

## Usability Report

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Date: March 16, 2003

To: Judy Ramey

From: Jill Stutzman

Re: \*\*\*\*\*.com Redeeming Gift Certificates Usability Study

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### Summary

This study was a two participant pilot study, testing issues related to redeeming gift certificates at \*\*\*\*\*.com. “Web-savvy” participants used their own accounts, real gift certificates and the live \*\*\*\*\*.com site.

The following issues were investigated:

- Terminology: Do users’ conceptions/assumptions of relevant terms e.g. “redeem” allow them to complete basic tasks?
- Basic Task Performance: Are there any problems with basic task performance of which we are not aware?
- Error Messages: After receiving an error message, can the user complete the task currently being attempted without additional signs of confusion or mistakes?
- (Lack of) Feedback: Do users re-attempt tasks that have already been completed? Do users claim to be done with a task when they are not?

The following findings were obtained:

- Users do not understand the word “redeem” as it used on the site.
- Users will attempt to purchase disallowed items (from third-party merchants etc.) with a GC.
- Users may eventually understand that there are items offered thru \*\*\*\*\* that they cannot buy using GC funds, but will have difficulty identifying which items those are.
- Users can successfully perform the sequence of actions required to use a gift certificate when attempting to purchase an allowed item from \*\*\*\*\*.com.
- Users will be surprised that a GC is saved just by entering it; this functionality has the potential to cause problems later.

\* A bug prevented adequate testing of error messages. Questionnaire results pertaining to error messages are of no value, as an incorrect error message was displayed.

## **Background**

The study was conducted at the University of Washington technical communication usability lab (LUTE), using the live \*\*\*\*\*.com site, T1 Internet connection, Internet Explorer, Windows XP. Participants used their own \*\*\*\*\*.com accounts and printouts of real email gift certificates. Studies ran on 3/3 and 3/10.

Participants were shown the lab set up, given think aloud warm up exercises and asked to do a series of scenario-based tasks (Appendix B) during which they were asked to think aloud. They were asked to fill out short questionnaires after task 2 and after completing the entire study. Lastly they were interviewed face-to-face. Data collected included: time on task, participant verbalizations, user actions, types of errors, hints given.

Participant 1 was a 30 year old training manager, working at a large software development company who had been using the Web for over 5 years, and had used a promotional code at \*\*\*\*\* once before. He had not used online gift certificates or promotional codes at any other site.

Participant 2 was a 34 year old dance instructor and family advocate (social work, parent education) who had been using the Web for over 5 years and had not used gift certificates or promotional codes at \*\*\*\*\*.com. She had used gift certificates/promotional codes at numerous other sites including NetFlix, Discount Dance Supply and HomeGrocer.com

## **Key Findings**

1a. Users will attempt to purchase disallowed (third-party merchant, etc.) items using a GC.

When asked to find items to purchase with their GCs (task 1), both participants selected items from the Apparel section. Neither read the explanatory text on the GC that indicates a GC can't be used toward certain purchases. Participant 2 never read the text by the GC entry field on the "Pay" page in the order pipeline that describes some of the GC rules; Participant 1 only read this after several errors.

Recommendation: Prevent the user from attempting to use GC funds when they cannot be used.

- When not applicable, disable checkbox to apply already redeemed GC funds. (*See pict.*)
- Disable GC entry field when not applicable. This would involve having separate entry fields for gift certificates and promotional codes, since it is possible to have valid promotional codes when a GC can't be used. (*See pict.*)

\* These solutions address the problem in its entirety only when all items in the shopping cart are disallowed.

You have \$10.00 in gift certificates or promotional credit available for use toward this purchase. Would you like to apply it?

### Do you have a gift certificate or promotional claim code?

If you have more than one gift certificate, click the "Enter another" button. If not, click the Continue button below.

