

Evaluation

The Design Brief

The company is a car hire company called *Citicar*. Customers are offered a range of cars to hire. It's based in England and has branches in various cities such as London and Manchester. Customers can choose the model of car, requirements like what they'll be using it for, whether they'll need air conditioning and how long they'll need it for. At the moment the public can't search the website and have to ring the company or go to the office/shop where they can find the type of car they require and receive help from the staff. The company is currently paper based and is full of filing cabinets. I have to solve the company's paper-based problem by designing them a system that is easy to use for customers and staff using a database. Also with a database the customers should be able to access it on the Internet saving them trouble of going down to the Citicar shop.

When the system is completed it will make things quicker and more efficient for the company. Data will be easy to reach and can be got to quickly. Customers will be happier with the increased accessibility of the company and being able to search for exactly what they are looking for quickly. Staff will have a lot less filing to do and keeping track of records will be easier. The search tool will help customers and staff find what they are looking for quickly without any unnecessary hassle.

- More efficient for staff and customers
- Easy to search for files
- Records can be put into order(s)
- Numbers of customers should increase due to new improved, easy system
- Customer can specify for exactly what they want and will hopefully find a match
- Money will be saved as less staff will be needed to manage filing and filling in forms etc
- Data presented clearly for customers to use in a database
- Simple instructions so customers can use the system easily
- Over due cars can be spotted easily and sorted out quickly

Is the system able to all the things required?

The system has some limitations but does do most of the thing users will require when using it. If I was given more time I could make the design more complex with more reports etc. It can store records on computers, without using up loads of paper and without having to have offices filled with filing cabinets. The data is presented clearly and the tables are linked to save having to rewrite or retype records next to each other (if a customer rented a car you'd have to transfer there details to another table showing the loans, where as relationships do it for you). It can be searched for records quickly using queries and filters. Customers can specify what sort of car they want by using a query. Mail merge saves addresses and customer names having to be looked up and typed out. Over all there is less filing and more time saved because of the new database.

Does the system meet requirements of users?

I tried to make sure that my design requires all the necessities of users. I did this by getting as much feedback as possible so I could change and improve parts of my design. Some users wanted different things so I have done my best to include most things I thought important to users without making it too complicated. I made a couple of questionnaires to get comments on things I should change or improve. I found this feedback very important to help me find out what users want.

Results of Testing

As a result of my testing I have discovered only a few faults. One fault was in the field size category for the gender field in the customer details table. Also as a result of my testing I realised I had made several spelling mistakes, which I corrected.

How I tested my design

I tested my design by running a number of different tests I had planned out with predictions of what should happen. I entered false data to see if it prompted me to correct it. I entered loans to test the relationships and checked my validation rules. To test the whole database I got 5 users to give it a trial run accompanied with a user guide. I got their feedback, which was mostly good and got them to fill in a questionnaire about what they thought of the User guide. Overall, feedback from users has been a key aspect to my project.

What the users who tested my design thought

I tested my design on potential users and asked for there feedback. I made any improvements they though needed making and this feedback really helped me to improve my design. The people who tested the design all felt that a user guide was necessary. They didn't want a user guide that was too long because they said they didn't have the time. I tried to make a short user guide to teach users in a simple and easy to understand way how to use the database. Some comments made by the users who tested the system were that they weren't experienced enough with Access so took them a while to get used to it. Others said tthe tables where a bit confusing and prefer to use forms. I have tried to make the forms as simple as possible and unlike the tables, which are found confusing.

What improvements and Modifications I have made

As a result of my testing, I have changed a few aspects of my design. I added a few fields as I went along, a second price field, cost per day, in case customers don't want to hire it for a week and just a couple of days. I also found a mistake in the field size box for the gender field in the customer details table. I meant to make the field size 1 but when testing I discovered something was wrong and realised I had put 6 characters for the field size instead of 1. I changed when I realised and now it works how I wanted it to.

I also added in a new form for the users about the car details.

At the end of my project I spell checked every thing to make sure I hadn't made any careless mistakes. I found quite a few but corrected them.

Limitations and Improvements

There are a few factors that have limited my design, and there are possible improvements, which could be made. I feel I could have improved the design if I had more time. If I'd had extra time, I would have got more feedback from users and more raw data. I could have tested it in much greater detail therefore improving the system. With a greater number of people's comments and improvement suggestions the system would have satisfied a greater number of users, satisfying more users.

The software I used

I found using Microsoft Access relatively easy once I had got the hang of it. It is much more appropriate than some other database programs I could have used for this particular project. The wizards and help makes it clear to understand. The forms and reports present data in a clear and easy to understand way saving me from having to design them in Word. Microsoft Access is compatible with programs such as Microsoft word making it easy to carry out tasks such as producing a mail merge letter to send to customers. Some of the users found things like the setting out of the tables confusing and preferred forms.