histogram

Image Informat

Name IMG265

Version Original

Date 5/11/200 2:00 a

Size 2560x19

Exposure f/5.0 1/3 ISO 50

Comment:

1 Photo (1 selected)



Edit X

Cro

Select the area that
No Constraint

Cancel

Histogram

Image Informat

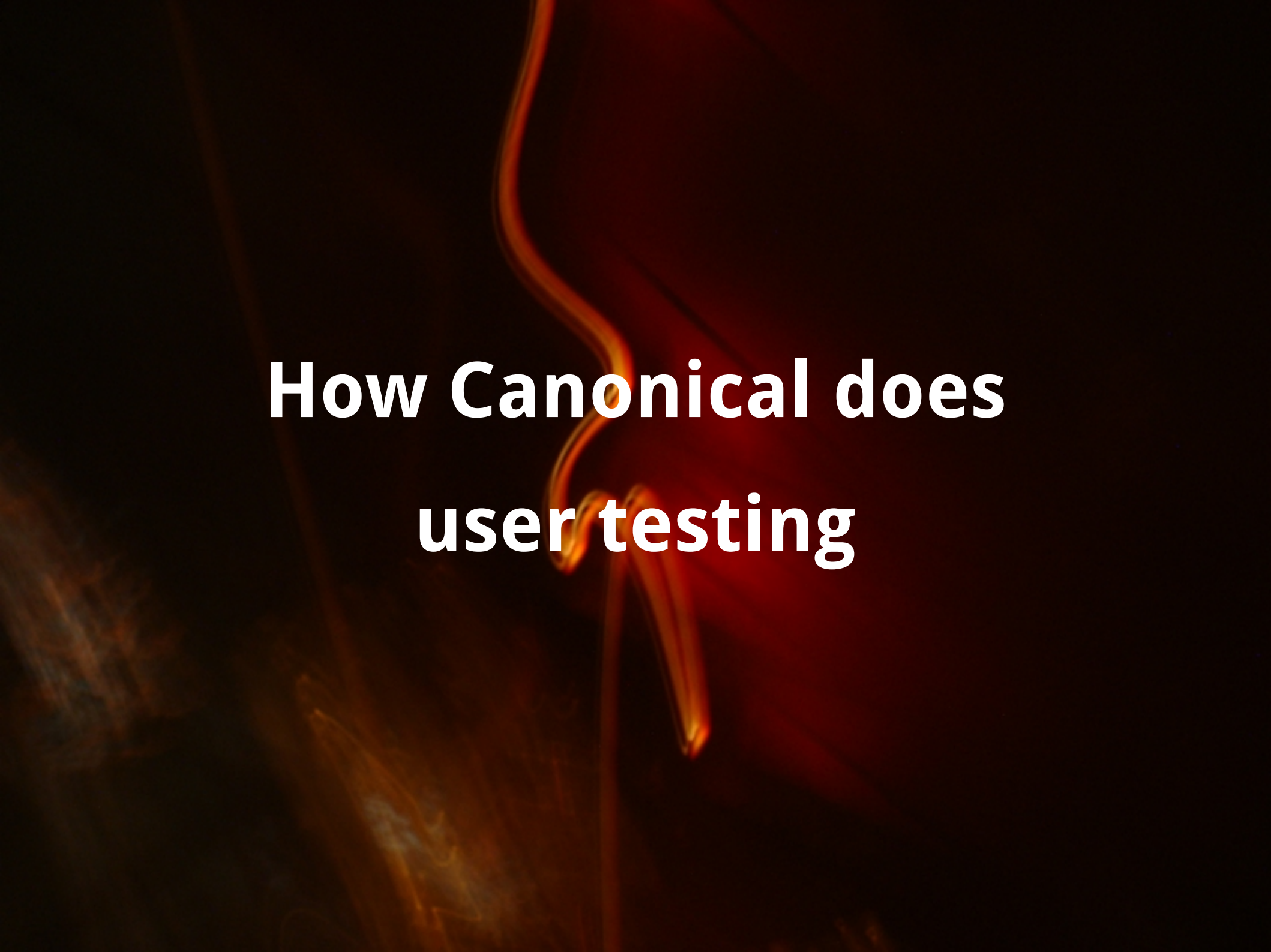
Name IMG265
Version Original
Date 5/11/200
2:00 a
Size 2560x19
Exposure f/5.0 1/3
ISO 50

Comment:

1 Photo (1 selected)



RITE usability testing



How Canonical does user testing

One day

Six people

One hour each

Explanation of user test

Permissions form and payment

Introductory questions

*** name, age, occupation, own/rent, family**

*** Do you have your own computer? ... What kind? ... What do you use it for? ... How many hours per week?**

*** technology self-rating (0~10)**

How often do you use your camera?

