



Making Usability Testing Agile: Our Experience

Cindy McCracken & Skye Pazuchanics
iContact Corporation

Usability testing is important

If you want a great site, you've got to test... The only way to find out if it really works is to test it.

Steve Krug
Author of "Don't Make Me Think"

User experience is everything.

Evan Williams
CEO of Twitter

Usability testing is probably the fastest and easiest way to tease out show-stopping usability problems before a product launches.

Mike Kuniavsky
Founding Partner of Adaptive Path

But it's not always easy in agile



Ben Levin ...the timelines are short, the cycles are fast, and .. there aren't an unlimited number of cycles in which to deal with the usability testing results. (From: Blog "The Experience is Brand")



Bruno Figueiredo I have worked recently on a project that used the Scrum methodology applied to UX, and it didn't work quite well. I think that the reason behind it was that the backlog wasn't properly laid out. (From: IXDA Discussion)



Anthony Colfert Agile... takes for granted that they (requirements) are appropriate. (From: Boxes and Arrows)

But it's not always easy in agile



Ben Levin ...the timelines are short, the cycles are fast,
and .. there aren't an unlimited number of roles in
which to deal with
Blog "The



Bruno
the
was
IX



Antoni
(requirements,
Arrows)

Wow... I guess we're not alone.



We want to share our experience



User Experience Team
iContact Corporation

Problems faced along the way

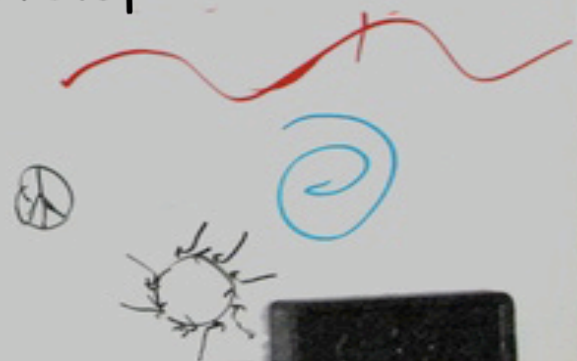
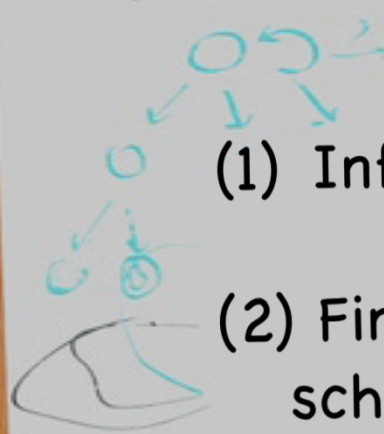
$$G_{\mu\nu} + \Lambda g_{\mu\nu} = 8\pi T_{\mu\nu}$$

Problems to address:

- (1) Infrequent testing
- (2) Finding and scheduling users
- (3) Local participant pool is too limited
- (4) Sharing results
- (5) Poor integration with development

