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Frost & Sullivan for Morae - Usability Testing  
Software Solution



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A major hurdle facing usability professionals is the technology required to conduct the actual testing, and moreover how that technology enables the usability professional to share their findings with decision-makers. Traditionally, it has been a hodge-podge of extremely complex and cumbersome hardware and software – something similar to what one would find in a control room of a radio or television station. It is also very expensive ranging from \$30,000 - \$100,000. Typically a technician is required to operate, maintain and manage all the various components. And because of the sheer number of moving parts, testing could only be conducted in a fixed lab. In order to overcome this challenge, Michigan based TechSmith Corporation has developed Morae - a software based usability testing solution.

Because Morae is software-based, users can conveniently load it on a laptop to conduct usability testing in the field. Morae can be used to conduct usability testing at conferences and client sites so that users can be observed in their natural working or living environments, or just about any other location. And when permissible, Morae can even be loaded on the test subject's own computer. This ability has knocked down the costly and time-consuming barriers so the usability professional can travel to the test participants instead of the test participants being forced to come to the usability testing location. It also saves costs so usability professionals don't have to rent lab space when traveling to conduct the test.

Released in 2004, TechSmith's Morae is the industry's leading software-based, all-digital usability testing solution. It is designed to enhance data collection and speed up analysis. Its dramatic effectiveness lies in the fact that it actually reduces the amount of work needed, not only at setup, but also during the data logging, analysis and presentation stages. Its design works well for users new to the field of usability testing, as well as for seasoned specialists wanting to integrate Morae into their existing methodology to improve the usability and user experience of software, Web sites, intranets and eBusiness applications.

Talking about the major challenges that Morae overcomes, Shane Lovellette, who is the User Experience Products Manager at TechSmith Corporation says, "The key challenges and problems Morae overcomes include: cost, complexity, flexibility and delivery of results. TechSmith's Rich Recording Technology (RRT), the power behind Morae, offers several significant advantages over previous technologies. With RRT, all available data streams (system and application data, and video from an optional Web cam) can be captured and recorded, and these data streams are automatically indexed and synchronized. The resulting content can be easily retrieved, organized, searched, and navigated in ways that were never previously possible for real-world content without manual indexing." Further, very large collections of recordings, and very long recordings, can be analyzed quickly.

The recordings created using RRT can be searched based on many events that occurred during the test. Some of the events are when the user presses any key on the keyboard, clicks a certain button, views specific text or moves from one Web page to another. These events can be viewed in sync with the video and audio of the user when the event occurred. Additionally, recordings can be performed system-wide for any or all applications and for the operating system, since the recording is performed by processes that operate independently of any particular application. Because RRT synchronizes the video/audio streams with the data streams, high-level contextual information can be used to find segments or points of interest in the content. A more complete set of system context and event information is used to index the content with Morae than is possible with other technologies. RRT's "intelligent" automatic indexing removes the cost, effort, and subjective element of manually comparing data; its automatic indexing is both objective and repeatable.

Another major hurdle TechSmith's Morae overcomes is the reporting of findings. Traditionally, usability professionals have been confined to write lengthy jargon-laden, data-intensive and technical reports. Non-usability types find this delivery mode to be outdated and time-consuming to read. Morae empowers usability professionals to quickly and efficiently deliver a "video report" of their findings, so decision makers can see, hear and experience what the participant (the customer) actually experienced. Even for seasoned and well-known usability professional, this video-based reporting lends immediate credibility and negates "cherry-picking" criticism.

One significant advantage of Morae is that it is priced competitively so both large and small organizations can easily deploy user experience testing – which has been the critical barrier to entry for the vast majority of customers who desire to deploy a user experience testing program. This considerably lower price is made possible by the fact that Morae is a software solution, this in turn implies that TechSmith doesn't have the overhead, cost and complexity of selling hardware. In addition, because Morae was designed to fit the individual role of the usability professional's testing and methodology criteria, customers have flexible options to purchase the necessary Morae components to fit their specific needs (e.g. the ability to purchase additional Recorders). And because Morae is designed as a complete solution, users get all the data-capture capabilities at no additional cost. There are no separate charges for such things as mouse click and key strike capture.

Commenting on the application areas and the current status of the RRT technology, Lovellette explains, "TechSmith RRT is a platform technology, Morae is just the first of many possible applications for this platform. RRT can be expanded to capture arbitrary user input from any Windows-based computer source, and to include multiple synchronized audio tracks (such as system audio, remote observer audio, and user audio) and multiple video feeds. These inputs would be automatically indexed with the screen video." Also, RRT's automatic indexing capabilities have the potential to be incorporated into proprietary systems, such as a call center application that monitors productivity. Other possibilities include government or military applications, such as flight simulators, or psychological research situations in which any digitally measurable factor (including biomedical factors such as heart rate or eye movement) could be automatically indexed with user activity. At present, TechSmith has not deployed the industry-specific solutions to the marketplace.

TechSmith recently released UserVue (formerly known as the Astoria project) for remote user experience research. UserVue is a Web-based service that enables usability professionals and designers to remotely connect to and interact with users over the Internet, and to observe them as they navigate through an application or Web site. It is secure, easy to use, and works through firewalls. Connecting to a UserVue session is painless for participants because there is nothing for them to install or configure.

By enabling remote user experience research, UserVue allows researchers to greatly expand the pool of available participants, understand user interaction in the participant's natural environment, and eliminate travel costs completely. UserVue integrates with Morae to provide in depth analysis and sharing of the remote participant experience, and both local and remote users can be analyzed as part of a study. This further removes the barriers to user experience research by eliminating location as a barrier to user testing participation.

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Founded in 1987, TechSmith Corporation provides practical business software tools and services. TechSmith's solutions enable users to capture, record and enhance digital content from their computer screens so they can share information and knowledge in compelling multimedia formats, and allow others to observe, analyze and learn from their experiences. TechSmith products are used by 98 percent of the Fortune 500. Visit [www.techsmith.com](http://www.techsmith.com) for more information.