What do you do with the photos from your camera?

How long do you use the camera for, before putting the photos onto your computer?

Okay, here is a camera with some photos on it. And here's the USB cable for the camera. Can you show me what you'd do to put the photos onto the computer?

Which is your favorite photo of these?

When was it taken?

Let's say you want to crop the photo to show just ____.

Okay, what if you wanted it to be just black and white? ...

**Avoid using the same jargon
as the software
in your test script**



What have we found?

1

**Don't give your software
a silly name**

“You shouldn’t call things ‘GIMP’ — I just feel ... it’s not a good word.”

— 25-year-old healthcare administrator

“GIMP — lovely name! That is pretty disturbing, you know, S&M references on my computer.”

— 23-year-old neuroscience student

“What the hell is a ‘Cheese Webcam Booth’ ... that is a bizarre name.”

“Some of these things have strange names ... well — the ‘Istanbul desktop sessions recorder’ — why is it called ‘Istanbul’?”

“Sort Buddies’ ‘By log size’ — what the hell does that mean?”

2

**Don't neglect
the initial experience**

“I’d expect something to tell me what to do.”
— 42-year-old accountant trying Klotski

Other highlights:

- **Applications that require Internet access do a poor job of explaining you're offline**
- **Zero out of four F-Spot testers could work out how to use tags**
- **Two out of four testers successfully burned photos to a CD**
- **Photo and music managers fight with Nautilus for the user's attention**

Bugzilla@Mozilla - Bug 489981 Launching Firefox twice quickly reproducibly gives "Firefox is already running" error Last modified: 2009-06-14 19:57:52 PDT

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[Bug 489981](#) - Launching Firefox twice quickly reproducibly gives "Firefox is already running" error [Last Comment](#)

Status: NEW

Whiteboard:

Keywords:

Product: Firefox

Component: General

Version: 3.0 Branch

Platform: x86 Linux

Importance: -- minor ([vote](#))

Target Milestone: ---

Assigned To: [Nobody](#); OK to take it and work on it

QA Contact: general@firefox.bugs

URL:

Depends on: [479078](#)

Blocks:

Show dependency [tree](#) / [graph](#)

Attachments

[Add an attachment](#) (proposed patch, testcase, etc.)

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[Bug 490992](#) - Popup blocking notification banner hides password storage banner

[Last Comment](#)

Status: NEW

Reported: 2009-05-01 07:02 PDT by [Matthew Paul Thomas](#)

Whiteboard:

Modified: 2009-05-02 18:51 PDT ([History](#))

Keywords:

Product: Firefox

Component: Security

Version: 3.0 Branch

Platform: x86 Linux

Importance: -- minor ([vote](#))

Target Milestone: ---

Assigned To: [Nobody](#); OK to take it and work on it

QA Contact: firefox@security.bugs

URL:

Depends on:

Blocks:

Show dependency [tree](#) / [graph](#)

Attachments

[testcase](#) (389 bytes, text/html)

2009-05-01 09:36 PDT, Nochum Sossonko [:Natch]

no flags

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Two near-identical spellchecking toolbar buttons by default is confusing

Issue #: 103243	Component: Word processor	Version: OOo 3.0.1	Platform: Unknown
OS/Version: All	Status: NEW	Issue type: DEFECT	Priority: P3
Resolution:	Assigned to: sts	Reporter: mpt	QA Contact: issues@sw
Subcomponent: ui	Target milestone: OOo Later		

URL:

Summary: Two near-identical spellchecking toolbar buttons by default is confusing

Keywords:

Status whiteboard:

Description:

[Originally reported at <<http://launchpad.net/bugs/394394>>]

OpenOffice.org 3.0.1, Ubuntu 9.04

By default, OpenOffice.org Writer's Standard toolbar contains two toolbar buttons with near-identical icons: "Spelling & Grammar" and "AutoSpellcheck".

During Canonical user testing, one test subject said: "The only thing that I'm not quite sure about is that there's two like 'ABC' check [buttons], I'm not sure [which is which]."



