The 2007 Microsoft Office User Interface Study

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Microsoft commissioned Answers Research, INC. a California-based market research firm that specializes in high technology market research, to conduct a series of web-based surveys with beta users of the 2007 Microsoft Office release. The focus of the study was to understand the users experience associated with the introduction of the new Microsoft Office user interface.

Background

The 2007 release of the Microsoft Office programs is distinguished by the introduction of a new user interface for Office Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access and Outlook. As part of ongoing research into the user interface Microsoft commissioned Answers Research, Inc. to conduct web-based surveys of Office users in the U.S., France and Japan. The goal of the research project was to learn how people perceived their productivity to be affected by the new user interface and to gain insight into the learning curve associated with it. The specific questions the research was designed to answer include:

1. How do users perceive their productivity to change with the new UI, both in the short- and long- term?
2. How do users perceive the learning curve associated with the new UI?
3. What benefits do users associate with the new UI?
4. Will the new UI generate greater demands on IT organizations for training or help desk support?

Methodology

At the time the research project was commissioned the 2007 Office release was still in development. For this reason, people that had downloaded pre-release versions of the Office applications were selected as the best population to research. Individuals in the US, France and Japan who had downloaded the pre-release software were invited to participate in a web-based survey.

In order to qualify for the survey, users were required to have downloaded the Beta 2 release, have used the software for at least one week, and still have the software installed on any of their computers. Respondents were limited to two broad categories: information workers (iWorker's) and business decision makers (BDMs) who did not work in an IT department. Web-based surveys were conducted in September/October, 2006.

A total of 3,677 respondents completed the survey. A break out of respondents by role and country is indicated below.

Country	iWorker	BDM	Total
US	1,568	984	2,552
France	626	187	813
Japan	265	47	312
Total	2,459	1,218	3,677

Conclusions

In general, the users surveyed in this study are highly satisfied with the new user interface and believe it will (or already has) increased their productivity. In addition, survey results point to a relatively quick learning curve of between 2 and 3 weeks. Furthermore, users expect training and help desk services associated with the new UI to be minimal and many users indicated neither will be necessary.

The details pertaining to these results are covered in greater detail in the sections that follow.

How do users perceive their productivity to change with the new UI, both in the short- and long-term?

When asked how their productivity changed in the first 2-3 days of using the new software, 64% indicated that it increased or stayed the same. A majority of this group (40% vs. 24%) reported their productivity increased, 10% felt it increased substantially. Roughly 1/3 of users felt their productivity decreased during the initial period of use as they became familiar with the new user interface; however the majority of this group reported only a slight decrease in productivity.

- During the first few days of use…
    - 40% of users experienced <u>increased</u> productivity
    - 24% experienced no change
    - 27% experienced a slight <u>decrease</u> in productivity
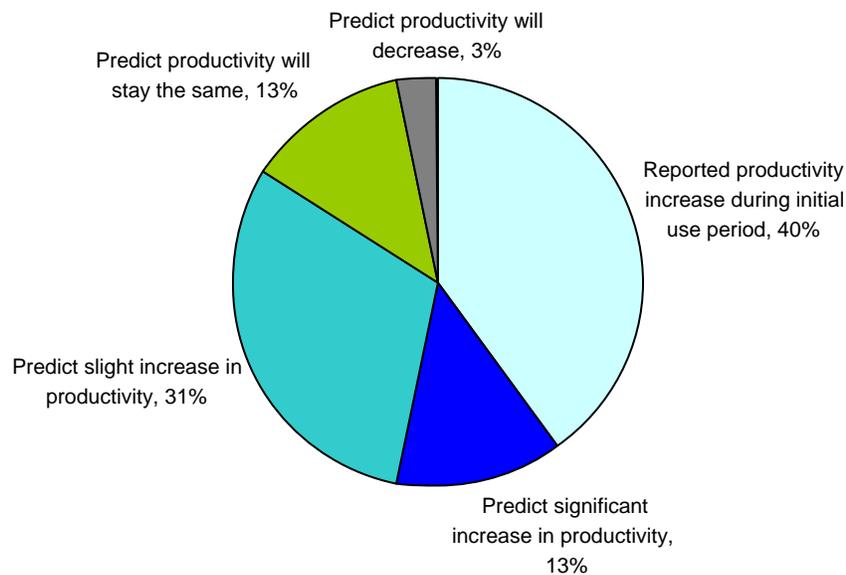   - 9% experienced a significant decrease in productivity

