


Plain Language: What's Next?

Panel for User Focus 2010
October 15, 2010



Evidence of Traction for Plain Language

- Plain Writing Act – passed by Congress!!
Signed into law by President Obama this week!
- Examples from federal and state government
and from business
- Occasional requirements for plain language
in RFPs and contracts

Supporting Organizations

- Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
www.plainlanguage.gov
- Center for Plain Language
www.centerforplainlanguage.org
- Plain Language Association InterNational
www.plainlanguagenetwork.org
- Clarity (promoting plain legal language)
www.clarity.org

Local Government Resources

- NIH's plain language program
(training and awards)
<http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/plainlanguage.htm>
- Guidance on plain language in health communication
<http://www.health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>
- Guidance on usability
www.usability.gov

Objectives for this Panel

- Describe some success stories
- Provide perspective on the implications of recent signs of traction
- Offer opinions on “what’s next”
- Tell us what usability practitioners should be doing to further the cause

The Panel

Dick Horst, UserWorks, Inc. (moderator)

- **Charlene Haykel**
 - The Haykel Group, NYC
Specializing in effectively communicating complex information to lay audiences; focus on financial communications
- **Ginny Redish**
 - Redish & Associates, Inc
Active in plain language for more than 30 years
Letting Go of the Words: Writing Web Content that Works
- **Kathryn Summers**
 - Summers Consulting and University of Baltimore’s program in Interaction Design and Information Architecture
Co-author of *Creating Websites That Work*

Questions and Discussion Points

- Is "plain language" mostly about language? Is it about document design? Is it about understanding your audience? Is it about other factors?
- Cost: What evidence is there that plain language saves money or increases revenue or has other benefits that justify costs?
- Does writing in plain language help low-literacy readers? Does it harm or bother high-literacy readers?
- What's next in plain language and what should we be doing to further the cause?

• **SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND EXAMPLES**

Results Can Be Dramatic: Example 1 (2003)

	Site 1	Site 2	Improvement
High-lit users ToT	14:19	5:05	+182%
Low-lit users ToT	22:16	9:30	+134%
Time-on-Task (ToT)	17:50	6:45	+164%
High-lit users SR	68%	93%	+37%
Low-lit users SR	46%	82%	+77%
Success Rate (SR)	59%	89%	+52%
High-lit users SS	3.73	4.58	+23%
Low-lit users SS	3.54	4.38	+24%
Subjective Satisfaction (SS)	3.67	4.51	+23%

*Summers, and Summers (2003), Usability Professional's Association, Montreal, Clear-Health Communication on the Web: Making Medical Content Accessible to Users

Example 2 – Performance Comparison (2007):

	Old	New	% Change
Errors	6.6	3.4	48%
Skipped Fields	7.7	3.5	54%
Time-on-Task (TOT)	0:10:45	0:12:24	-15%
Satisfaction (SUS)	75.1	80.6	7%

Values stated are averages over all participants

Acceptable apps are those eligible for a "first fill" without additional follow-up:

Acceptable Apps	3	22	633%
Acceptable Apps without proof of income	6	35	483%

Values stated are total counts of acceptable forms

WAC 296-800-23065

Provide showers when required for employees working with chemicals

You must:

- Provide showers for employees if:
 - - They work with chemicals that could cause an occupational illness;
 - **AND**
 - - The chemicals remain on the skin between work shifts.
- Make sure employees who work with such chemicals shower at the end of their shifts.
 - - Make sure showers have:
 - Soap or other cleansing agents.
 - Hot and cold water with a common discharge line
 - - Provide individual, clean towels for each employee who is required to shower.
- Provide at least one shower for every ten employees (or every fraction of 10) of each gender.

Note:

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/wisha/rules/corerules/HTML/296-800-230.htm#WAC296-800-23005>

PREMIUM INVOICE Page 1 of 2

Account No: 051199-01-0001
Due Date: June 25, 2008

COVENTRY Mutual Insurance Company
P.O. Box 290, Shoreline, WA 98148-0290

2 COVENTRY is pleased to make sure you ALWAYS TAKE AN AREAL 2882533 when you call us at 1-800-230-2300 to help you get the most out of your policy. For questions on this bill, please call Billie, our client.