Enter Gift Certificate code:

Enter Promotional code:

If your gift certificate or promotional claim code doesn't cover the cost of your order, we will use the card you enter above for the balance. (You may not pay by check in this case.) [Find out more about gift certificates](#)

Recommendation: Include noticeable info about GCs near payment areas and GC entry fields.

- Make "Find out more about Gift Certificates" link on the "Pay" page more noticeable. Perhaps rename this link.
- Grey out or hide "Gift Certificate" under "Payment Method" on the "Place Order" page when not applicable. (See pict.)
- Include info in Order Summary pane on the "Place Order" page that indicates GC funds are deposited, but not available toward this purchase. E.g. "Gift Certificate funds cannot be applied to some items in this order." (See pict.)

1b. Even after realizing they can't buy certain items using a GC, users will be uncertain which items those are.

By the end of the study Participant 1 understood there were certain items he could not buy using a GC. He described these as "any item not sold directly by \*\*\*\*\*," but admitted he did not know how to tell which items those were. After reviewing the site he concluded the "Seller" info on the detail page was the key, but that he had originally thought that info was present simply to promote that seller. (Note: During the writing of this report, "Seller" was changed to "Offered by," which is used for both GC (e.g. games) and non-GC allowed items, making Participant 1's conclusions incorrect.)

During task 5, participant 1 read the text on the "Pay" page stating "**Please note:** Gift certificates can be applied only to items shipping from \*\*\*\*\*.com. Promotional coupons cannot be applied to Marketplace items. Gift cards cannot be applied to orders containing Marketplace items or to orders shipped outside the United States." and then incorrectly assumed this meant the pen from Office Depot he was attempting to buy was a marketplace item.

#### Order Summary

Items:	\$2.99
Shipping & Handling:	\$4.99
Total Before Tax:	\$7.98
Estimated Tax*:	\$0.69

**Order Total: \$8.67**

[How do I qualify for free Super Saver Shipping?](#)

**Gift Certificate funds cannot be applied to some items in this order.**

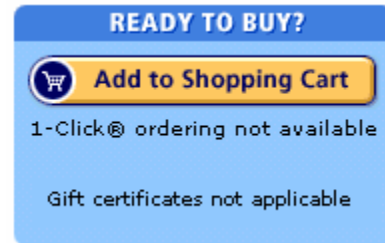
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**Have a gift certificate, promotional code or gift card?**  
Enter them here (one at a time):

**Payment Method:**  
  
Gift Certificate  
Visa: \*\*\* 12345  
Exp: 02/2005

Recommendation: Make it more obvious while browsing which items can be purchased with a GC, and which cannot.

- Include text on the detail page that indicates they cannot use GC funds to pay for this item, for example, in the “Ready to Buy” pane, where other messages such as “no gift wrap or gift messaging available...” are placed. (*See pict.*)
- Consider alternate graphic identity for pages that offer non-GC items, similar to Z-shop pages.



Recommendation: Do not depend on ambiguous/unintuitive terms such as “marketplace item” to identify what items can and can’t be purchased with GC funds.

Recommendation: Suggest that any error message include a link to further information clarifying how to discern a disallowed item. E.g. “What can’t I buy with my gift certificate?”

\* A bug prevented the correct error message for this scenario from being displayed during the study. We have no idea if current wording is helpful or not.

2a. Users do not expect a GC to be saved simply by entering it during the checkout process.

2b. A GC will not be saved this way if only disallowed items are in the shopping cart, but the user will not know this, due to lack of feedback.

Both participants were surprised to find that their GCs had been saved after entering a GC code, but then abandoning an order (task 3). Having learned to save a GC in this manner, Participant 2 attempted to save a GC (task 4) by “pretending” to buy an item and then abandoning the order. However, as she was attempting to buy a disallowed item this did not work. Since there is no feedback to indicate the success or failure of saving a GC this way, the participant mistakenly believed she had successfully completed the task. If this scenario had happened in real life, she may have then thrown away a hard copy GC, or deleted an email GC, and thus lost her funds completely.