<u>Demographic and Usage Differences</u>

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- <u>Younger</u> users, under 35 years old, report greater productivity increases during initial usage compared with older users over 35 (44% versus 37%).

- Word and PowerPoint users report higher productivity during initial usage compared to Excel users (48% & 44% versus 38%).

- US users report a higher productivity increase than do users in France or Japan (42% versus roughly 34% for both France and Japan). Note Japanese users in this study had used the 2007 Office release for a shorter time, an average of 6 weeks versus 8 weeks for both US and French. Also, the majority of Japanese respondents only used the 2007 Office release occasionally, while the majority of US and French used the new version exclusively.

When asked to predict how their productivity will change once they are accustomed to the new user interface, users clearly expect to be more productive. Furthermore, after roughly 5 weeks of use, users indicated that they felt they were working an average of about 10% more efficiently (as measured by stated time it takes to complete an activity). Activities reported to take 30 minutes in the previous version now take 26 minutes to complete

- Although 36% of all users reported a decline in productivity during the initial period of use, almost all users (97%) anticipate their productivity will exceed or be equal to that of their previous version once they became accustomed to the new version.

- Additionally, 84% of all users believe they will be MORE productive with the new version compared to their previous version.

Predicted Productivity after Becoming Accustomed to new Version

Predict productivity will decrease, 3%

Predict productivity will stay the same, 13%

Reported productivity increase during initial use period, 40%

Predict slight increase in productivity, 31%
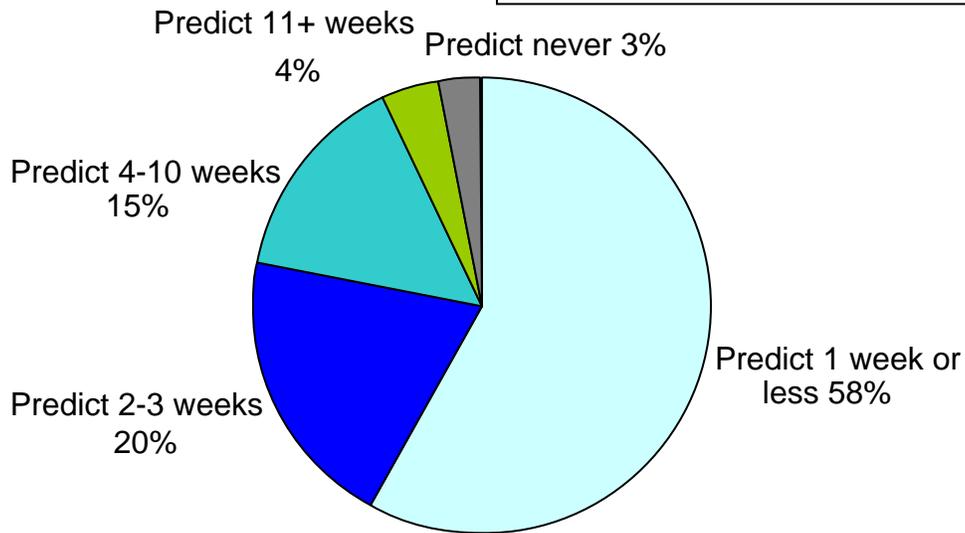
Predict significant increase in productivity, 13%

Base: All Respondents: (N=3,677)

How do users perceive the learning curve associated with the new UI?

Based on survey results users are not experiencing a long and difficult learning curve.