$$S = -k \text{Tr} \rho \ln \rho$$

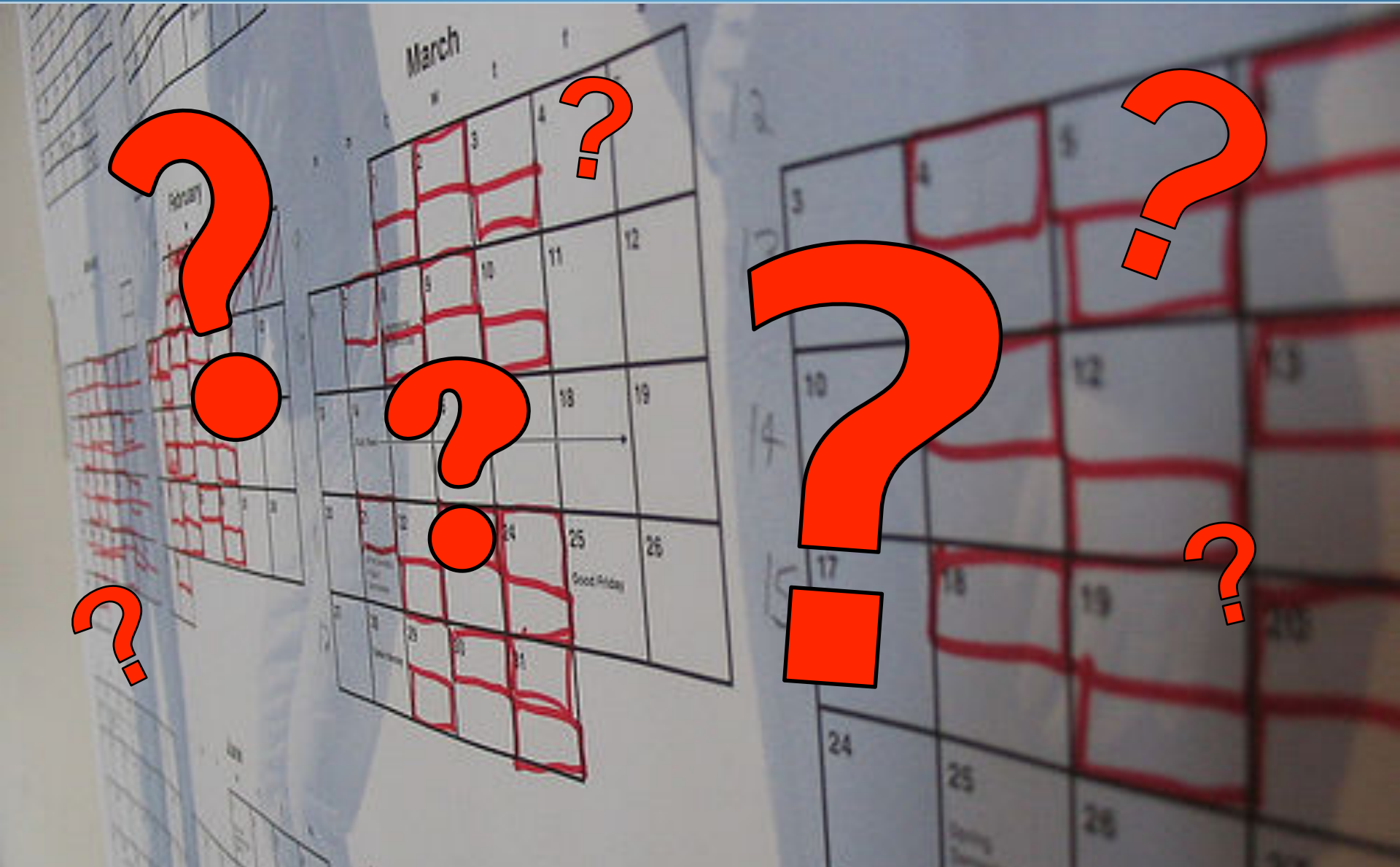
$$g_{\mu\nu} = 8\pi T_{\mu\nu}$$



Life is an eddy in entropy

$$i k \cdot \sigma = [H, \sigma]$$

Problem 1: Infrequent Testing



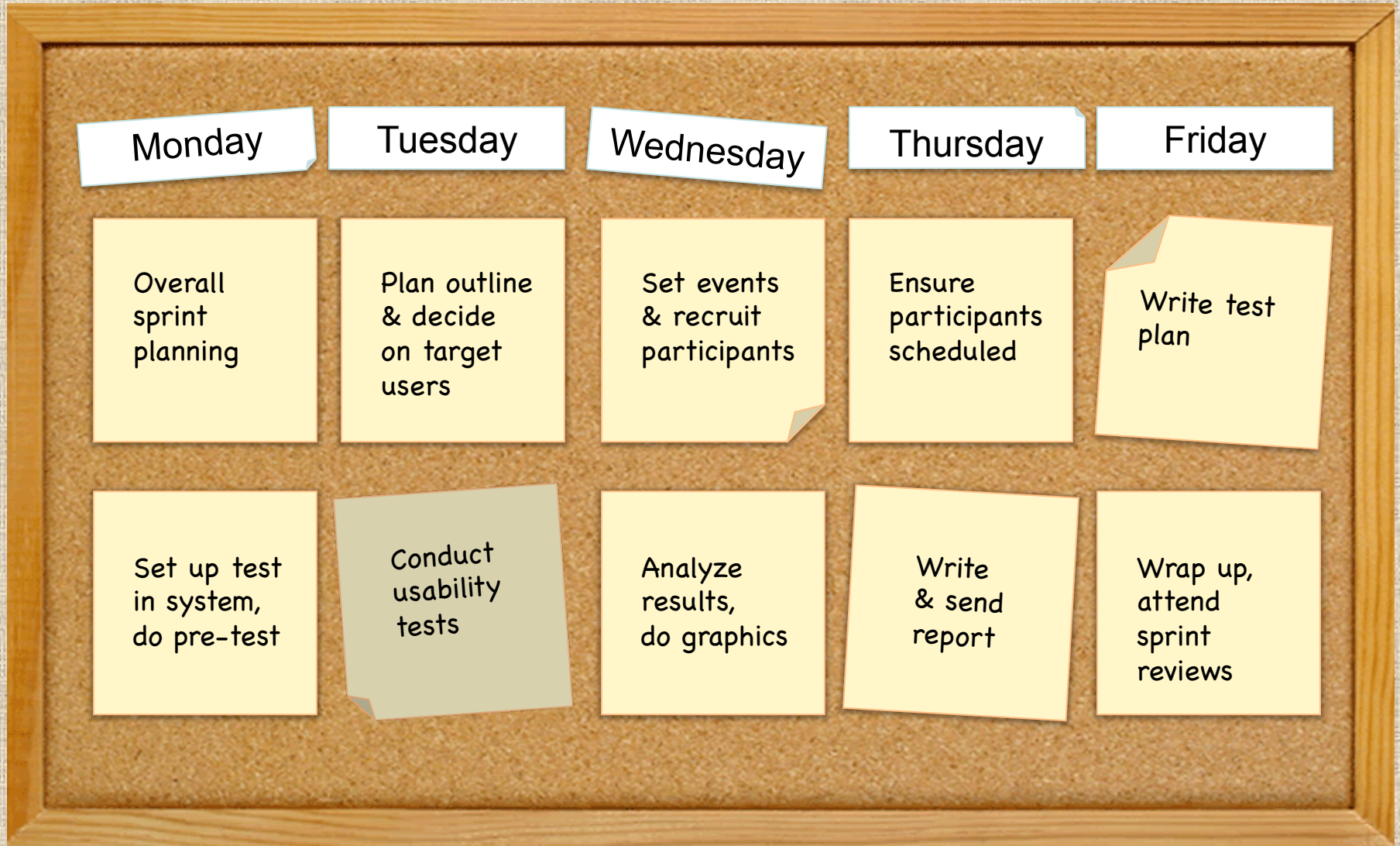
Solution:

Make testing a part of every sprint



Amanda Stockwell
User Experience Strategist
iContact Corporation

Here's how we did it:



Monday

Overall sprint planning

Set up test in system, do pre-test

Tuesday

Plan outline & decide on target users

Conduct usability tests

Wednesday

Set events & recruit participants

Analyze results, do graphics

Thursday

Ensure participants scheduled

Write & send report

Friday

Write test plan

Wrap up, attend sprint reviews

Here's where we stand:

Problem 1: Infrequent Testing

Solution: Make testing a part of every sprint

Successes:

- ✓ User feedback is a regular part of the development cycle
- ✓ Fast, low cost feedback on customer needs
- ✓ Rapid iteration

Area for improvement:

- ✗ Get better insight into what may be coming up in backlog
- ✗ Continue improving efficiency of testing process

Problem 2:

