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Date: 12/02/07

To: Professor Rob Myre

From: Karen Prieto

Re: Audience / Environment / Task Analysis

Hi Rob,

For my final PTC 632 project, I plan to upgrade my portfolio web site and various versions of my resume. Currently, all of these items are statically-generated and independently-maintained. In order to eliminate duplicate content and streamline maintenance, I wish to establish a single resume/portfolio content source using XML. Such a repository will allow me to generate resumes with customized content for different viewers, in different file formats, along with portions of my portfolio web site. (Eventually I hope to auto-generate the entire site, but for now I am focusing only on the resume, samples, and skills pages.)

In preparation for this project, I have researched my prospective viewers, their environment, and the task of reviewing my resume content. This memo describes my research methods and analysis for each.

Audience

Technique

My chosen "instrument" for analyzing my viewers (audience) is a questionnaire. But as recommended in Week 7 Course Notes (1), I started by considering my target market. At its broadest, my audience comprises all employment recruiters.

(Actually, I believe that I am my own target market, since I selected this project in the interest of my own convenience. Employment recruiters are only a secondary market. But since one of the goals of the final project is to practice researching user needs, I am treating recruiters as my primary audience for all intents and purposes.)

Since I have no desire to move west, or work out of the country, I can narrow my audience target market to employment recruiters for companies in the eastern United States.

This market breaks into two major segments: "internal" – those who are recruiting for their own company, and "third-party" – those who work for employment or contract agencies and are recruiting on behalf of a client company. For my analysis, I needed representatives of both segments.

Unfortunately, my respondent pool is slim – since I am not actively looking for work, I feel uncomfortable asking recruiters for their time. But I periodically receive email solicitations for job postings, and typically send personal "thanks but no thanks" replies, so I speculated that some of these recruiters would be willing to complete my questionnaire. Therefore, I selected the three most recent solicitors as third-party representatives.

To represent internal recruiters, I asked two members of Verizon Wireless (VZW) Human Resources (HR) to participate. I would prefer to have input from more than one company, but do not currently have HR contacts outside of VZW.

Before developing my questionnaire, I paused to consider what crucial information I was looking for, and identified these key questions:

- Do candidate search methods include online / DB searching?

- What is preferred resume format (paper, PDF, word, XML…)?

- Is an assignment / skills/ sample matrix valuable?

These key questions provided the foundation for my questionnaire, which I kept as short as possible. For the full questionnaire text, please see Appendix A - Questionnaire on page 5.

Analysis

All questionnaire participants use some form of electronic search when looking for candidates, as shown in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 on page 7. But they tend to have interruptions while working (Figure 4 on page 8). To accommodate users who may be unable to devote 100% attention to the material they are reviewing, I will ensure that both resume and portfolio contain key phrases to facilitate online searching. For the portfolio, I will also try to present information in small, clearly-labelled groups of information.

For preferred resume format, the majority indicated Microsoft® Word (Figure 5 on page 9), which clashes with my plan to produce PDF resumes. I may need to add the ability to generate resumes in Word, although I typically insist on PDF files in order to reduce the chances of my resume being accidentally (or intentionally) altered without my knowledge. One respondent asked for resume data in XML format, presumably for importing straight to an internal database. These differing preferences underscore the advantages of single-sourced content.

As far as a matrix to cross-reference assignments with skills and samples, most respondents were uncertain of the value, even though most do request samples some of the time (Figure 6 and Figure 7 on page 9). As a result, I may eliminate the matrix / table that I envisioned for my portfolio website, and just use hyperlinks to tie information together.

Environment

Technique

To plan my environment analysis, I referenced Driscoll, who provides a list of environmental topics for use in designing web-based training (91-96). Several apply to web users in general – and therefore to visitors of my portfolio site:

1. Which web browsers are used?

2. What OS do they use?

3. What is users' typical connection speed?

Detailed information of this nature is available for sale from marketing companies such as Nielsen or WebSideStory. And general statistics are available at no cost from sites such as W3schools.

Therefore, I opted to exclude environmental questions such as "which browser do you use" from my questionnaire, out of respect for my respondents' time. Instead, I referenced online statistics and web design best practices for ballpark statistics.

