

## Case study

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# User testing wins Active Standards valuable product insights



## Structured UX programme delivers for digital governance experts

ActiveStandards provides digital quality management solutions for leading global corporations including Shell, Sony and KPMG. These give senior corporate managers high level website optimization and compliance assessment capabilities, while hands-on web managers gain detailed tools for identifying and resolving issues.

In early 2014, a significant design update of its user interface was planned, and Nicola Thompson, the Lead Interaction/Visual Designer began the search for a specialist agency partner to create a more systematic user testing programme.

*“We had relied too much on anecdotal user feedback. We chose System Concepts to help us develop a more systematic, structured understanding.”*

Nicola Thompson, Lead Interaction/Visual Designer, ActiveStandards



## Challenge

ActiveStandards needed to optimise its user interface design cycle. To make this happen, it first needed to gain a more in-depth understanding of how clients were using its product; whether there were any problem areas; and how it could support its users more effectively.

It sought our help to create a more systematic, structured and insightful user research programme, including building robust personas and key user journeys for its two primary user types.

Nicola says the ActiveStandards team wanted to, “dip our toes in the water with a professionally run framework, and to use what we learnt to fill-in gaps in our own understanding.”

## What we did

We advised on and implemented a full usability research programme. Participants were drawn from ActiveStandards’ client base, and included senior as well as more hands-on roles. Nicola says that having clients know that ActiveStandards works with a user research agency was a positive additional factor.

The research included users completing a series of representative tasks. Nicola Thompson says, “System Concepts brought in a number of interview and facilitating techniques that were really valuable.” A participative design exercise provided insights on users’ ideas for improvements, and an interactive workshop with the ActiveStandards project team established findings and key areas for improvement.

## Benefits

Our client, Nicola Thompson, says, “There’s a very strong perception within the organisation that improving our user research programme is absolutely the right thing to do and is giving us real value.”

The research enabled ActiveStandards to:

- Improve understanding of users’ roles, tasks and characteristics
- Develop personas and key user journeys
- Uncover and fix some significant usability issues
- Validate ideas for development
- Improve navigation and labelling.
- Gain powerful insights, and reset incorrect assumptions

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**Nicola Thompson, Lead Interaction/Visual Designer, ActiveStandards**



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**Nicola Thompson, Lead Interaction/Visual Designer, ActiveStandards**

## Significant changes

The findings from the programme steered a major redesign exercise, and resulted in a number of significant changes that have been well received by users. The development of more accurate and meaningful personas has enabled dedicated pages to be created, while user journeys have been greatly improved.

## Unexpected benefit

There’s been one unexpected benefit from our input that Nicola Thompson hails as, “A really big deal for us.” This is the impact of our collaboration on the wider ActiveStandards team. She says, “It was a really positive and engaging experience for our whole team. Right across the organisation, I think everyone is much more aware and focused on UX.”

## Insight and value

Nicola Thompson summarises, “We’ve tried a number of ways of getting feedback on prototypes, but nothing has given us anything like the kind of value we’ve got from structured, managed user research sessions. Even if you can’t afford to do it very often, a single project gives you so much insight.”

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