Billie Services: 800.827.8284
Agent: NAIGHIN L. GRANT CMA 928.128.1182

STRINFELLOW CASSE #
401 W MAIN ST
SAFFORD AZ 85446-3754

Account Summary	Previous Balance as of 05/01/08	Payments & Credits	Previous Charge & Credits	Remaining Balance as of 06/01/08	Minimum Due by 06/25/08
	\$1,242.31	-\$221.20	1.95.00	=\$1,016.11	\$207.23

Payment Summary

05/05/08	PREVIOUS INVOICE AMOUNT	\$1,174.18			
06/02/08	PAYMENT RECEIVED - TRUSTEES	-\$221.20			
Account Summary					
Policy Term	Description	Premium Charge & Credits	Insuring Insureds	Balance 6/1/08	Minimum Due
05/01/08-05/31/08	AUTO INSURANCE		4	110.00	
05/01/08-11/28/08	PLUMBING CONTRACTORS FARM POLICY				
	PLUMBING CONTRACTORS FARM POLICY				
	PLUMBING CONTRACTORS FARM POLICY				
05/01/08-05/31/08	AUTO INSURANCE		4	158.65	
05/01/08-11/28/08	PLUMBING CONTRACTORS FARM POLICY				

WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR AGENT ABOUT FINANCIAL SECURITY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAYMENT. SECURE THIS PORTION WITH YOUR CHECKS.

Account Total:	\$1,016.11
Minimum Due by June 25, 2008:	\$207.23
Amount Due to Coventry Mutual Insurance Company:	\$

5 051199-01-001 0506020223

Account Name: STRINFELLOW CASSE A
Account Number: 051199-01-0001
Please include the account number with your payment.

For change of address, please write the reverse side.

ABOUT YOUR ACCOUNT INVOICE

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO YOU: Payment will be applied to your account in the following order:

- Installment Charge and Applicable Fee
- Past Due Balance
- Current Due Balance (in a general liability regardless of the policy effective date)

Remember to allow ample mail time for your payment to reach our payment-processing center. Payments made in your agent's office will not post until received in our payment-processing center.

IMPORTANT TERMS FOR YOU TO KNOW:

ACCOUNT RENEWAL: This invoice is sent to you by mail with a copy of the policy. It is your responsibility to review the policy and make sure you understand the terms and conditions. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you do not receive your policy, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent.

PREMIUM PAYMENT: The amount of your premium is based on the information you provided on your application. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent.

INSURANCE COVERAGE: The amount of your insurance coverage is based on the information you provided on your application. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent. If you have any questions, please call your agent.

2008 Annual Meeting: The 2008 Annual Meeting is on June 25, 2008, at 10:00 A.M., 1700 Yorkville Ave., Shoreline, WA 98148.