Analysis

According to W3schools and Radok™ Internet Consulting, the majority of web users have either Firefox or later versions of Internet Explorer, use a Windows® operating system, and have a broadband connection at their place of employment. For details, see Figure 8, Figure 9, and Figure 10 on page 10.

Since my resume/portfolio content does not require large multimedia files, and has a fairly simple organization, I can easily accommodate the majority of visitors.

Task

Technique

Some task analysis methods seem inappropriate for my resume project. For example, an affinity diagram, described in *Week 8 Course Notes* (2) is out of place, since my users are reviewing and processing information rather than performing a procedure. So I opted to use a prototype, by asking questionnaire participants to review and comment on a current resume and my current portfolio site.

I supplemented the prototype comments with an online search for resume writing tips, as well as design best practices from usability experts such as Jakob Nielsen and Steve Krug.

Analysis

In general, my questionnaire participants were satisfied with the provided resume sample. But there were a couple comments of note:

- Objective vs. Summary

  In an online article about resumes, ContractJobHunter advocates using a summary paragraph instead of an objective when applying for contracting assignments. My questionnaire results support this: both internal respondents suggested added an Objective section, although neither seemed to mind the presence of the Summary section. None of the third-party respondents mentioned an objective.

  In light of this information, I plan to create a conditional Objective section that will appear only in resumes generated for internal recruiters.

- Contact Information

  ContractJobHunter advises including one or more mailing addresses, but most questionnaire participants seemed satisfied with phone number and email address. Only one respondent suggested adding a home

address to the sample resume. One third-party respondent noted that contact information must be removed before the resume can be submitted to a client for evaluation.

For now, I will continue to exclude home address from my resume for security purposes. But I will make the phone number, email address, and web site values conditional, so that I can optionally exclude them in resumes generated for third-party recruiters.

In response to my portfolio web page sample, participants had several minor suggestions. Two recommended changing "Skills" to "Samples," which I think is a good idea. Another suggested removing the Format column, and another asked to have all samples listed on a single page for easier reference. My usability research revealed a few other considerations:

- Navigation

  According to Steve Krug (62), persistent, or global, navigation should include these five elements:

  – The site's name or logo

  – A link to the home page

  – Links to the site's major sections

  – A search tool

  – Links to the site's utilities

    (utilities are "important elements of the site that aren't really part of the content hierarchy.")

  Thurow (94) recommends using hypertext for a site's global navigation to increase search engine visibility. Search spiders can follow text links easily, and search engines often assign higher relevance to hyperlink anchor text. Thurow also observes that hypertext navigation has usability benefits because visitors intuitively understand the difference between visited and unvisited link colors (91).

  Currently my portfolio site includes Krug's first three items, and employs text navigation links, but does not have a local search feature. Thanks to Google™ Free SiteSearch, local searching is now very easy to provide, so I should add this to my site's design. (The site has no utilities, thus does not need Krug's last item.)

- Navigation

  According Nielsen, online copy is more effective when presented as small chunks of information (112). Therefore I will probably split HTML version of my resume across several pages.

- Metadata

  According to Shari Thurow in *Search Engine Visibility* (49-50), key phrases should reflect terms that potential customers are searching for, and should include common abbreviations, misspellings, and synonyms. My resume already contains multiple buzzwords, but I need to also include them in the search metadata of each page of the HTML resume.

Conclusion

Both segments of my target audience use online / electronic search methods when looking for candidates, but are likely to have interruptions when doing so. There is a tendency to prefer resumes in Word format across both segments, but PDF and XML are also options.

Internet trends indicate that over 80% of users employ a Windows operating system with either an Internet Explorer or Firefox browser, and have high speed connections while at work. It is possible that these general statistics do not exactly fit my target audience, but since my audience consists of professionals who frequently use computers, I feel confident in applying these general stats. Additionally, my website has no complex or media-intensive content, so should be fully viewable by most visitors anyway.

As for the design of my resume itself, feedback has highlighted several ways in which I can customize for different audience segments and purposes.

As impractical as it is, I tend to want to make "everybody happy." Single sourcing my resume content will at least help me to accommodate differing opinions more easily, and hopefully bring happiness to a somewhat larger portion of "everybody."

