

Straight Talk

Suyog Ketkar for the STC India Annual Conference, 2015

Quick Look

- ▶ How much did we cover?
- ▶ What do we do today?
- ▶ What's the matter?
- ▶ The Torchbearers

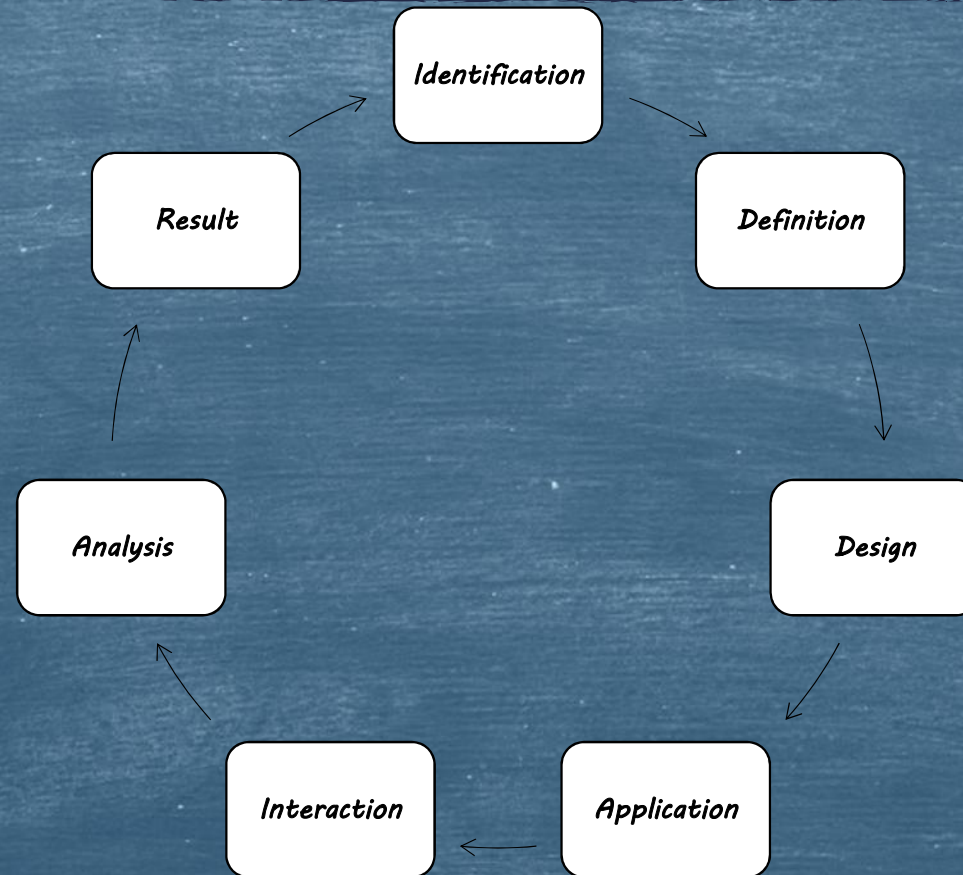
What's Information Design?

Information Design is **creating user-centered,**
visually-driven messages to help bring **clarity,** interest,
understanding, and **insights** about the information need.

How much did we cover?

- ▶ Attempt to improve information findability and information usability.
- ▶ Be a minimalist.
- ▶ Provide the information at the most obvious spot or in the most obvious way.
- ▶ Users are usually in a hurry.

How much did we cover?

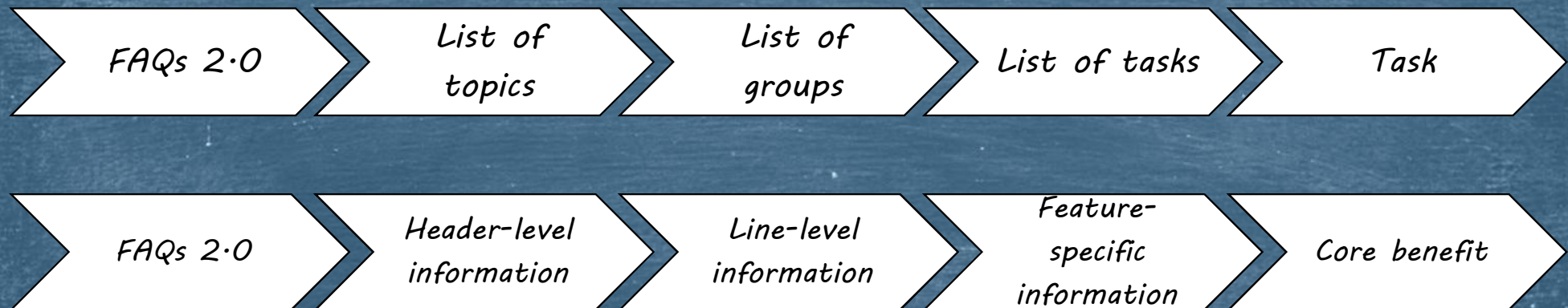


How much did we cover?

