HCI 445 – Gray Team
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General Idea
Our project focused on providing a small engineering firm with some qualitative feedback that their team could use to shape future design research activities. The company, RLE Technologies, currently produces a small device that can detect a water leak and emit an audible alarm, similar to a smoke detector. Our design research was focused on exploring a web service that would accompany this device, allowing consumers of this product to receive an alert on their cell phone in the event that the device detects water. This text or email message would be in addition to the audible alert functionality currently built into the device and would help ensure that customers are made aware of the potentially damaging situation immediately, even if they're not at home. RLE also envisions a website that would support the shopping, buying, setup, and ownership stages of this customer experience. The website would also allow a customer to manage alert preferences and potentially view the status of their various home sensors.

Our goal was to conduct interviews with homeowners to understand their thoughts/questions/needs related to this alert idea and the supporting website.

Interesting Finding
The most interesting finding was related to participants desire to research online, but not purchase. Almost all participants indicated that they did not know much about products like this… so they'd likely turn to the Internet to help them understand it. After researching it, which included looking for customer reviews, most participants indicated that they wanted to see it in person at a store like Home Depot or Lowes. This finding was meaningful because it informed the relative priority of making online purchase functionality available only after customer reviews and product information was created. In hindsight, it makes sense, but was not something we were thinking about initially.

Lessons Learned

What you would do differently if you were to conduct this method in the future?
- I'd probably spend additional time iterating on the script and doing dry-runs… just to ensure the questions getting asked are really soliciting good feedback. After running a few interviews, we found a few questions that could easily have been dropped.

What was particularly difficult about this method?
- The most difficult part of this phone interview method was accurately capturing notes during the interview. I heard a few really good quotes, but we didn't record the interviews, so typing quickly and listening well was difficult at some points. It wasn't a hugh deal, but would have been nice to record them. However, recording them would have required double the amount of time to go back and review feedback.

How much time this method took?
- Interviews took longer than expected, about 45 minutes each.