

Expert review of Note Everything by ATM

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In this report we will be reviewing the android application Note Everything as available in the Google Appstore. This report will be a review based on the article on heuristic evaluations by Jakob Nielsen. The application has been used by multiple evaluators and they have noted the problems they encountered while using the application on their personal android smartphone. The goal of this report is to unveil certain flaws within the application so that they may be altered to give the user a more efficient and or pleasured experience while using the application.

The application itself is used to store selfmade notes in the form of Drawings, Voice messages and Text notes. This application is meant to make, alter, store, manage and view notes and by these means help the user remember, store, manage or list certain memories, thoughts, events, dates, cenarios, or objects.

The target audience for this application is meant for the big public. It is a simple, multitasking application that can be used by almost all people and be used for a wide spread of tasks. The only audience that isn't part of the target audience are people with disabilities causing them to not be able to use the touch screen properly, not see the screen properly, not easily understand the working of applications, or not being able to understand/process the information provided by the application.

Persona profiles:

Annie:

A slightly childish highschool girl who forgets quite a lot, therefor she uses Note Everything. Besides that she likes to draw little things, and record some things. Furthermore, Annie has little experience with technology besides what her friends taught her. (Like WhatsApp and other popular smartphone applications)

William:

A middle aged business man, very busy with work but likes to stay up to date with the latest gadgets. He uses Note Everything to remember all odds and ends. He rarely uses the draw function but when he does he uses it to remember a logo and makes a shortcut for it.

The review was done by 2 evaluators in the same scenario which is everyday use of the app for remembering things. The evaluators used the application and wrote down their findings individually and these were combined by a seperate person. They used the application during the day in a mildly populated room. They were not supervised and were not helped by anyone during their usage of the application since the target audience also doesnot have this when using the application, and the evaluators have as much inside information or background information about the application as the target audience. The phones used by the evaluators were one high-end HTC phone and a low-end Samsung phone. The phones were not used for other uses during the evaluation and it was made sure that the phone was in a state as the target audience would mostlikely would have their phone in so not fully charged and not almost empty and the phone has been on and was being used before the usage of the application.

Findings:

Within the creation of altering of a drawing not al icons do what one would expect such as a paint bucket that clears the entire screen and a pencil apearing when you are using the eraser. The application doesn't use the backbutton on the phone optimal as it causes the effect of pressing the button can be different from what the user might try to do such as that the backbutton, when in a folder, closes the app instead of going back to the previous screen.

There is a mix of the usage of on-phone buttons and on screen buttons which sometimes leads to confusion when using the application such as having to press on a button onscreen to open a note, but having to use the back button on the phone to close the note since there is no onscreen button to do so.

At first it is not completely clear how to do certain things and you have to learn through using the application to understand certain things such as that creating a folder is only possible when saving a note.

Not all functions were working as they should and there were a few glitches such as the drawing being destroyed when editing it right after making a short cut of it and the search function in the text editor not always working.

The most problems encountered by the evaluators fall within the "Match between system and real world", "User control and freedom" and "Flexibility and efficiency of use" and are purely design-related problems which are problems that can be fixed quite simply and fast without hugely impacting the core of the application.

The application has some design flaws and some bugs that make the application slightly not usable for the target audience. This kind of application has to be 100% reliable and has to be trusted by the target audience which is not the case. Also is it necessary for the application to not interfere with what the target audience wants to do which is not the case since the app still isn't yet optimised to a point that a user know exactly what it needs to do to make a desired action happen.

Appendixes:

Review 1:

1. Visibility of system status: The app is so simple that the system status is always visible. That is to say: There is no loading screen needed.
2. Match between system and the real world: The system is basic, quite clear in what each button does by having clear icons and written meaning of each button. Though the paint bucket clears the whole field instead of filling the non-drawn background as one would expect. Also in the draw mode indicates a pencil with an eraser on top of it pencil mode where as a pencil without an eraser indicates eraser mode. This is very confusing.
3. User control and freedom: The user has little escapes. When the back button on the phone is pressed the app doesn't go to its previous screen. To move between screens, maps and notes a user has to use the menu.
4. Consistency and standards: There are no inconsistencies.
5. Error prevention: Ayala Hoeks s4594452 Research&Development Project The simplicity of the app makes it nearly impossible to cause an error (this reviewer hasn't managed to do so yet), so it has good error prevention.
6. Recognition rather than recall: The app has a standard menu, which is constantly the same with the same symbols and names. So the app doesn't rely on the user's recollection of earlier things.
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use: There are no accelerators in this app (or none found by this reviewer), this may be because the app is an android application and as such cannot rely on hotkeys. Still this doesn't allow users to tailor frequent actions.
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design: This is done nicely. The app's menu has an 'more' button offering more obscure options.
9. Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors: (This reviewer didn't run across any errors so cannot review the error messages)
10. Help and documentation: The help was easy to find but the FAQ stated that a user should not use any Task manager / killer, otherwise the app would be killed. Besides that it says the app needs permissions because the Pro version needs those, which seems weird.

Review 2:

Visibility of system status

The app works rather quick, so loading screens are unnecessary and therefore do not exist. Whenever a user opens a popup window, this window clearly states what it is meant for, making it clear to the user what is going on. Furthermore, whenever the user starts a process that happens in the background (Like saving a shortcut), the app pops up a toast stating what is happening.

Match between system and the real world

The app barely uses any lingo, apart from a few terms that are generally known to anyone who has a little experience with computers or other mechanical devices (Which is to be expected for a smartphone app). Furthermore, whenever something is explained, it is explained in intelligible and correct English. On occasion, the app can be slightly vague, but a lot of options are accompanied by clear pictograms and a lot of options are clarified when selected if they can have drastic effects.

User control and freedom

All options and stored files are easily accessible, although it can be a bit of a hassle figuring out how to access everything at first. A user can also easily exit out of any popup window when an undesirable action is selected without actually performing said action. There is, however, a big issue with returning from a note or from a sub map to the main map where all notes are stored; there is no back button to exit out of a note, so the user has to use the phone's back button whenever they wish to return, which can be quite confusing, especially for a person like Annie. This is especially awkward when a note is opened via a shortcut, seeing as the phone's back button will then return the user to the phone's menu instead of the app's main map.

Consistency and standards

Throughout the app, all options that share the same name also give the same result, so the app is very consistent.

Error prevention

During evaluation, this tester has not encountered any app-breaking errors, however, there are a few glitches. When the user creates a shortcut for a drawing and then immediately edits the drawing without leaving the screen, it will seriously damage the drawing. This would be very bad for users who create a lot of drawn notes, like William. Another found glitch is that text will not always line up with the outlining in text notes.

There is an error prevention system in play that warns users before committing to influential actions, making errors on the user's side less likely.

Recognition rather than recall

Almost all options can easily be accessed by a button, which is in most cases also provided with a clear and intuitive pictogram.

Flexibility and efficiency of use

There are some settings available that may improve usability for some users, but these improvements are quite limited.

Aesthetic and minimalist design

The app quite easy on the eyes and is certainly not cluttered with different icons and buttons, as most actions that would be used less are stored in hidden menus that can easily be opened with one tap. The app also offers slight customisation of the user interface, albeit limited.

Help users recognise, diagnose and recover from errors

Seeing as this tester has not encountered any app-breaking errors and has therefore not encountered any error messages, there is not much to be said about this topic. What is known is that there is a help menu to inform users on version specifics and frequently asked question and also allows for the user to inform the developers about encountered errors or glitches.

Help and documentation

The help menu contains a large list of version specifics and frequently asked questions. However, some actions are not discussed in the help menu and are only discussed once.