- Users were asked to estimate the number of weeks of use it would take to reach the same level of productivity as they had with their previous version of Office software. The majority of users indicate that they were (or will be) back up to speed in 3 weeks or less.
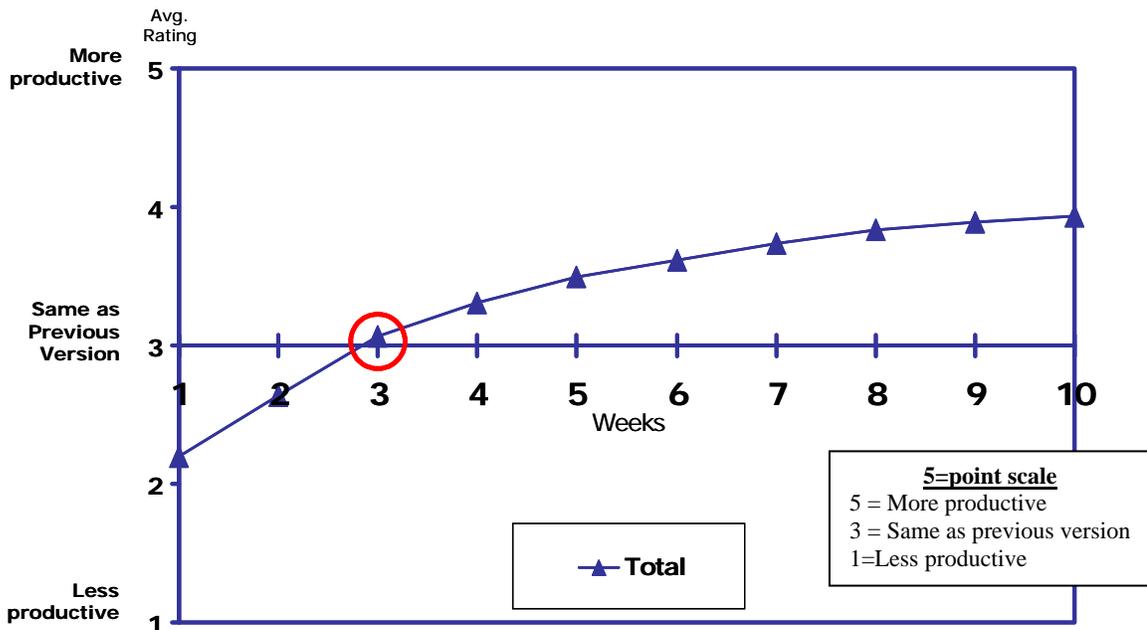
3 out of 4 of users (78%) expect to be back up to speed in 2 to 3 weeks or less.

Predict 11+ weeks
4%

Predict never 3%

Predict 4-10 weeks
15%

Predict 1 week or
less 58%

Predict 2-3 weeks
20%

Base: All Respondents: (N=3,677)

- In addition, users were asked to rate their productivity from week 1 thru week 10 of use. Both of these questions indicated that users expect to reach baseline productivity in about 3 weeks.

Average Productivity by Length of Use

Avg. Rating

More productive 5

4

Same as Previous Version 3

2

Less productive 1

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
Weeks

Total

5=point scale
5 = More productive
3 = Same as previous version
1=Less productive

Base: All Respondents: (N=3,677)

Demographic and Usage Differences

The differences noted below are from a question asking respondents how long it took them to return to their original level of productivity.

- The <u>younger</u> the user (under 35), the faster they feel they will return to original productivity (1.7 weeks vs. 2.2 for over 35)

- U.S. and French users expect they will return to original productivity faster than Japanese (2.0 & 1.8 weeks vs. 2.5).

- PowerPoint (1.6 weeks) or Word users (1.8 weeks) expect to reach their original productivity more quickly than Excel users (2.4 weeks).