Appendix A - Questionnaire

1. When looking for candidates, , how often do you search job posting sites, such as Monster or Dice®? (Always / Sometimes / Never)

2. When looking for candidates, how often do you employ online search engines, such as Google™ or Yahoo®? (Always / Sometimes / Never)

3. Does your company maintain an internal database of candidates? (Yes / No / Not sure)

4. When looking for a candidate, how often are you typically interrupted by other responsibilities? (Frequently / Sometimes / Seldom)

5. What information do you expect to see in a resume (check all that apply):

   - Address
   - Phone Number
   - Objective
   - Skills Summary
   - Education level
   - Education details (school, location, major)
   - Employer names
   - Employers' addresses
   - Agency names
   - Agencies' addresses
   - Job / work assignment dates
   - Job / work assignment descriptions.
   - Other (please specify) _____

6. What is your preferred resume format? (select one):

   - Hardcopy – faxed
   - Hardcopy – mailed
   - Text file
   - HTML file
   - Microsoft® Word® file
   - Adobe® PDF file
   - Email (as embedded text, rather than attachment)
   - Other (please specify) _____

7. When evaluating candidates, would an alternate, tabular view of resume content be helpful? (Yes / No / Not sure)

8. How often do you ask for samples of prior work? (Always / Sometimes / Never)

9. Please review this resume: http://www.geocities.com/kprieto01/kprieto-TW_web.pdf

   In your opinion,

   a. is any information missing?

   b. should any information be removed?

    c.   are the items in a usable order?

    d.   can you recommend any other changes?

10. Please visit this webpage, http://www.geocities.com/kprieto01/samples1.html, and browse the links across the top.

    In your opinion,

    a.   are the items in a usable order?

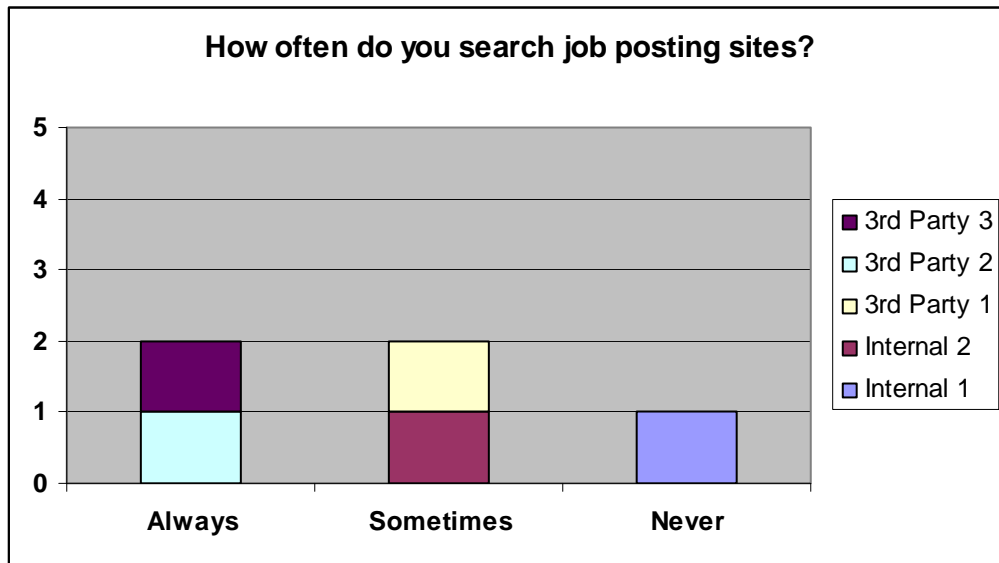   b.   can you recommend any other changes?