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Content Disposition

Deleted

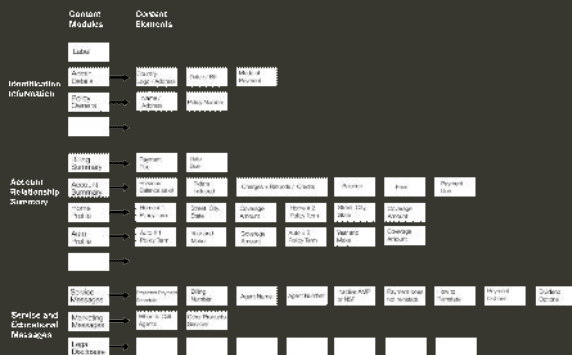
Reason

Health Premium	"Message regarding your health insurance" It is a "bill." Coverage Description: 25 Check No/Amount/Date Paid Fields Customer has check/money order as receipt "Keep top portion for your records." HEALTH label	Unclear Unclear to customer Unhelpful Unhelpful/obvious Unhelpful to customer
P/C Premium Bill	Account Number – last 8 digits Six-digit Auto ID # Policy Effective Date Activity Summary Bar Premium Charges and Credits Column Amount Due Column Retain: <i>Policy/Term & Description</i> EFF Date	Number inoperative Unhelpful Redundant Redundant
P/C Premium Stub	"We appreciate your business" "Please contact your agent..." "Thank you for payment." "Please mail early..." Account Payoff	Redundant Unhelpful Unhelpful Unhelpful Redundant
P/C Premium Back	Account Number – last 8 digits "Remember to allow ample mailing time..." Retain: "Payment made in your agent's office..." Important terms for you to know Reworked in updated language and design	Number inoperative Unhelpful Unhelpful
P/C Commercial Farm	Account Number – last 8 digits Payment Summary Remaining Installments in Term Auto ID #s Stub: Account Payoff	Number inoperative Redundant Unhelpful Unhelpful Redundant

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Premium Notice: Property Casualty




Premium Notice: Property Casualty (STUB)



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AUTO/HOME INSURANCE INVOICE



Policyholder
JANE DOE
131 FIELD GROVE, CT
ANYCITY, IL 60000-0000

COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company*
P.O. Box 2100, Bloomington, IL 61702-2100

YOUR INVOICE SUMMARY

Billed last payment period 11/09/08	\$501.43
Amount received 11/14/08 Thank you	485.89
<hr/>	
PAYMENT DUE	
Unpaid balance 11/17/08	\$15.54
Auto payment due	153.22
Home payment due	48.75
Payment plan fee (quarterly)	2.00
Amount due by 12/09/08	\$219.51

Invoice Date: November 17, 2008
Account Number: 10000000


Due Date: December 9, 2008

Amount Due \$219.51

COUNTRY* Financial representative
Pam Hess LUTCF
www.countryfinancial.com/pam.hess

Auto Invoice:
Policy summary and stub

AUTO/HOME INSURANCE INVOICE



Policyholder: JANE DOE
Account Number: 10000000

COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company*
P.O. Box 2100
Bloomington, IL 61702-2100
(continued on reverse invoice stub)

\$219.51 Amount due by December 9, 2008

Amount enclosed

\$

Payment must be received by December 14, 2008 to avoid **\$15.00 late fee.**

Make check payable to:
COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company
Write your account number on your check.
DO NOT write messages on the back of the stub.

Change in contact information?
Complete reverse side to change your contact information.

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YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW...

... ABOUT YOUR FUTURE BILLING SCHEDULE

Due date

000000	0018 07	
000000	48 75	
000000	48 75	

Future payments may vary from what is listed here because of policy renewals and additional product purchases or changes you make to your insurance coverage or terms.

... ABOUT EXTRA FEES

Payment plan fee: You should know that paying your premium more frequently within a policy term will cost you more. Choosing a less frequent payment plan will make you eligible for a better premium rate and you pay no fee.

	Fee	Annual total
Quarterly payment	\$2	\$6
Monthly payment	\$3	\$36
Automatic monthly payment	\$1	\$12

Late payment fee: We attach a **\$15 late fee** to your next invoice when payments are received 5 days or more after the due date.

Returned bank item fee: For each unpaid item returned by your bank, we charge you **\$25**.

... ABOUT HOW WE APPLY YOUR PAYMENT

We apply your payment to your balance in the following way:

First: to extra fees (if any)

Next: to past due balances (if any)

Then: to current billed items, proportionate to the amount of your policies.

... ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF NON PAYMENT

If your payment is not received by the due date, cancellation activities for non-payment will be initiated and additional fees may be assessed.

... ABOUT OUR ANNUAL MEETING

The 2009 annual meeting for COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company* is April 19th at 1:00 pm, 1701 Towards Ave., Bloomington, Illinois.

... ABOUT YOUR RECEIPT

This notice and your bank statement or money order stub will serve as your receipt for your payment.

Auto Invoice:
Additional legal information and back of stub

CHANGE OF CONTACT INFORMATION

If your billing address, shown on the invoice, is incorrect or has changed, please provide correct address below.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ E-MAIL _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PERSONAL PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

For office use only: 10000000-001-00001 JANE DOE
A100000000 A100000000 A100000000 A100000000 12095713485

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