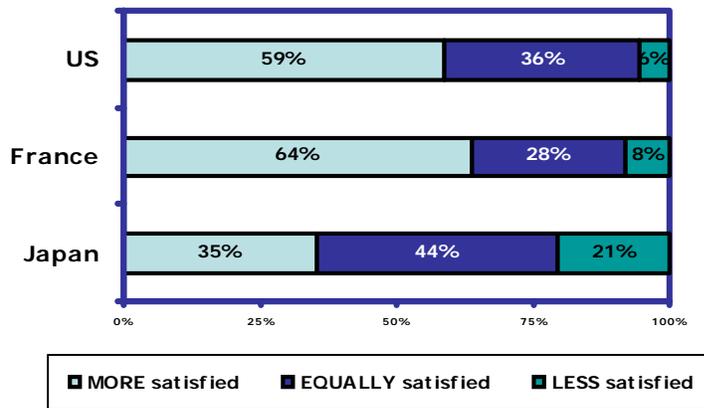## What benefits do users associate with the new UI?

Substantial additional benefits beyond increased productivity accrue to users of the 2007 office release. Users were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with a series of statements about the new UI. Key benefits users felt the strongest agreement with include "[the new UI…] makes it easier to create professional-looking documents," "requires fewer steps to accomplish what I want to do," and, "better meets my needs."

	Total	US (a)	France (b)	Japan (c)
Base: All Respondents	N=3677	n=2552	n=813	n=312
Benefit Statements				
is more fun to use	83%	87%	93%	64%
makes it easier to create professional looking documents	83%	89%	90%	58%
is more enjoyable to use	81%	87%	93%	52%
requires fewer steps to accomplish what I want to do	80%	82%	88%	69%
better meets my needs.	78%	83%	86%	56%
helps me be more effective	78%	83%	84%	60%
helps me be more productive	78%	82%	81%	60%
enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly	75%	80%	87%	53%
is easy to learn	75%	80%	83%	53%
is easier to use	75%	78%	86%	57%
makes it easier to discover new features and functions	74%	81%	85%	46%
enables me to find and use new features and functions more quickly	71%	76%	82%	48%

- Another tested benefit of the new UI was "satisfaction of work produced" using the new version. The results indicate 91% of survey participants are equally or more satisfied with the work produced (54% are more satisfied, 37% equally satisfied) compared to their previous version.

Demographic Differences

- Younger users tend to be more satisfied than older users.

- U.S. and French users are more satisfied than Japanese. (see chart below) But again, Japanese users in this study had used the 2007 Office release for a shorter time, an average of 6 weeks versus 8 weeks for both US and French. Also, the majority of Japanese respondents only used the 2007 Office release occasionally, while the majority of US and French used the new version exclusively.

Base; All respondents: (N=3,677)

	MORE satisfied	EQUALLY satisfied	LESS satisfied
US	59%	36%	5%
France	64%	28%	8%
Japan	35%	44%	21%

Will the new UI generate greater demands on IT organizations for training or help desk support?

Roughly 1 of 3 users believes that no training is necessary to get up to speed on the 2007 Office release. Of those that believe some form of training is necessary, over half indicated online interactive training as the preferred method. Furthermore, the majority (78%) feel that only 4 hours of online training would be necessary to get up to speed on the 2007 Office release.

The majority (84%) of users feel they will seek less assistance or about the same as with previous versions. Only one in four called their help desk for support and they used it less frequently than with previous versions. Taking these results together leads us to the conclusion that the training requirements for the new UI can be best characterized as 'modest' (or non-existent) for most users

Demographic Differences

- Older users (35) are somewhat more likely to seek assistance than younger users.

Summary of Conclusions

The 2007 Office user interface offers significant benefits, with higher productivity levels, higher work satisfaction, and a relatively short learning curve. Training and help desk service is expected to be minimal and not necessary for many users.

The survey results indicate that users are reacting very positively to the new UI as indicated by high levels of agreement with benefit statements associated with the new UI e.g., "easier to create professional documents", better meets my needs."

Users are also optimistic about the effect the new UI will have on their productivity and expect to be more productive compared to their previous version within roughly 5 weeks of use. Users are also experiencing a relatively short learning curve, with most users back to the same level of productivity they had with their previous version in 2 to 3 weeks.

Moreover, the majority of users indicate that they are more satisfied with the work they produce using the new version.