Finding and scheduling users

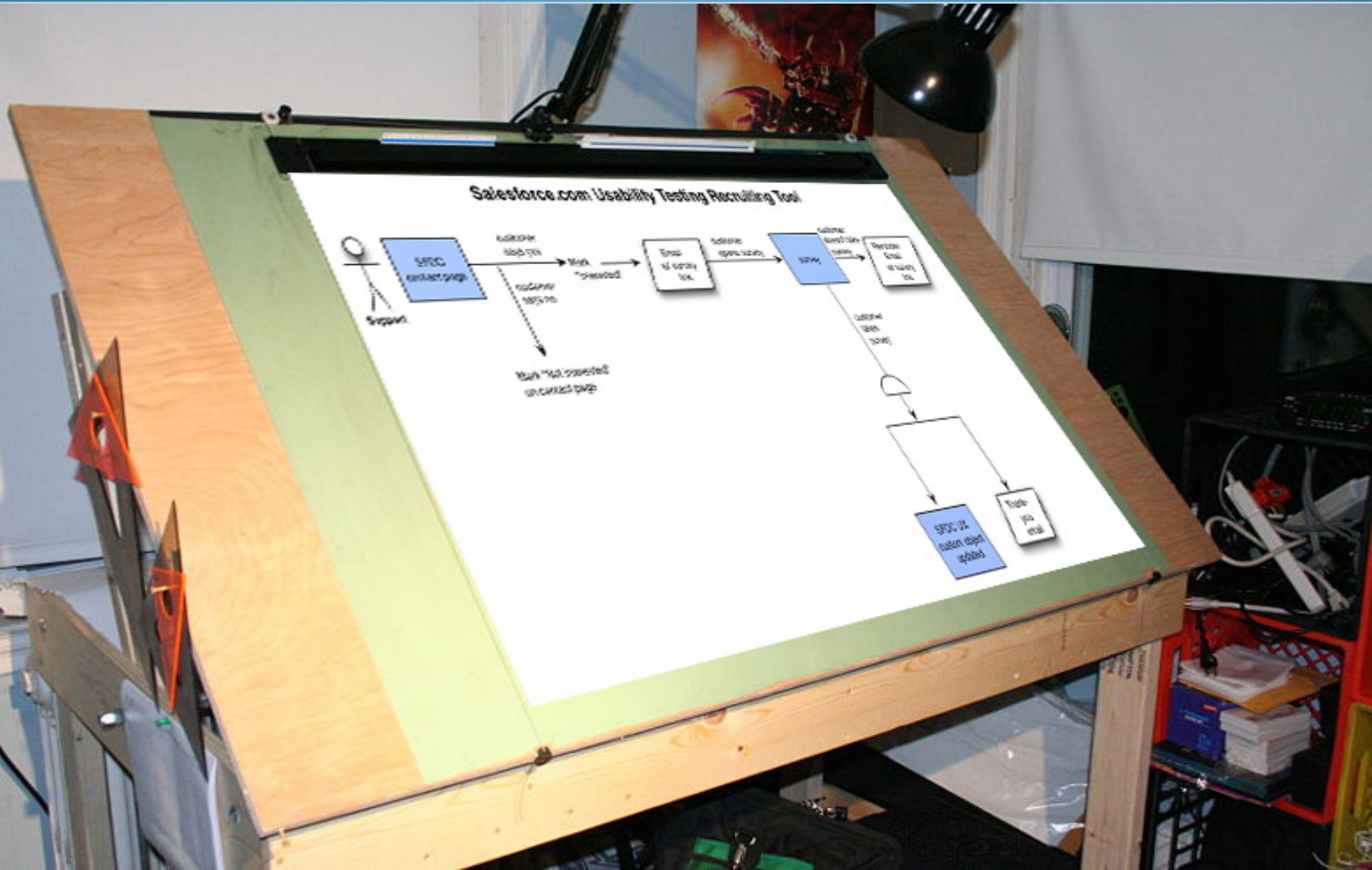


Solution: Have others recruit for us



Jackie Dalton:
Technical Support Representative
iContact Corporation

Here's how we did it:



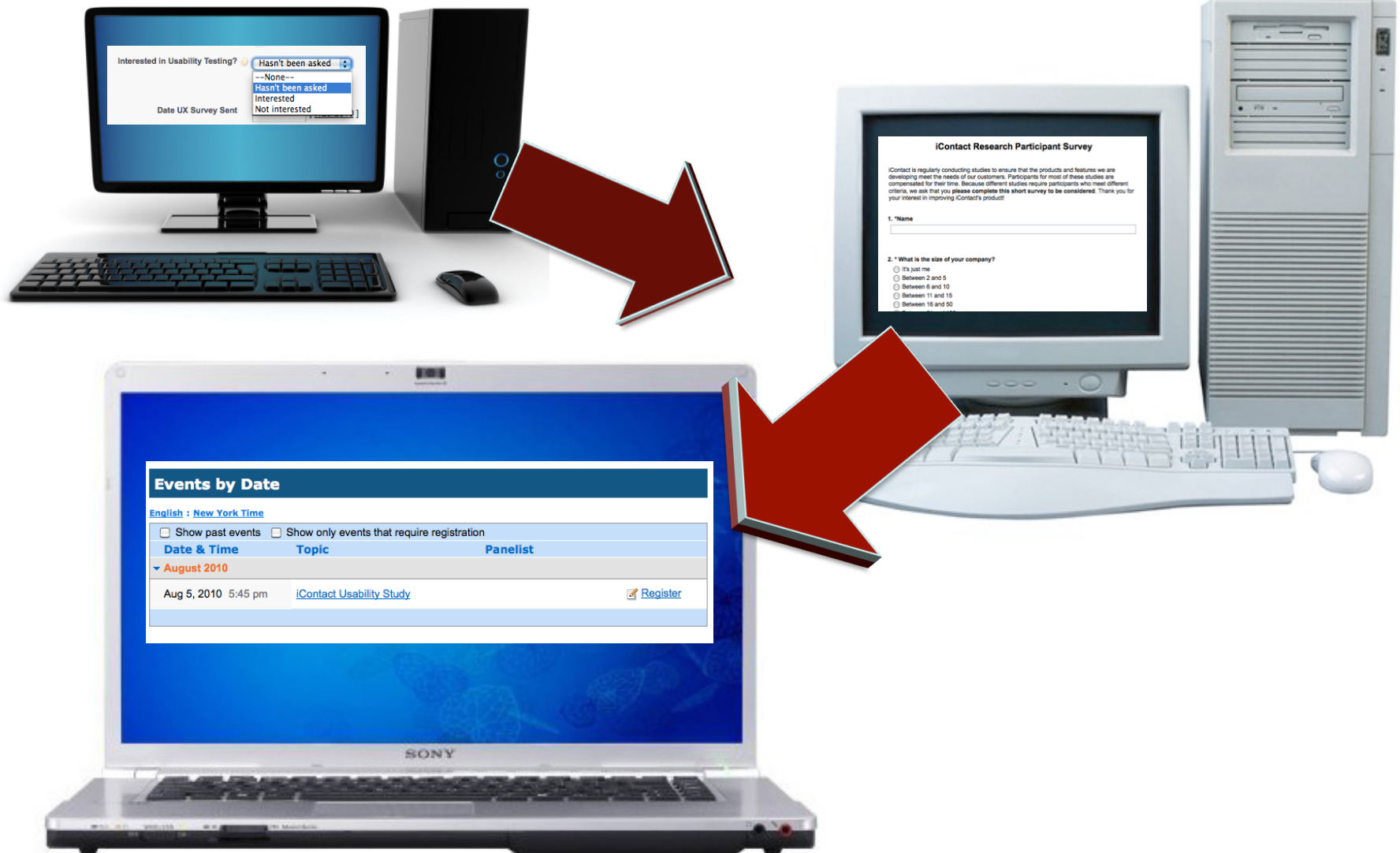
Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's where we stand