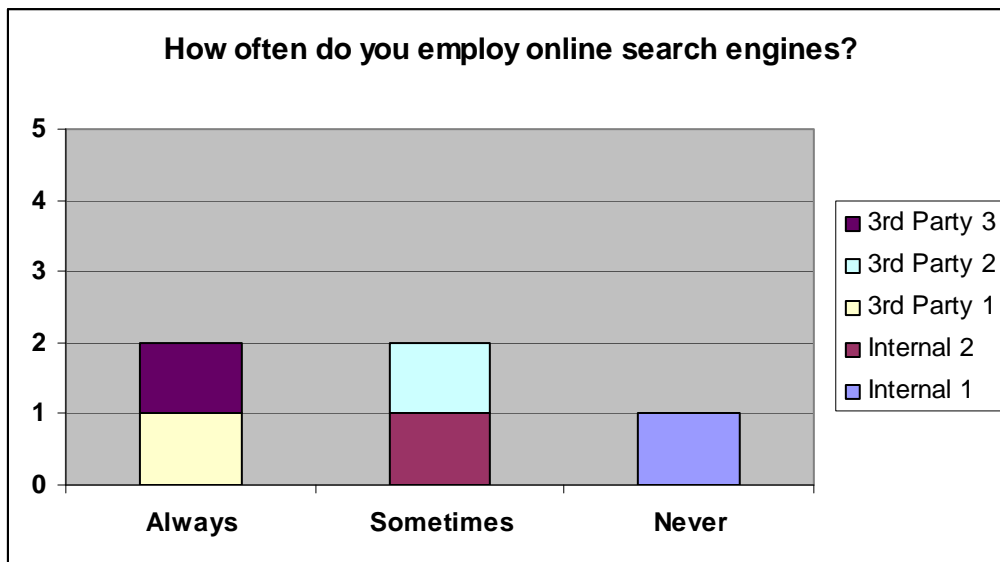## Appendix B - Responses

Figure 1   Audience – Question 1
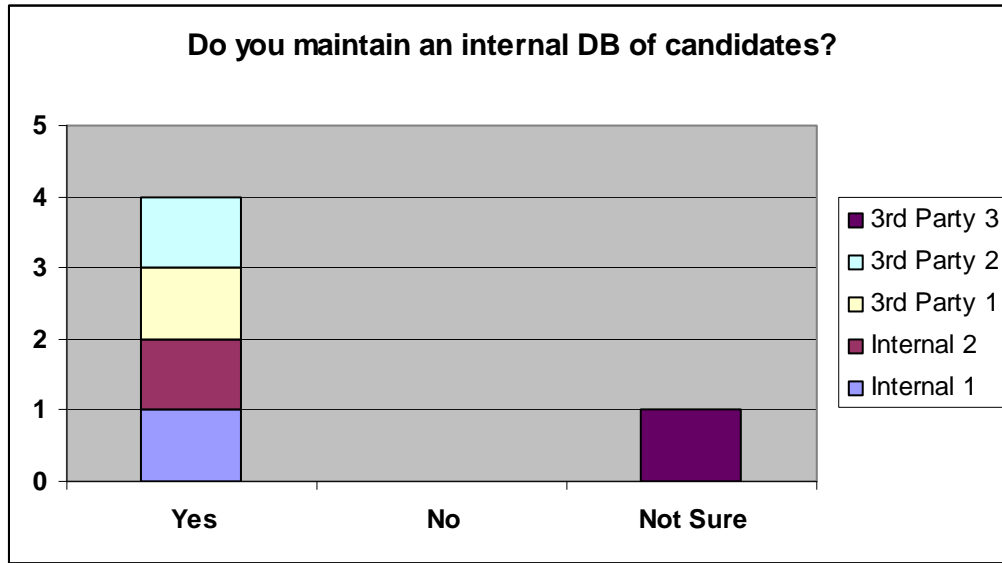

Figure 2   Audience – Question 2

Do you maintain an internal DB of candidates?

