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Assignment 5

**Poor visual organization**

From what I can see, MS NetMeeting became harder to use and more difficult to understand. I was very disappointed by the complexity of the new layout and the new functionality of the entire program.

![Screen dump from Microsoft NetMeeting 3.01](image)

**Fig. 1: Screen dump from Microsoft NetMeeting 3.01**

For example: The “Find Someone” screen in Fig. 1 contains poor designs:

1. When this screen first appears, the focus is set directly in the “Type name” box (circled in green), while nothing seems to be showing up. In actuality, the program is trying to connect you to uls.microsoft.com. There are no status bar that shows the attempt or to tell the user to wait.

2. The combo box (circled in red) lists only uls.microsoft.com, which is often down or very busy. Previous version of MS NetMeeting gave you several sites where you could connect. It doesn't really tell you how to can find other sites.
3. The Microsoft directory option in the combo box will take you to Microsoft’s webpage so that you sign up for an account with them... the usual way of trying to convert everyone to use their product more than others. It does really list users who are connected using NetMeeting at the moment. CUSeeMe allows you to search for anyone using their software directly, without even having to connect to another server. You can search by e-mail, name, location, etc.

4. How do you connect to a friend's IP? Would entering the name in the “Type name” box enable the “Call” button? Do I need to connect to one of Microsoft server first before being able to connect to someone else? I think in this case... an optional step-by-step chain of events would be useful to familiarize the user on how to make contact with someone.

Another Poor Visual Design

Another really badly design, and not so user-friendly software is TherapistHelper. TherapistHelper is a billing software used by doctors. It runs from $500-$700 per license. The program is very difficult to learn and not enough help is provided.
Spot at least four poor visual designs:

1. The first one, which is really obvious is the number of forms showing up. This was our first attempt to enter the billing for a fictitious person. The first form asks for the person’s name, then ask for tons more information that just keeps on cascading from one form into another. Here you can see six forms, which seems to persist quite a lot. Several entries require 3-8 forms to show up. The data to input is big, but the implementation by this software makes it even more complicated it bothersome.

2. The part circled in red shows a large space of wasted area. In fact, there is nothing after the cancel button (nor on the left side of the circle area)... Just plain blank.

3. The part circled in green shows 4 buttons overlapping. The print, Ok, cancel, and another that we can’t really figure out unless you expand the form’s size.

4. The yellow circles are the worst parts. The tab control is easy to follow. However, we had no idea that every single button in the right side (also in yellow) displayed more forms to fill out, which contained more tabs. At first we though it was options... select one of many. But actually it just displayed one form after the other. They are mostly required to be able to print an accurate bill. I guess you just have to read the manual completely to figure out how to print. Learnability is really low here.

5. You can't see it here, but they do provide ToolTips (or quick tips) at the beginning of the program when it first starts. However, they also do advertize their company and special promotions when the program ends. You can click on “Exit”, a common dialog box ask you to confirm that you want to exit the program. Once you click on yes, another common dialog box shows how great the program works, and that they provide other features and services. You can click “OK”, yet, another common dialog box pops up again asking if you want to back up your data now.

Good visual designs:
TherapistHelper have a lot of bad visual designs and widgets. They also have a few good ones. They show some glyphs on the command buttons for the OK and Cancel. The navigation bar on the first form shows icons with words

Nevertheless, overall, we just decided to give up on the software after the first attempt... After hours of frustration.