Problem 2: Finding users

Solution: Get others to do it with an in-house recruiting system

Successes:

- ✓ Enough volume to cover tests
- ✓ Good mix of target users
- ✓ Customers happy to help shape the product
- ✓ Support, sales happy to help customers

✓ Tools help with surveys, unmoderated testing

Areas for improvement:

- ✗ Offer staff more incentives for recruiting
- ✗ Make self-identification possible for customers
- ✗ Iterate on targeting screener

Problem 3:

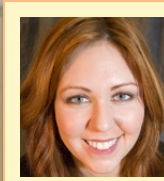
Local participant pool is too limited

We are here..



... users are not

Solution: Remote testing



“Debra” user
Offsite Participant

Rob Call:
Product Owner
iContact Corporation

Cindy McCracken:
User Experience Strategist
iContact Corporation

Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Cisco
webex



Here's where we stand:

Problem 3: Local participant pool is too limited

Solution: Remote testing

Successes:

- ✓ Easy to include participants from all over
- ✓ Easy to carry out basic UX tests via sharing desktops
- ✓ Easy to include non-UX team members as observers

Areas for improvement:

- ✗ Reduce lag time
- ✗ Find an easy way to get videos of faces

Things to try:

- ★ Remote un-moderated testing

Problem 4: Sharing Results

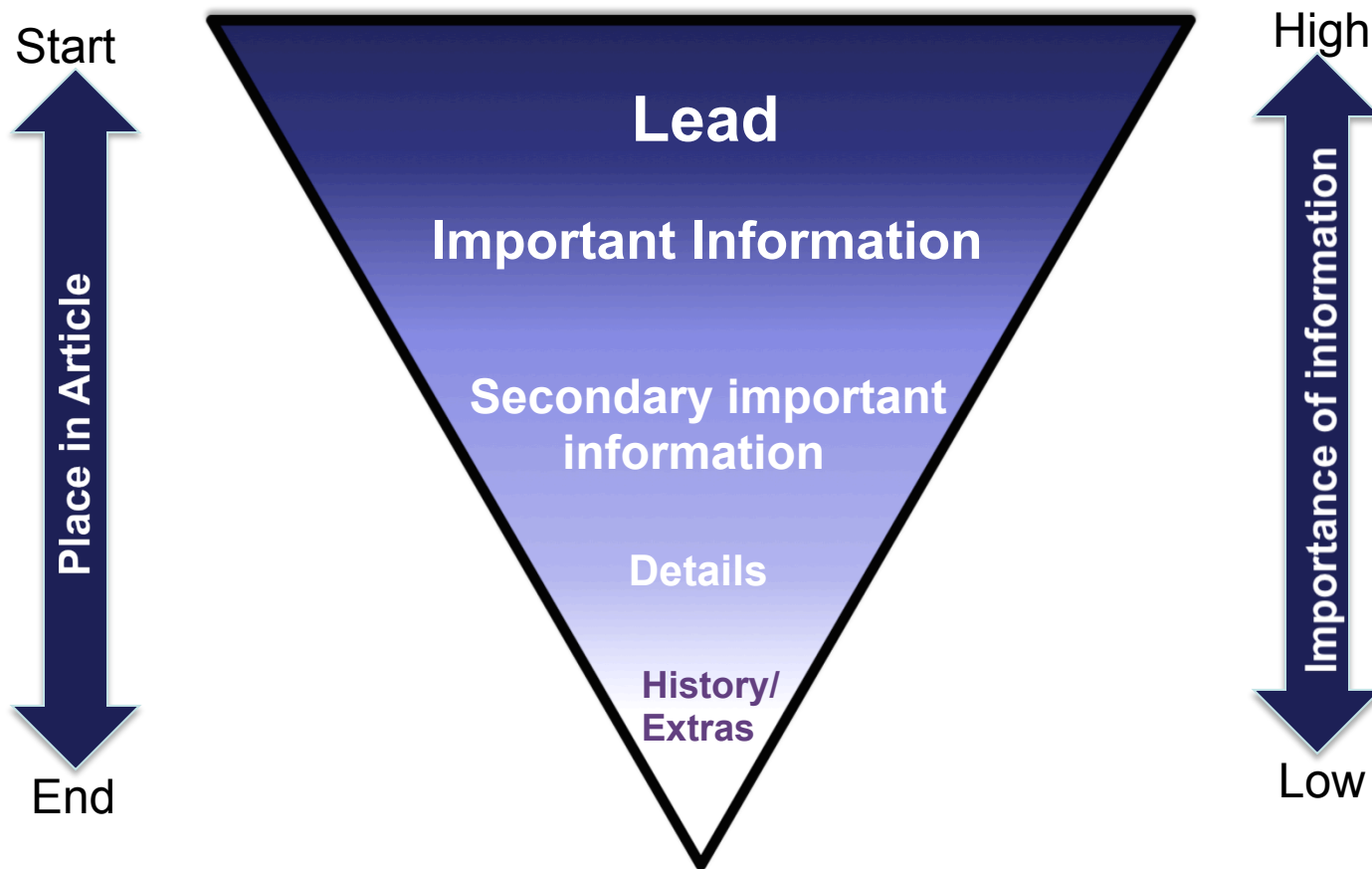


Michelle Engle:
Product Owner Manager
iContact Corporation

Solution:

A journalistic approach for agile reports

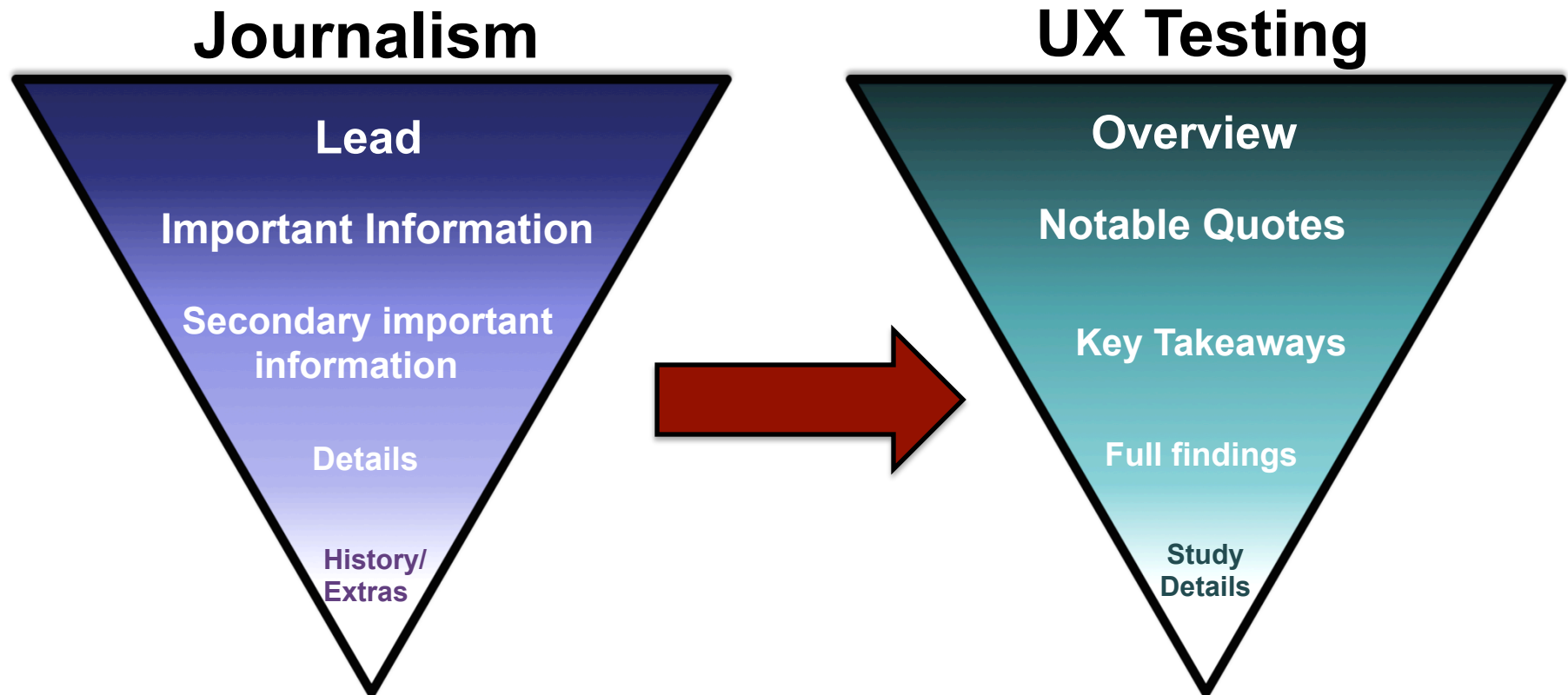
Inverted Pyramid Writing



Solution:

A journalistic approach for agile reports

Our Approach to Reporting Results



Here's how we did it:

Beta Message Composition Toolbar, Block Actions Usability Test Report

Overview

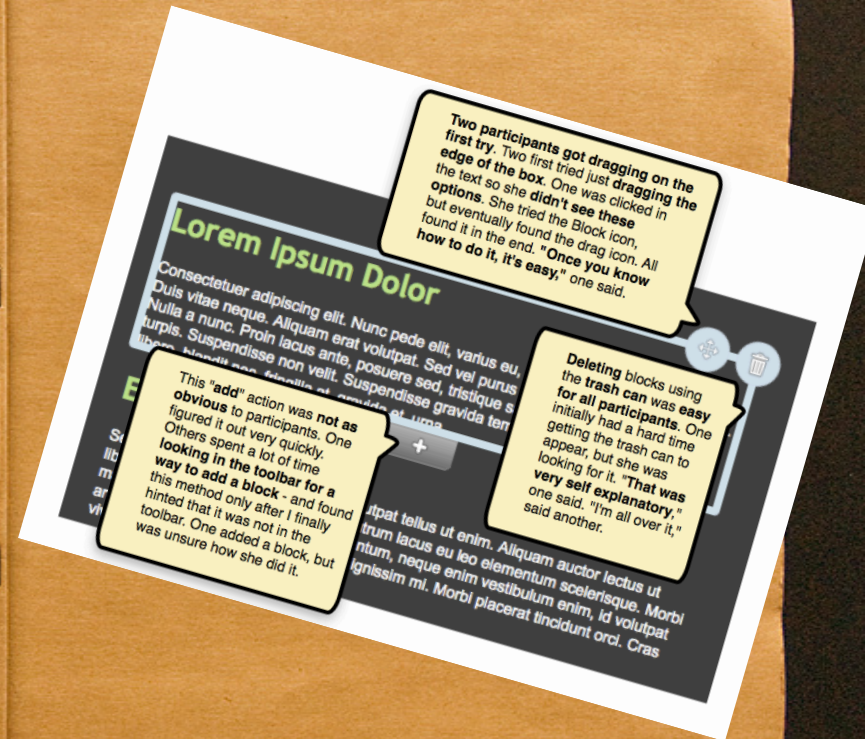
This study takes the first look at the usability of the beta message creation product in the sandbox. We see how five customers representing our Bob persona manage with manipulating blocks, text and appearance of different areas of the message.