Figure 3   Audience – Question 3

How often are you typically interrupted?
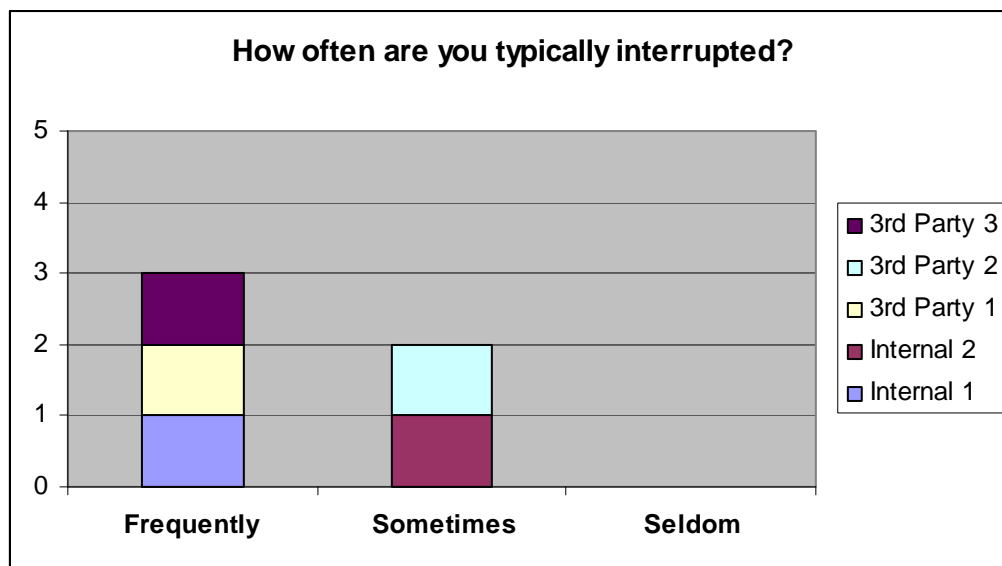
Figure 4   Audience – Question 4

- Back to Audience Analysis -

What is preferred resume format?

H/C faxed	H/C mailed	Text file	HTML file	Word® file	PDF file	Email	Other

Legend:
- 3rd Party 3
- 3rd Party 2
- 3rd Party 1
- Internal 2
- Internal 1
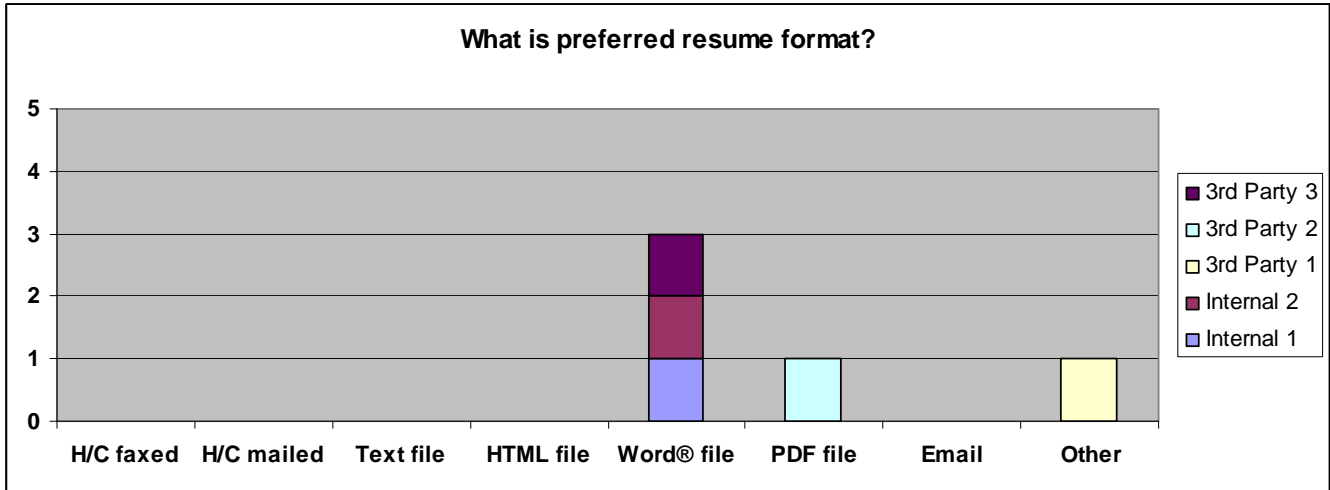
Figure 5   Audience – Question 6

Would tabular view of resume content be helpful?