Bug 587868 – Atomix doesn't explain the game to first-time users

[View Bug Activity](#) | [Clone This Bug](#)

Opened by Matthew Paul Thomas (mpt)

(reporter, [points: 14](#))

2009-07-06 10:41 UTC [[reply](#)]

During Canonical user testing of Ubuntu, one test participant happened to install Atomix, and launched it, but Atomix did not display any explanation of what kind of game it was. "It looks like it's a word puzzle, where you fit the words in."

Eventually she found the "Game" > "New Game" menu item, but Atomix still did not give any hint of how to play the game. "I didn't find that very user friendly, it might just be me."

This is not a duplicate of [bug 312592](#): it should not be necessary to resort to the Help menu to grasp the basics of how to play a game.

One way of fixing this would be to change the intro screen to include a few sentences on how to play the game, followed by a button for starting the game. Something like this:

= Atomix =

Guide the atoms through the maze to form molecules.

Click, or use arrow keys and Enter, to select an atom and move it.

Product: [atomix](#)
Component: atomix
Version: 2.14.x
Status: UNCONFIRMED
Priority: Normal
Severity: normal

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Bug #394335: Bug #394335 reported by Matthew Paul Thomas on 2009-07-01 ([Activity log](#))

Nautilus

"Changing Backgrounds" help is tl;dr and doesn't cross-reference desktop background

This report is public

[Mark as duplicate](#) [Convert to a question](#)

Affects	Status	Importance	Assigned to	Milestone
gnome-user-docs (Ubuntu)	Confirmed	Low		

[Also affects project](#) [Also affects distribution](#) [Nominate for release](#)

Binary package hint: ubuntu-docs

Ubuntu 9.04, all updates installed

During Canonical user testing, one test subject followed this path in trying to change the desktop background:

1. opened "Places" > "Desktop"
2. chose "File System", then "Documents" in the resulting file manager window
3. double-clicked on "Desktop"
4. chose "Edit" > "Backgrounds and Emblems..." > "Add a New Pattern...", "Cancel", "Add a New Pattern...", "Desktop" (in the file picker), "Cancel", "Help"
5. started reading the help, even confirming that it was helpful ("yeah, I

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- Matthew Paul Thomas
- Phil Bull

Also notified

- 3n!Gma
- Auro Florentino
- CRC
- ...

Bug #394366: Bug #394366 reported by Matthew Paul Thomas on 2009-07-01 ([Activity log](#))

Not obvious how to start a Sudoku game

This report is public

[Mark as duplicate](#)

[Convert to a question](#)

Affects	Status	Importance	Assigned to	Milestone
GNOME games	Confirmed	Unknown	gnome-bugs #526587	
gnome-games (Ubuntu)	Triaged	Low	Ubuntu Desktop Bugs	

Also affects project Also affects distribution Nominate for release This bug affects me too ([change](#))

Binary package hint: gnome-games

Ubuntu 9.04, all updates installed

During Canonical user testing of Ubuntu, one test participant opened Sudoku and tried to start a game, but found this needlessly difficult:

- * she tried clicking on the "New Game" text, but it did nothing (even though one of its letters is apparently an access key)
- * she tried clicking on "Easy", and it changed color, but nothing else happened

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Matthew Paul Thomas

Also notified

3n!Gma
 Auro Florentino

The background features a dark, almost black, space filled with abstract, glowing patterns. A prominent, wavy, orange-to-red gradient shape flows from the top center towards the bottom right, resembling a stylized human profile or a dynamic, fluid form. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and high-tech.

How can you do user testing?

**Any testing is (usually)
better than none**

Issues:

- **Screen capture is fiddly**
- **Video transcoding is slow**
- **Analysis is slow**
- **Not enough participants**
- **All participants are English**

launchpad.net/screenie



Screenie



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Screenie: Record and Share

Screenie lets you show and tell what is happening on your desktop. It records the desktop activity, mouse and key presses and can record you through your webcam.

Primary Persona

Sarah is 26 and is a usability professional. She has a degree in psychology and has been working for 3 years. Sarah has been using Ubuntu for a while and would love to be able to record some novice users and how they interact with the desktop.

Related projects:

<http://www.andreasn.se/blog/?p=96>

Uses Launchpad for: [Bug Tracking](#).

Maintainer:  [Ivanka Majic](#)

Driver: Not yet appointed

Licenses: GNU GPL v3

live.gnome.org/MatthewPaulThomas

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