

# “Rocket Surgery Made Easy”, how to integrate usability tests into agile software development

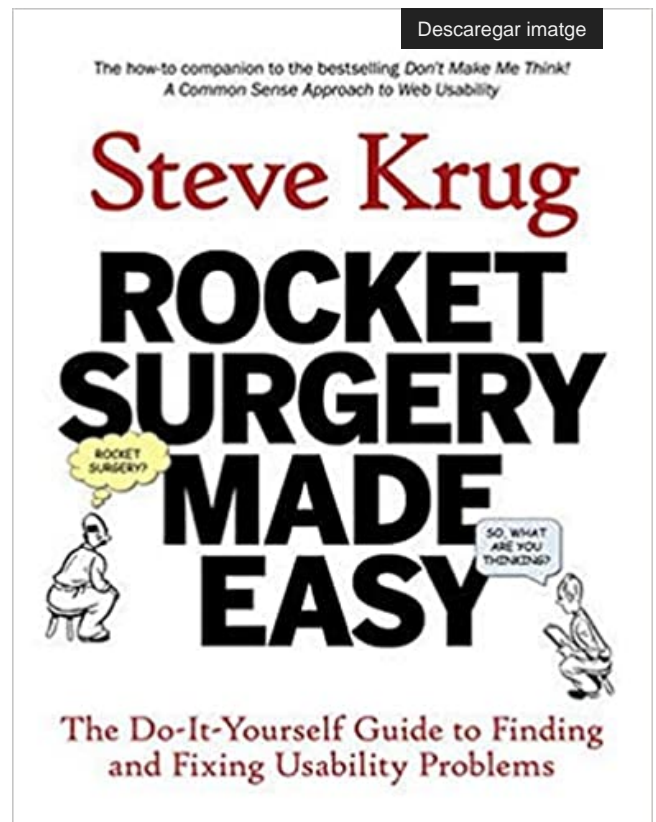
I've dedicated part of my '11 summer time reading [Steve Krug's book “Rocket Surgery Made Easy”](#) [ <http://www.rocketurgerymadeeasy.com/> ]; I found it so wonderful that I enthusiastically recommend its lecture and I'll spread up with are (for me) the most outstanding points.

## Usability Testing definition:

*watching people try to use what you're creating/designing/building (or something you've already created/designed/built), with the intention of (a) making it easier for people to use or (b) providing that it is easy to use.*

Steve argues that, what he explains in the book works because (p16-17):

- all sites have problems,
- most of the serious problems tend to be easy to find, and
- watching users makes you a better designer.
  - (my) highlight: even though terms like “user centered design” and “user experience” are now in the vocabulary of most people working on Web sites, **relatively few designers, developers, stakeholders, managers, and check-signers have actually spent any time watching how people use Web sites.** As a result, we end up designing for our abstract idea of users, based for the most part on ourselves.



When asking for the utility of data gathered with Web Analytics tools (p18-19),

*... they are useful but, ... they can't tell you why they're (the users) doing those things.*

[DEMO TEST VIDEO](#) [ <https://youtu.be/QckIzHC99Xc> ]

## A morning a month, that's all we ask

>> See [interesting table in p25](#) showing differences between “The Big Honkin’ Tests” AND “Do-It-Yourself Testing” [ [http://books.google.es/books?id=9Q3OQVyX\\_-QC&lpg=PA24&ots=6FLQfEI0JY&dq=the%20big%20honkin%27%](http://books.google.es/books?id=9Q3OQVyX_-QC&lpg=PA24&ots=6FLQfEI0JY&dq=the%20big%20honkin%27%) ].

*Do-it-yourself testing doesn't do everything the Big Honkin' Test Does, but it produces the results you need at a price you can afford.*

Given the short cycles in [Agile software development methodologies](#) [ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile\\_software\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile_software_development) ] (sprints), if you wait a month the world will have passed you by. Perhaps it's more like “**A morning a sprint, that's all we ask**”.

Wasting (stakeholders, developers, managers, designers, ..) time looking a user test is useful because

*... you don't understand your users as well as you think you do.*

## Testing the sketch on the napkin (p34-36)

Napkin tests aren't full tests; they're like the Home page tour you saw me (Steve) do in the demo test video (see above).

- 5 minutes
- test with friends, neighbours, or anyone you run into
- NOT asking their opinion or feedback; ASKING them to look at the sketch and try to figure out ***WHAT THE THING IS.***

## Testing Wireframes (p36)

A wireframe is a schematic diagram of a page. Typically, it shows where different kinds of content will go, the relative prominence of things like headings, and navigation devices like menus and search.

