The Importance of the Management Perspective in the Human-Computer Interaction Field

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 Abstract

We explore the roles and the importance of having a management community inside the Human-Computer Interaction field and inside the large CHI community. We believe that the management community keeps the broad HCI field in touch with the strategic and managerial values of HCI research and practice. It can be an effective advocate and bridge for bringing the importance of HCI research and practice to the strategic and managerial levels of organizations, thus HCI work can have bigger and broader impact on people, organizations, and societies. We call for additional energy, effort, and participation to the management community.

Keywords

Management perspective, strategic value, interdisciplinary, disciplinary advancement

ACM Classification Keywords

A.0. General

Introduction

The importance of HCI (including human-centeredness, usability, human factors, user experience, and design)

issues and concerns to the success of businesses, management, and organizations has been acknowledged to some extent by both researchers and practitioners. However, there are still many challenges that need to be addressed in order to really make HCI an integral part of success factors for businesses and organizations. For example, HCI professionals often play marginal roles in technology and product development and management efforts; human-centeredness is normally not a focus of middle and top management concern; and we often train HCI professionals as technical problem-solvers, rather than strategic thinkers with managerial potentials.

The CHI community has realized the importance of identifying and addressing the managerial related issues and challenges. Over the past several years, the annual CHI conferences have had a management community as an integral part of the conferences. It has attracted a good number of submissions and participations from people both inside and outside the large CHI community. Some of the highlighted activities with a managerial perspective during the recent CHI conferences include:

- a panel discussing the value of ROI issues in usability [4],
- a course on re-positioning user experience as a strategic process [6],
- an interactive session on usability from CIO's perspective [5],
- a SIG session on producing human-centered, usability-sensitive, and HCI competent managers, CIOs, and CEOs [22],
- a SIG of the management community [11],

- a management experience report on the internal consultancy model for strategic UXD relevance [17],
- a management experience report on fast-tracking product innovation [1],
- a panel on using rhetoric and argumentation to promote UCD [12],
- a panel on design, marketing, strategy - where does user research belong [19],
- a panel on what would you do with a 1 million dollar user experience marketing budget? [13], and
- courses on usability & product development with some emphasis on the strategic value of usability engineering [14-16].

The review of the current management community activities indicates that there are definitely awareness and synergies. Yet compared to the activities and coverage of other communities at CHI conferences, the management community related activities and coverage are light and small. This indicates a strong need for additional efforts to generate more awareness, strategies, tactics and actual actions. If we ourselves are not concerned enough about the strategic values and significance of HCI research and practice, how can we expect others to care?

It is a healthy strategy to work jointly with other related fields and associations that have overlapping concerns, unique expertise, and willingness to collaborate rather than to try to figure out all the related issues and potential solutions alone. Although these fields and associations may have different emphases or different takes on HCI related issues [9, 10], it is advantageous to build on the synergies and

overlaps among these fields and associations and benefit from the different perspectives and expertise.

For example, the Association for Information Systems (AIS, http://home.aisnet.org/) has a special interest group on Human-Computer Interaction SIGHCI (http://sigs.aisnet.org/sighci/) that shares many of the similar concerns with the large CHI community [24]. Yet it has a unique managerial, business and organizational spin [26] that positions it well with bridging the HCI research and practice with the strategic and managerial implications and considerations in organizations [21, 23] and advocate the importance of HCI issues to organizations and management. AIS SIGHCI has involved many CHI community members in its conferences, debates, and publications [2, 3, 7, 8, 18, 20, 25]. These efforts have yielded fruitful results that enhanced the perspectives and advancement of the HCI research in the AIS community. The CHI community could also benefit from AIS and other related fields and associations by proactively involving them. Such attitude and effort will not threaten the identity of the HCI discipline. On the contrary, they will advance the field, and enrich its interdisciplinary perspectives and impacts on people, organizations, and societies.

The management community of CHI conferences is an effective forum to bring in other related fields and associations to enhance the managerial perspective of HCI research and practice. We hope to continue explore and advance our understandings and develop actionable solutions concerning HCI's roles in management and organizations, and the management of HCI research and practice.

Discussion Questions

We plan to have a brainstorming session to focus on but not limited to the following issues:

- Making top management realize and incorporate the HCI perspective into corporate strategic planning and management
- Strategies and tactics for investment in HCI
- Integrating HCI in product innovation, definition, development, deployment, and management.
- Investigating HCI issues and concerns in the business, managerial and organizational contexts
- Managing HCI research and practice, especially in a global environment
- Training future managers, CEOs and CIOs to be human-centered and HCI competent

Target Audience

Addressing the above mentioned issues and challenges requires a collaborative effort from people with various background, experience, interests, and positions. We call for scholars and educators in different disciplines, HCI practitioners and professionals in various industries, managers of HCI projects, and people in various managerial positions of organizations where HCI plays important roles. We welcome anyone interested in the above issues to come and join us to share your opinions and wisdom.

Expected Outcomes

We anticipate developing a list of ideas and actionable suggestions for the management community to continue in future years, either at the CHI conferences or as research and practice projects.

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