Notable Quotes

- "This is exactly what I'm looking for. Now I won't have to send it to our web guy. It will save me money and time, and provide a quality product."
- "It only takes a second or two to learn what's going on. It's very good."
- "It's such a different use of tabs, it wasn't intuitive to me. But it's easily learned. It makes good sense to have the tools at the top, out of the way of the message."

Key Takeaways

- Participants liked the toolbar and felt it was useful.
- Participants were looking for a **Preview option**.
- In general, participants seemed **concerned about having functionality with which they were familiar** from other software so that they would understand it without having to think too much about it.



Here's where we stand:

Problem 4: Sharing Results

Solution: A journalistic approach for agile reports

Successes:

- ✓ Easy for developers to digest
- ✓ Help product owners make confident decisions
- ✓ Accessible to CEO and external stakeholders
- ✓ Archivable

✓ Format very adaptable

Area for improvement:

✗ Improve efficiency of report creation

Must also:

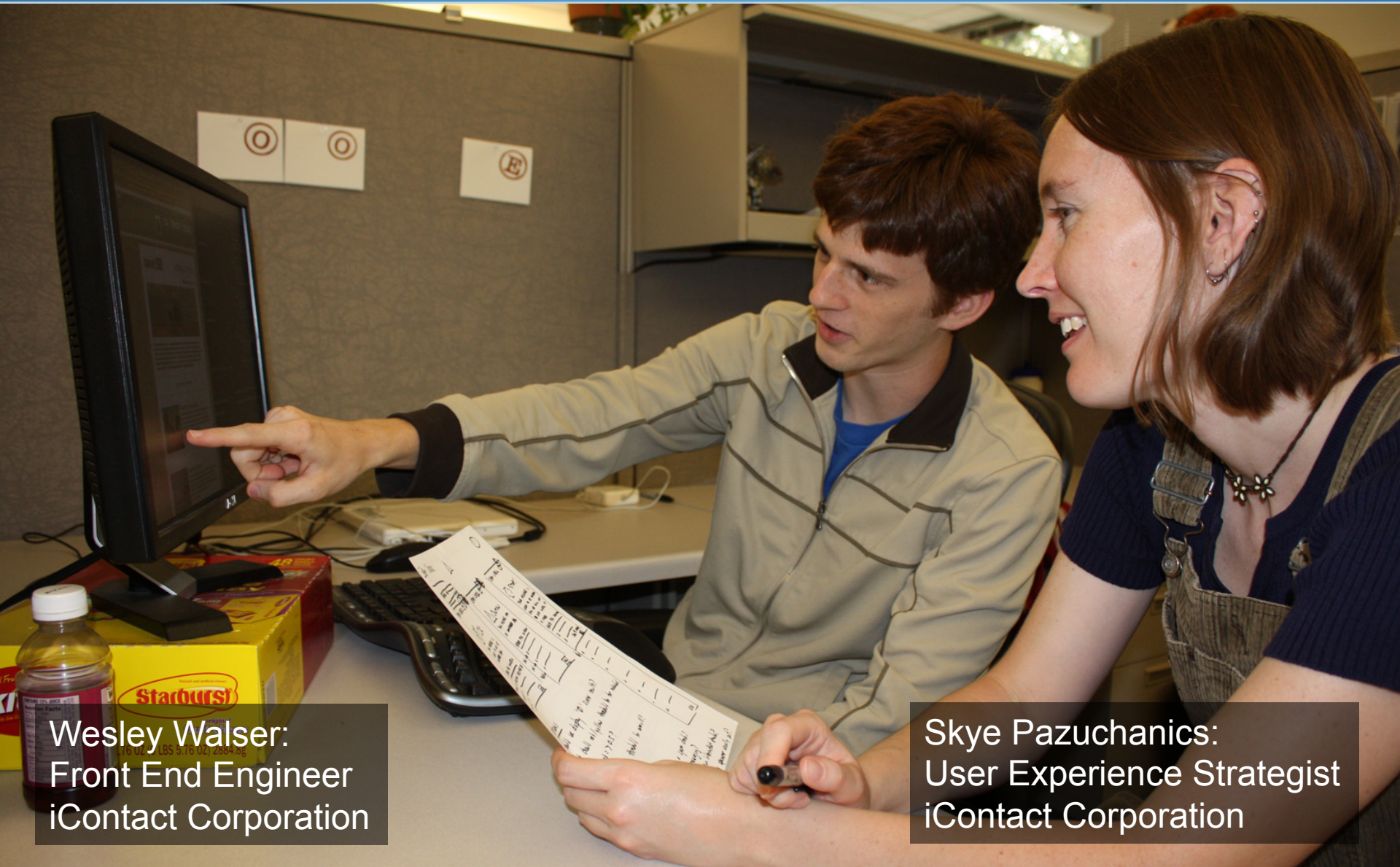
★ Be integrated into development teams – See Problem 5

Problem 5:

Poor Integration with Development



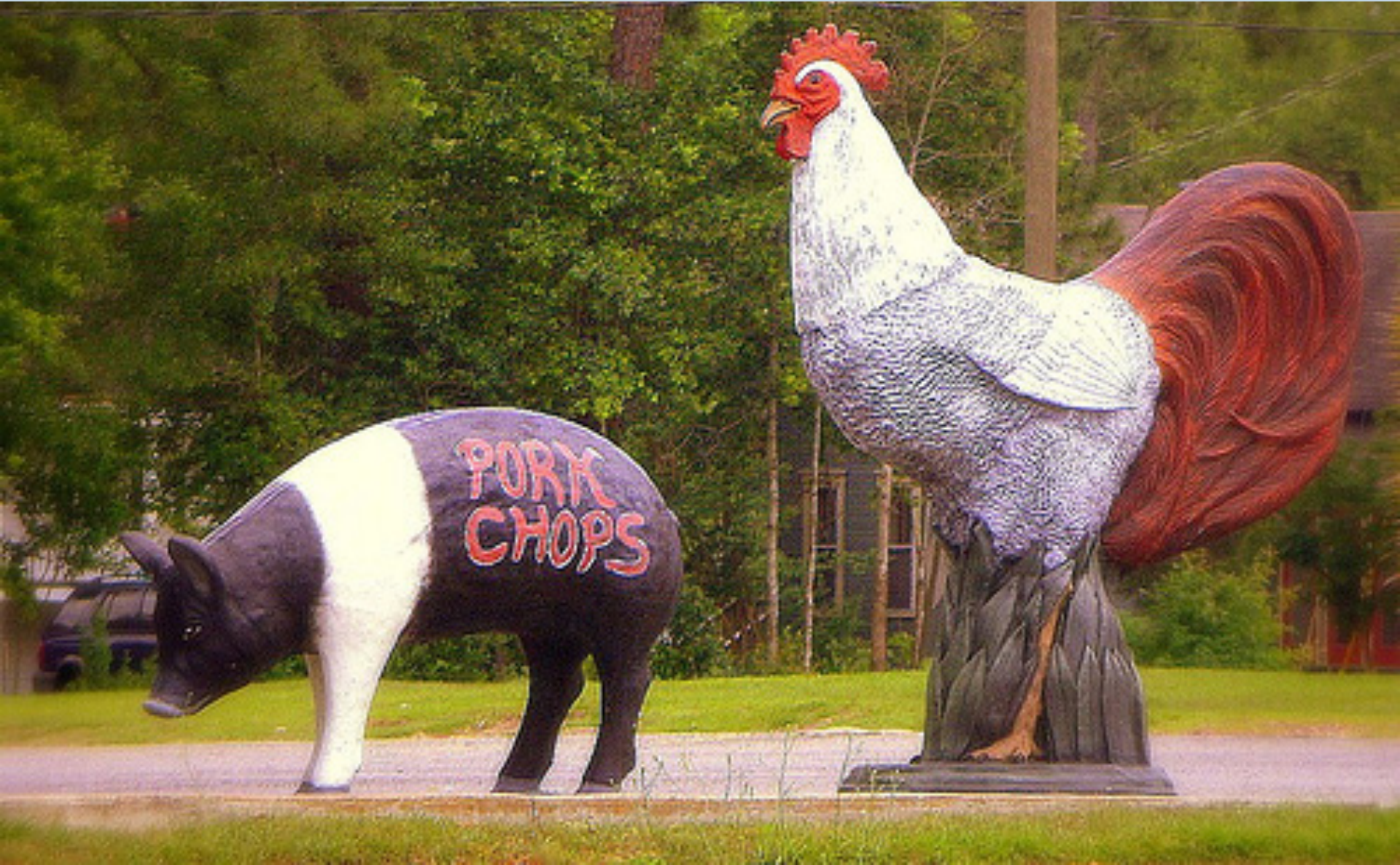
Solution: Direct involvement in design and development efforts



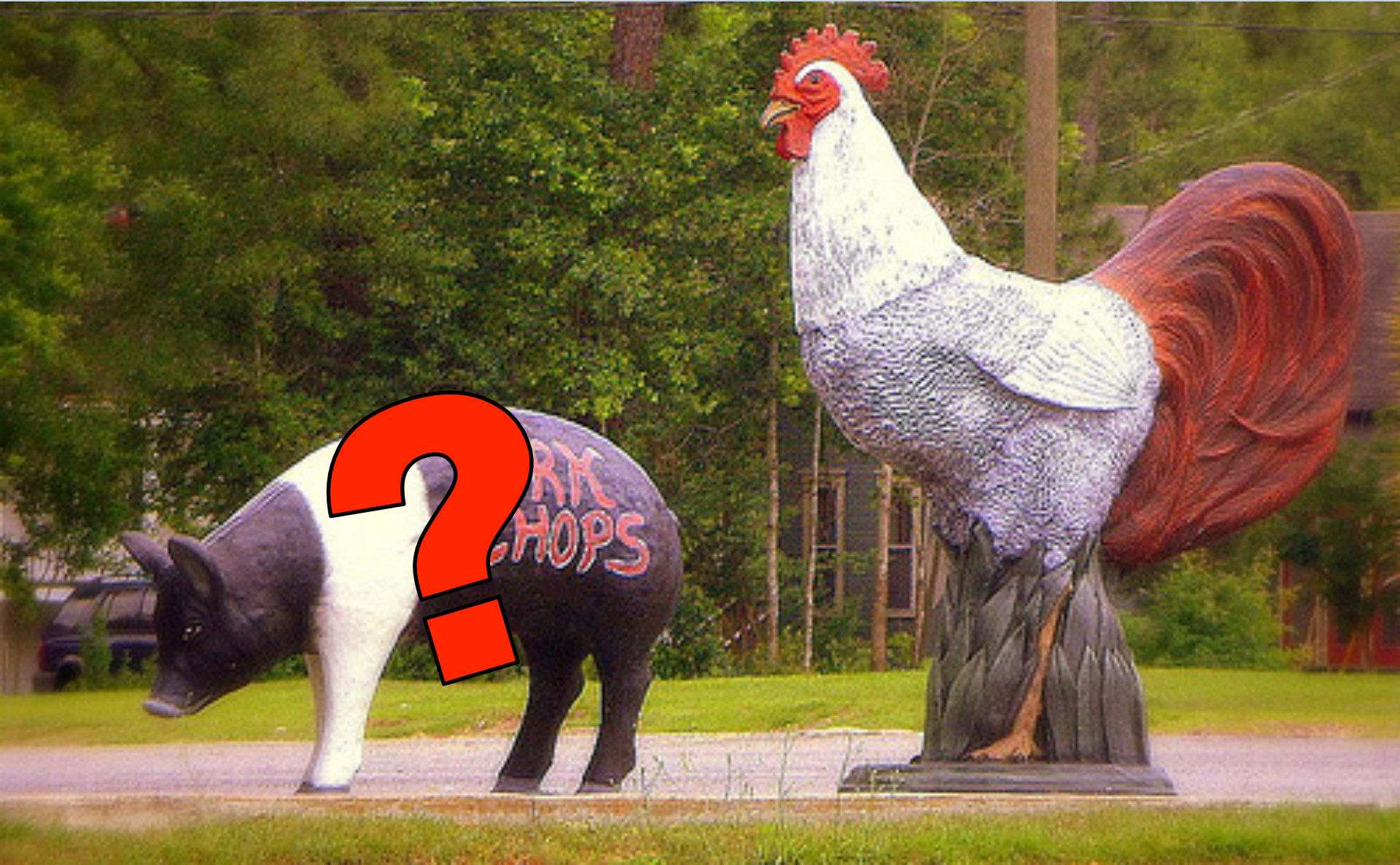
Wesley Walser:
Front End Engineer
iContact Corporation