## Testing page designs (p37)

Where wireframes focus on interaction, comps (visual treatments) focus on the visual design.

## And now, about testing with THE USERS:

(P41): two (great) sentences, two ideas to have in mind:

- *"People who presumably have domain knowledge don't always know what you think they know"*
- *"Many of the most serious usability problems have nothing to do with domain knowledge anyway; they're related to things like navigation, page layout, visual hierarchy, and so on -problems that almost nobody will encounter"*

## Three is enough (p43)

This part debates about one big usability users testing question, "how many participants do we need ??????" ... in the do-it-yourself method three is enough. It is because we're not interested in what it takes to uncover most of the problems; ***we only care about what it takes to uncover as many problems we can fix.***

## And, talking about some things for them to do (p52)

***"the trick is to make sure the tasks you test reflect your user's actual goals, not just your idea of what they want to do."***

And ... prepare extra tasks for people who finishes early !!!

## Make tasks into scenarios (p53)

- Scenario definition: ***"...script that the user can read, understand and follow."*** Scenario, also provides some context ("You are ...", "You need to ...") & information that users need to know, but doesn't (e.g., username and password for a test account). BUT **trim any detail that doesn't contribute.**

## Conducting the test session (chapter 8, p62-89).

ALL recommended, especially:

- The **Home Page Tour** (p75):
  - We are NOT asking for their personal opinion
  - 2 or 3 minutes
  - Scroll YES, click NO
- The **Tasks** (p76):
  - facilitator reads aloud the task, NOT the user.
  - when you (the facilitator) decide **it's time to move on?**
    - the task is completed
    - the participant is "miserable" (overrated, blocked, ...)
    - schedule has been exceeded
    - you do not learn anything new
  - DO NOT USE the searcher
- **Probing** (p78)
  - 5 minutes
  - AT THE END ... suggestions, ideas

**Facilitator recommendations:**

- Stay **neutral** (p82)
- **Handy chart** (p83-84): see below all the chart, it's excellent

[

[http://griho.blogs.udl.cat/files/2011/09/Things\\_a\\_therapist\\_would\\_say.jpg](http://griho.blogs.udl.cat/files/2011/09/Things_a_therapist_would_say.jpg) ]

With the do-it-yourself method

- **Pre & Post tests ARE NOT NEEDED** (p88)
- Krug recommendation: **DO NOT record user's face** (p89)

**Stakeholders, managers, developers, designers, editors, writers, ... all them should attend test sessions (chapter 9, p90-101)**

- Seeing is believing (p91)
  - watching usability tests in person is a transformative experience
  - most people think that all users are like them ... they're not like me, and in fact ***they are not like anybody***
- Observers will write down ***the three most important usability problems they saw in the session*** (p93)
- Instructions for Observers [Word](http://www.sensible.com/downloads/instructions-for-observers.doc) [ <http://www.sensible.com/downloads/instructions-for-observers.doc> ]  
[PDF](http://www.sensible.com/downloads/instructions-for-observers.pdf) [ <http://www.sensible.com/downloads/instructions-for-observers.pdf> ]

## **Debriefing meeting (p105)**

- Important problems?
  - will a lot of people experience this problem?
  - will it cause a serious problem?

## **Tips for success (p107-108)**

- After the debriefing, it's a good idea to ***summarize the testing in a short e-mail*** (short = 2 minute to read !!!)

## **Tweak, don't redesign (p114)**

[ <http://griho.blogs.udl.cat/files/2011/09/Tweak.jpg> ]

A **tweak** [ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tweaking> ] is a slight adjustment or modification, often one that requires a few rounds of trial and error to get it exactly right.

### **Tweaking process:**

1. Try a simple tweak first
2. If it doesn't work, try a stronger version of the same tweak
3. If the first tweak doesn't work, consider trying another
4. Always keep an eye out for unintended consequences.

## **Take something away (p117)**

The real problem very often is that there's already too much there. Most pages have all kinds of things that the user doesn't need: too many words, too many irrelevant pictures, too much decoration ... (too much NOISE).

## **The Big Bang Theory of Web Usability**

### ***Like real Big Bang, a lot happens in your first few seconds in a new web***

- recommended readings:
  - Lindgaard, G., Fernandes, G., Dudek, C. & Brown, J. (2006). Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression!, *Behaviour & Information Technology*. 25, 115-126 (awarded best paper for 2006, 25<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary of BIT)
  - <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/speed/tweak/blink> [ <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/speed/tweak/blink> ]

### ***Home Page tendency to deteriorate over time as stakeholders insist on adding things (p124)***

**This “small” personal contribution is only a “summary of this spectacular book !!!!”, please READ IT (Toni Granollers, 2010)**