Recommendation: Since users do not initially expect the GC to be saved this way, and doing so can cause confusion in later scenarios and possibly loss of funds, consider removing this functionality. If significant development effort is required, recommend further testing to discover the frequency of this problem.

2c. On the “Pay” page, users may re-enter a GC code despite seeing that the checkbox is marked. They will not understand why they receive an error message.

Participant 2 re-entered the GC code on the “Pay” page, even though she saw the checkbox to apply funds and noted that it was checked (task 5). She thus received the

error message explaining the GC had already been deposited, but was confused because the error message text did not seem to match up with what the checkbox was telling her. She seemed to perceive entering the code as a valid way to “use” the GC, whether or not it had already been redeemed.

Recommendation: This behavior is probably an artifact of the GC “accidentally” being saved. A user intentionally saving a GC for future use is probably doing so to avoid having to type it in at a later date. Following the recommendation for 2a and 2b should then address the problem.

### 3. Users do not expect to have to go to My Account to access personal GC info.

Participant 2 went looking in her Shopping cart for some way to save her GC for later (task 4). Although correctly going to “My Account” in task 4 to save a GC; in task 5, participant 1 wanted to see a GC balance in the order summary pane on the final page of checkout, even after realizing it couldn’t be applied to that order.

Recommendation: Consider redesigning the “Place Order” page to include more general payment info, including GC balance and status (whether or not GC can be applied).

Recommendation: Consider making “my account” info easily accessible from pages in the order pipeline. Seeing the link in that context may initiate an association.

### 4. Users do not understand “redeem” as it is used on the site.

Note the responses in the post-test questionnaire found on page 7.

Recommendation: Avoid using “redeem.” Use “deposit,” “save,” “apply” instead.

Recommendation: Modify the \*\*\*\*\* meaning to be more inline with users’ assumptions.

### **Other Findings**

*Users will be annoyed at having to re-login while going through checkout multiple times in one “sitting.”* Both participants referred to this as having to “enter my damn password again.”

*Users will be unsure in what format they must enter GC codes.* Participant 1 questioned whether or not he had to enter the code using capital letters. Participant 2 questioned whether or not she needed to enter the hyphens. This confusion may only be limited to hard copy GCs.

*Users may be confused as to why the sequence of pages they encounter during checkout varies even though they are attempting the same task.* Participant 2 stated that she “didn’t know why it did that.”

*Users may not understand the difference between a promotional code and a regular gift certificate, or to tell which one they have.* Participant 2 read the text next to the GC entry field on the “Pay” page expressed confusion as to whether or not he had a promotional gift certificate.

### **Test Suggestions**

The specification for gift certificate pages and known bugs should be reviewed prior to the study being planned. This will allow for a better-designed study as well as minimizing the amount of feedback received that is actually quality assurance data on bugs, rather than usability data on the intended UI.

As there are known bugs associated with entering the same GC code multiple times, ample GC codes should be made available for testing tasks while designing the study. Or a stable prototype environment should be used.

After each task that traps the participant into encountering an error message, administer post-task questionnaire to capture perception of that particular error message, rather than a general question about all error messages post-test.

The test directed the participants in two ways that may affect the data:

1. In task 2, users were specifically asked to find the total including shipping charges, and then abandon the order. From this, users may have learned to look in this area for feedback. If they had not been prompted to look in this area, they may not have done so in future tasks. This was done to trap the user into “accidentally” redeeming a GC, and to see if this caused confusion for the user on. Recommend varying the task order for future participants, or running two sets of tests.
2. The favorites list was pre-populated with items that the user was asked to purchase during the study. In an attempt at clarity, these favorites were named differently than the \*\*\*\*\* detail page title. One of the items was renamed “Zebra Pen from Office Depot” which turned out to be a big clue for Participant 1 that this was the reason the GC funds were not being applied. This was done intentionally because it was assumed that had the user chosen to buy this item, he would have realized the pen was from Office Depot when he decided to purchase it. This assumption should be tested however, as the seller info on the page is significantly less obvious than how it appeared in the favorites list. This is especially important as data suggests the user does not understand the relevance of seller info when using GC until \*after\* he has received an error message.

