

Usability and Playability Consultant

About Behavioristics, Inc. and Heather Desurvire

The principal of Behavioristics, Inc., Heather Desurvire, has been working in the field of Usability for over 15 years. She has conducted usability services as a full-time employee for AT&T Bell Laboratories, Bell Communications Research, NYNEX Science and Technology. She has successfully consulted and highly regarded by many high profile companies including Disney Interactive, Avalanche Software, Pandemic Studios, Fandango.com, THQ, Nickelodeon, Microsoft, AOL, Federal Reserve Bank, CMGI's Icast, Launch.com, Sapien, Organics, Washington Mutual, Citibank, Bankers Trust, Ernst and Young LLP, Informix, Symantec Peter Norton Group, Hewlett-Packard, Homestead, HomePage, Intertainer.tv (partnered with Paramount and Universal), GeoCities (now part of Yahoo), DirecTV (Largest U.S. National Satellite Television Corporation), United Airlines, Motorola, 3Com/Palm Computing, Intuit, Disney Interactive, Agribuys (largest distribution software for the international retail grocery market) among others. Her work in the game industry has spanned from the CD-ROM days, working with a game publisher in New York in the 90's on several adventure, platform, racing, and sports games for them; Worlds Inc. a "Sim's" like game. Her work has resulted in learning what aspects of the games would hinder and then how to redesign aspects of the game so the majority of the players would fully enjoy and continue playing these games. Recently, she has worked on: Tak and the Power of Juju (THQ publishers) released with a TV show in the fall 2003; Full Spectrum Warrior, the soon to be released strategy game that has the realism and immersion of a FPS, developed by Pandemic; Disney Interactive's Girlfriends (released 2001); a SIM's like game for the Department of Defense, and FPS game also for the Department of the Defense (division DMSO), to be released sometime in 2004.

Ms. Desurvire has utilized many proven methodologies with her user-centered design work. These include usability evaluations such as: usability testing, heuristic evaluation; user profile analysis, and needs analysis such as: task analysis/contextual inquiry/ethnographic studies; competitive analysis, focus groups, standards testing. Her game work spans computer games, PS2, Xbox, and Game Boy Advance. She has worked on the following user interfaces: Graphical User Interfaces such as Microsoft Windows based products and Apple Macintosh products; websites for Ecommerce, informational (US National website for largest satellite television corporation), and website applications; telephone-based interfaces, financial systems, ATM's, digital image printer, voice recognition systems (Motorola, NYNEX, Bellcore, AT&T Bell Labs, Nortel), and user Documentation and training (Symantec, and Norton Utilities). Her usability work on the software/internet product for Cybermedia, Inc. resulted in their attaining a design award for best user interface from PC Magazine. She was responsible for the successful usability of the music player developer by CMGI, which included a blending of video, Instant Messaging, radio, and chat. Her usability work has impacted the AOL's successful release 5 and 6 of the You've Got Pictures feature. She has also led research for Palm Computing, to analyze future feature set needs that will be compelling for targeted customers. She also assisted the designers at Launch.com to reconfigure a troublesome and

infrequently used Rating Widget into a successful highly used feature, which ultimately led to higher frequency of use of the site. Her usability work has impacted the burgeoning area of Web TV, where she has assisted Intertainer.tv, a Paramount and Universal subsidiary, in uncovering barriers to their customer's use of this new technology. Her work significantly improved the use and usability of Disney's new game for kids, aged 6-10. It is a new type of interactive game that will set the tone for future game designs put out by Disney. THQ and Avalanche Software (also produced by Nickelodeon) benefited from the playtesting by adding a new level for a tutorial, disguised as game play so that Novices could also enjoy the game. Many other areas of the game were also modified based on the playtesting, which resulted in a much wider audience for game play. Some of the improvements included adding more clarity of goals, more interaction with the game's characters which was perceived as the most fun, and paced assistance guised as a character in the game, among many other improvements.

She has pioneered research on alternative methodologies for evaluating the usability of user-interfaces. A summary of her research work is published in "Usability Inspection Methods" (John Wiley and Sons, edited by J. Nielsen and R. Mack). She has co-chaired a workshop with Jakob Nielsen, and her research has appeared in professional journals, such as the ACM Special Interest Group and the Computer Human Interaction (SIGCHI) Bulletin. She has presented her work at several professional conferences and has been invited to chair several paper sessions.

Her current research work is involved with playability for video games. Since usability for productivity software has different goals than games do (ease of use, faster, easier for productivity software, vs. games where challenge and difficulty may be a part of the fun), she has been involved with several colleagues in the industry including Microsoft's GameStudio lab, in evolving the methodology specific to playability and usability for video games. She will be presenting some of her research work at the at the prestigious CHI (Computer Human Interaction) conference in Austria 2004.

Ms Desurvire received her B.A. in Psychology in 1983 from the University of California at Berkeley. She received her M.A. in Psychology and a B.S. in Computer Science from New York University in 1988.

Ms Desurvire's consulting practice has provided her clients with mastering their usability challenges to create a fantastic customer experience. Ms. Desurvire accomplishes this by utilizing the latest proven usability and customer experience methods and techniques in a cost-effective manner. The results of her work immediately and effectively enlighten the team and impact the design for increased usability and for games, also increased playability, and thus increased revenue for her clients.