- ▶ Arrange controls to follow the flow of information.
- ▶ Arrange items alphabetically in dropdowns and in documents.
- ▶ Be creative in visualizing information.
- ▶ Categorize information in bulleted points or paragraphs of three to four lines.
- ▶ Follow Gestalt laws.

How much did we cover?

- ▶ When you give detailed information, they want a summary. And, when you summarize, they look for the details.



It's all about U and I

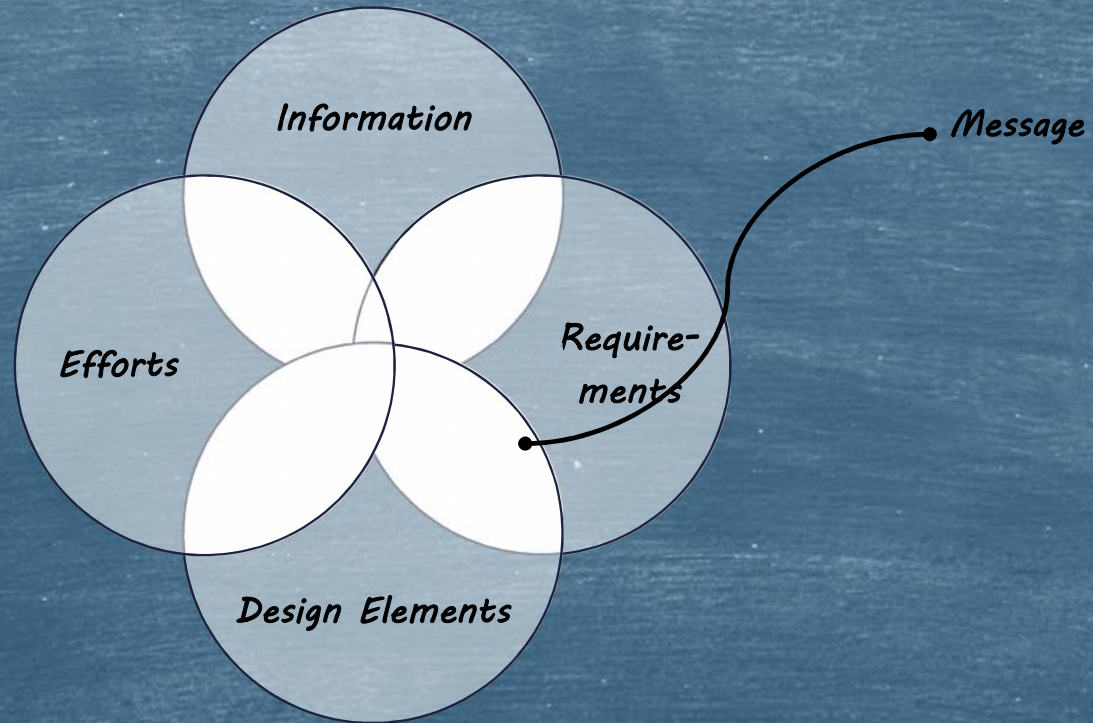
U

User
Utility
Understanding
Un-complication

I

Interest
Intuition
Interface
Information

Message: Where it all meets

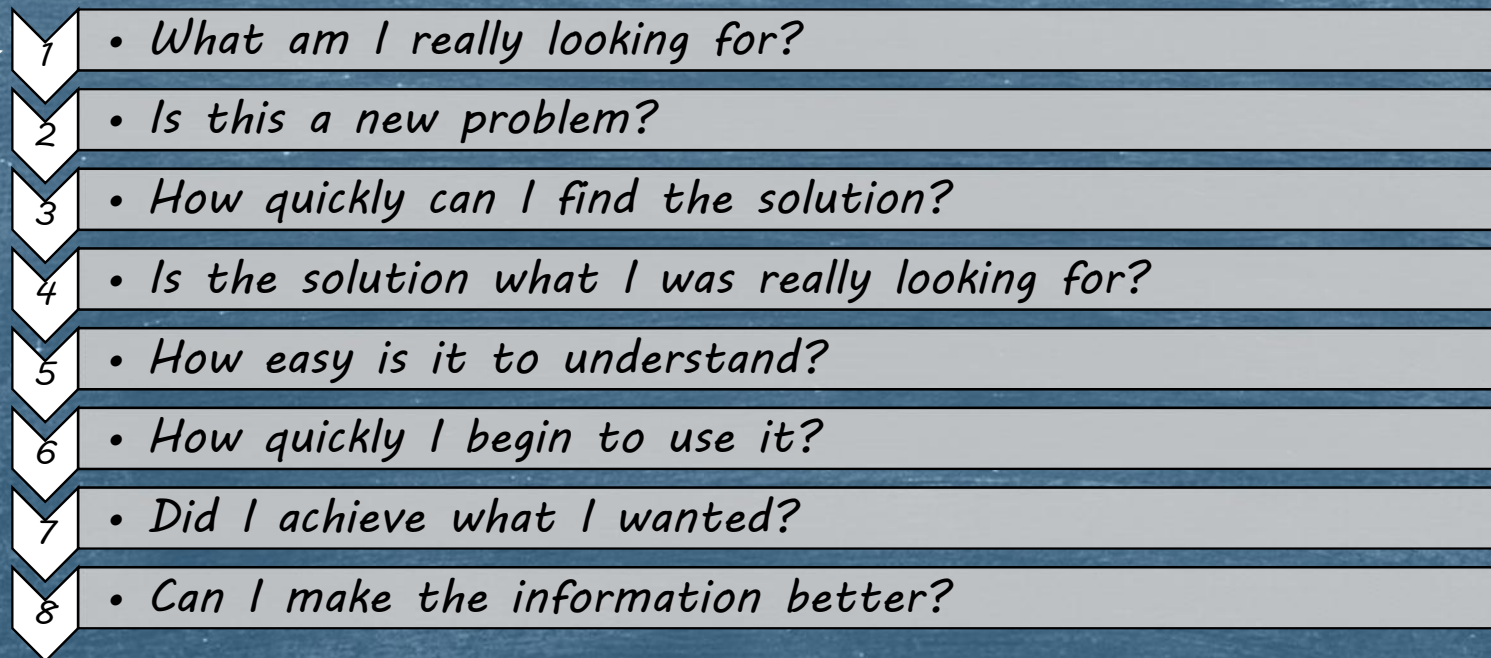


What do we do today?

Prepare instructions for an everyday task, such as changing the curtains of your home, changing the oil in your car, or folding and organizing clothes from your laundry basket. Now, use your technical writers' vision to see the effect of instructions on such tasks. This seems easy, now doesn't it.

Now, imagine that you were to switch roles with users. You play the user, and they write docs for you! Come up with broad-level guidelines to help them communicate information effectively.

What's the matter?

- 
- 1 • *What am I really looking for?*
 - 2 • *Is this a new problem?*
 - 3 • *How quickly can I find the solution?*
 - 4 • *Is the solution what I was really looking for?*
 - 5 • *How easy is it to understand?*
 - 6 • *How quickly I begin to use it?*
 - 7 • *Did I achieve what I wanted?*
 - 8 • *Can I make the information better?*

The Torchbearers

- ▶ Connect causes and effects. This connection helps users understand how or how much something affects them.