Skye Pazuchanics:
User Experience Strategist
iContact Corporation

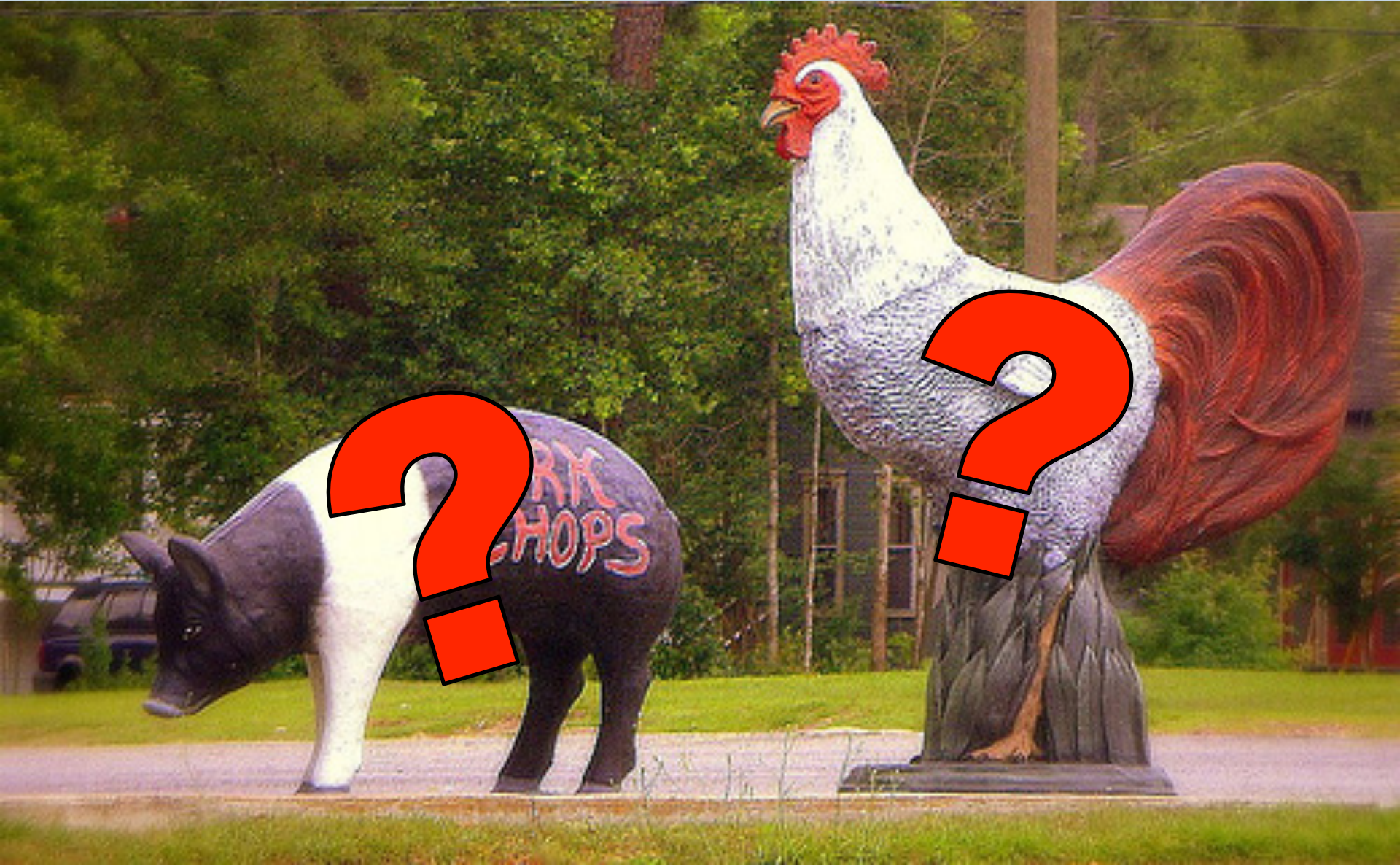
Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's how we did it:



Here's where we stand:

Problem 5: Poor Integration with Development

Solution: Direct involvement in design and development efforts

Successes:

- ✓ Testing is focused on important informational needs
- ✓ Design recommendations have a better chance of being implemented
- ✓ Cross-functional UX team permits faster test development and returns

Areas for improvement:

- ✗ Managing needs across several teams
- ✗ Keeping in the loop through dev and QA efforts

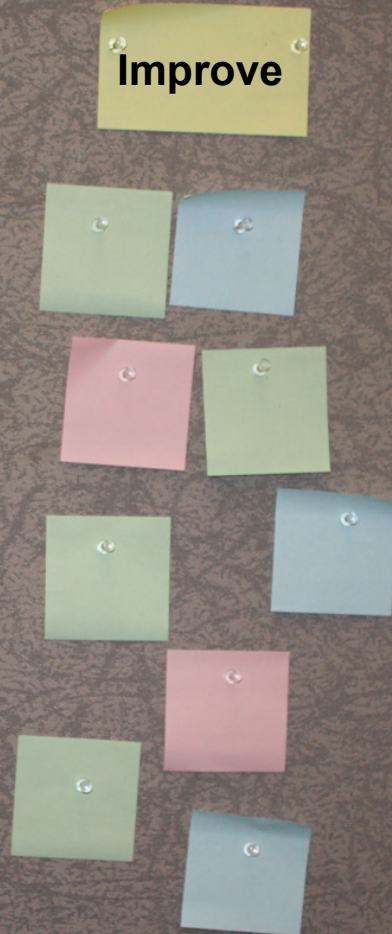
Conclusion:

Iteration and Adaptability are key

Success

Improve

Try



Conclusion: You Can Do It!



Thank you!

Cindy McCracken:
cmccrack@iconcontact.com

Skye Pazuchanics:
spazucha@iconcontact.com