Additional efforts should be made to ascertain how often certain scenarios occur. We know users will attempt to buy items from third-party merchants using GC. Recommend logging frequency that this particular error message occurs to gain insight into extent of problem.

More testing with multiple items in shopping cart – what do users expect to see when some items are \*\*\*\*\* items, some are third-party items.

Participants were confused by “blank book,” they did not initially understand what they were being asked to buy. Recommend choosing a less ambiguous item for them to purchase.

### **Questionnaire Responses**

1 = answer of participant 1

2 = answer of participant

#### *Post-task (after task 2 only) Questionnaire*

I found the process of using a gift certificate easy.

- 2 Strongly agree
- 1 Somewhat agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Compared to using a credit card only to purchase items, I found using a gift certificate more difficult.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- 2 1 Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I found the process of using a gift certificate took too much time.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- 1 Slightly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- 2 Strongly disagree

*Post-test Questionnaire*

I found the error messages I encountered helpful.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I didn't encounter any error messages.

I found the error messages I encountered confusing.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I didn't encounter any error messages.

If I "redeem" a gift certificate I am:

- Using it to pay for a purchase.
- Saving the code and amount in "My Account."
- Neither of these.
- Both of these.
- I don't know.

\* Participant 2 read through all of the choices then chose "Using it to pay for a purchase." She then read through everything again and chose "I don't know," but did not cross out her first answer.

## APPENDIX A

### Participant Profile

People usually receive GC as gifts because they themselves are familiar with the store or because the person buying the GC for them is familiar with the store. Given this, it is expected that the people receiving GCs to \*\*\*\*\* are likely to have purchased things before, or have been given the GC by someone familiar with \*\*\*\*\* , and can be an \*\*\*\*\*-savvy resource for them.

The study will focus on users who:

- Are web-savvy:
  - Have been online for at least 2 years.
  - Are online at least once a week.
  - Have an e-mail account.
- Have visited \*\*\*\*\*.com at least 2 times.
- Have an existing account with \*\*\*\*\*.com.

## APPENDIX B

### Task List

#### Task 1

It is your birthday and you have received a gift certificate to \*\*\*\*\*.com from your friend, Sue. She can't keep a secret to save her life, and mentions that some of your other friends are also getting you gift certificates to \*\*\*\*\*.com.

- Take up to 20 minutes to find several items you would like to buy with your expected gift certificates that fit the following criteria:
  1. A non-book item for under \$20
  2. A non-book item for under \$50
  3. A non-book item for under \$100
- Choose items you would buy in real life.
- Save the url for the detail page of each item in the Favorites menu of Internet Explorer.

#### Task 2

You decide to go ahead and buy something with the gift certificate you have already received from your best friend.

- Begin the purchasing process for the blank book (green) you have saved in your Favorites menu.
- Make sure your gift certificate funds have been included in your total, but do not complete the purchase transaction.

**Task 3**

After checking your total, you suddenly remember you told your significant other to buy the blank book in green for you for your birthday. Lucky you caught yourself in time!

- Delete this item from your shopping cart.
- Using your gift certificate, purchase the blank book (black) saved in your favorites menu.

**Task 4**

One of the other gift certificates you have been expecting has arrived! ...But you don't have the time to buy any more items right now. Your desk is a mess and before you lose it, you want to save your gift certificate information somewhere safe.

- Save this gift certificate for later.

**Task 5**

In all the excitement of your own birthday, you realize you've forgotten that it is also your sister-in-law's birthday. You remember that your sister-in-law wanted a BIC Zebra pen; an item that you have already saved in your Favorites list.

- Use the second gift certificate you received to purchase this item.
- Have the item sent to your address, no wrapping paper