- ▶ Either make the information apparent or provide an explanation.
- ▶ Emphasize readability.
- ▶ Explain about the product. But, tell the users how they can benefit from it. They can read about the product features from a lot of other documents.

The Torchbearers

- ▶ Follow consistency, consistently.
- ▶ Good content doesn't have any substitute.
- ▶ Build boundaries and restrictions for your design: The design constraints help design better, and for the better.
- ▶ If it is hard to understand or figure out for you, none of your readers will get it.
- ▶ Interweave the content and design elements. The users rate the overall content experience, and not the individual content tidbits.

The Torchbearers

- ▶ Make things easy for the users: Reduce their cognitive load.
- ▶ Purpose, which is a combination of need, interests, intuitions, and wants, is a moving target. The same user may repeatedly look for the same information tidbit, but for different purposes.
- ▶ The correctness of your design-related predictions is directly proportion to the accuracy of your understanding of the users' requirements.
- ▶ There is no "right" way. But, there sure are a lot of "wrong" ways.

The Torchbearers

- ▶ Too many cooks spoil the broth: Either reduce the number of writers or fix their responsibilities and accountabilities.
- ▶ Usability and depth of information are two separate things. One should not come at the cost of the other.
- ▶ Users learn through interest, intuition, and experimentation, gut, and later experience.
- ▶ Users skip what's hard to figure out. Make stuff easy for them.

Thank you 😊