I must Try Usability Testing

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Last week I read two books that combined to convince me that I need to start really pushing usability testing.

I have been encouraging clients to do this for some time now, but in the small voice "it might be a good idea, if you have the budget" way. Needless to say, that hasn't gotten any traction. I believed in it, but I didn't *believe* in it.

Now I do.

The first book was **Web Design for ROI**. This book discusses focusing your development and design efforts on those things that are going to increase the financial effectiveness of the site. A client of mine was so impressed with the book that she bought me a copy (for which I am extremely grateful). I wanted to read the book, but I was a bit leery of spending much time on a book with the rather obvious message of "you should focus on getting a good ROI on your site" (yawn!).

While the book certainly does cover that message, it doesn't stop there. It goes into specific details on the kind of changes that you should make to bring about those results. It also drives home the importance of having good data. It covers (to some degree) the need for both good metrics and for usability tests to find where and what problems your site has.

The second book was **Don't Make Me Think**. This book has been on my short list for a long time, but reading Web Design for ROI motivated me to read it right away. Once again, he covers specific ways to improve the usability of your site.

Much more than the previous book, he focuses on the essential need for usability testing. More than that, he gave me encouragement to try it out, with the following quote: "I've never seen a usability test fail to produce useful results, no matter how poorly implemented.". That is really encouraging. It doesn't mean that I shouldn't try to do a good job, but it does mean that I can't fail completely!

The big lesson is that without running some sort of usability test, we can never *know* if our applications are easy to use. If it is worth money to write the site or application, isn't it worth just a little more to make sure that the darned thing does its job?

So, now I have the confidence to beat that drum a bit harder with my clients. Nay, to insist upon it!

Wish me luck.