Yes	No	Not Sure

Legend:
- 3rd Party 3
- 3rd Party 2
- 3rd Party 1
- Internal 2
- Internal 1
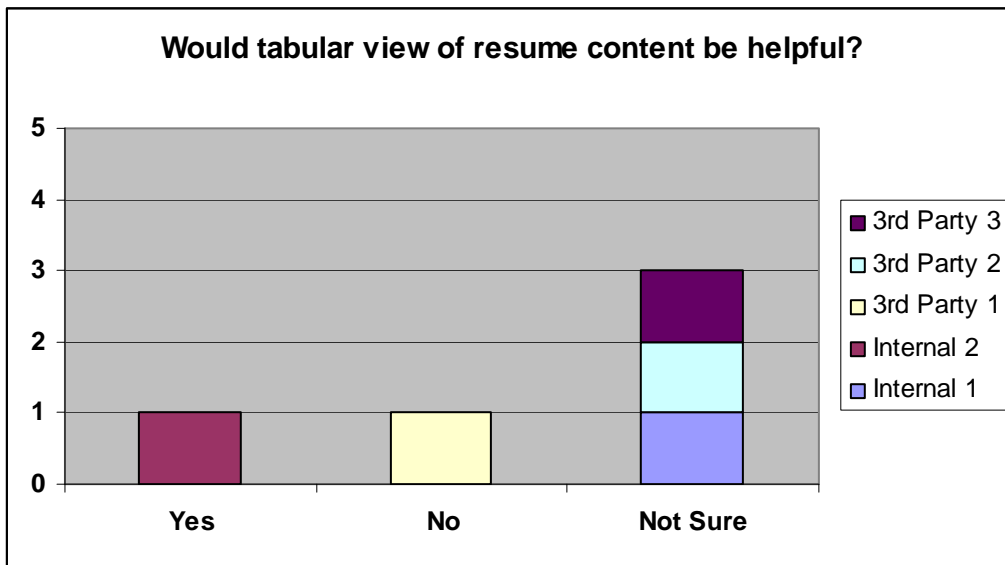
Figure 6   Audience – Question 7

- Back to Audience Analysis -

How often do you ask for samples?

Legend:
- 3rd Party 3
- 3rd Party 2
- 3rd Party 1
- Internal 2
- Internal 1

Categories: Always, Sometimes, Never
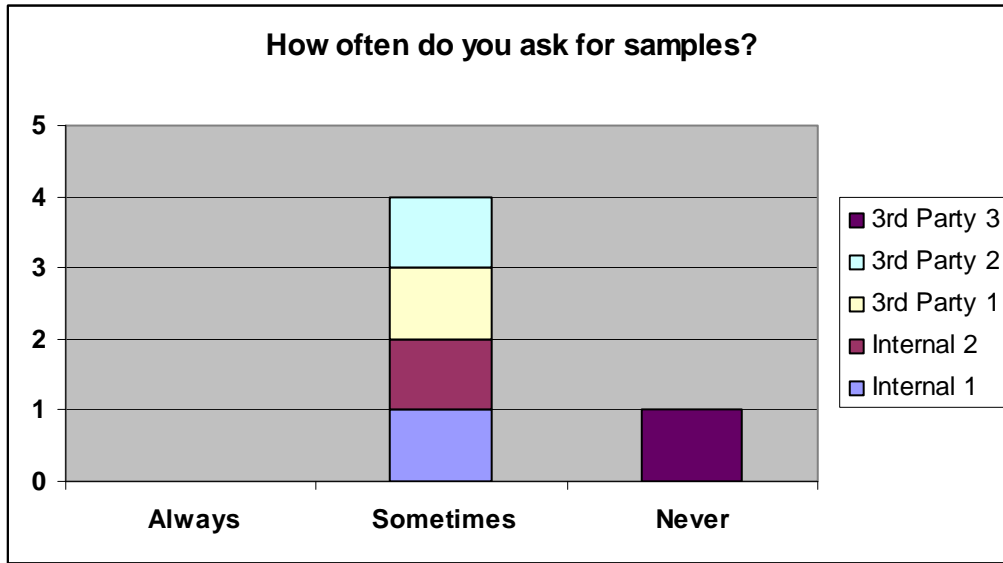
Figure 7   Audience – Question 8

- Back to Audience Analysis -

Web Browsers

Browser	W3schools (Oct'07)	Radok (Dec'06)
Internet Explorer	57.0%	73.0%
Firefox	36.0%	23.0%
Others	4.6%	4.0%
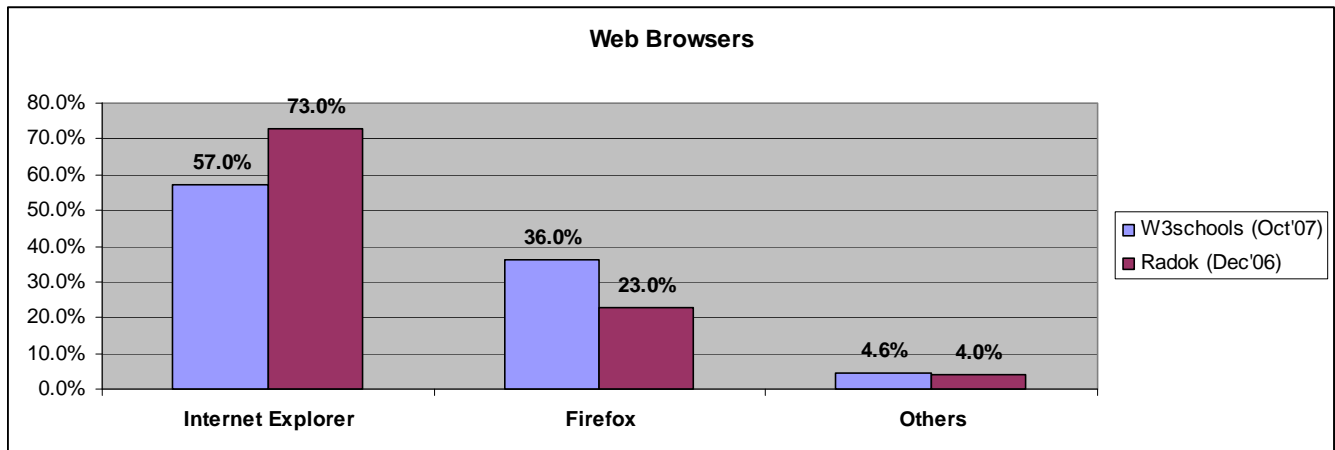
Figure 8   Environment – Question 1

Operating Systems
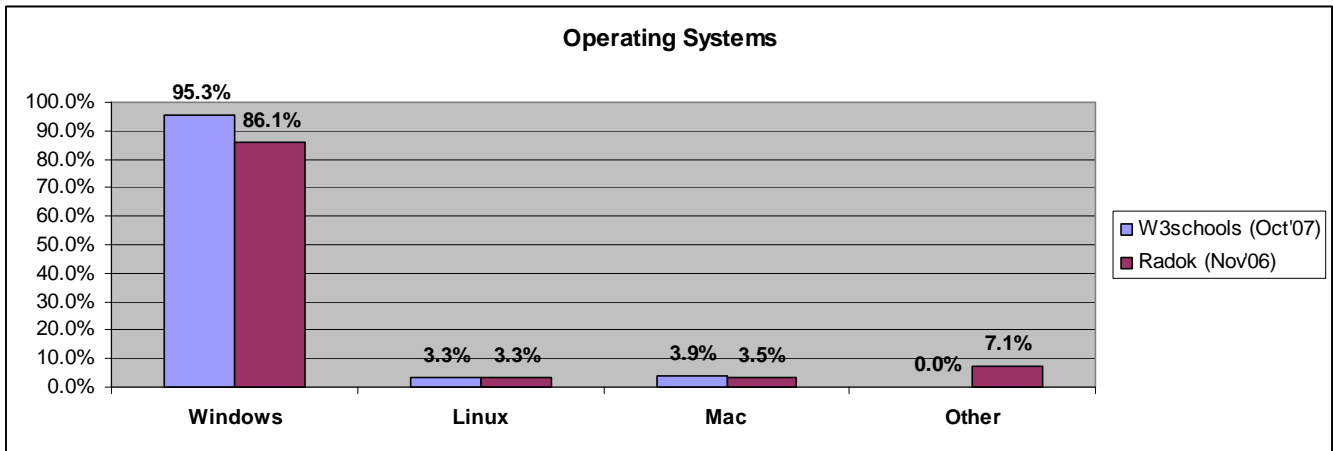
Figure 9   Environment – Question 2

Bandwidth at Work

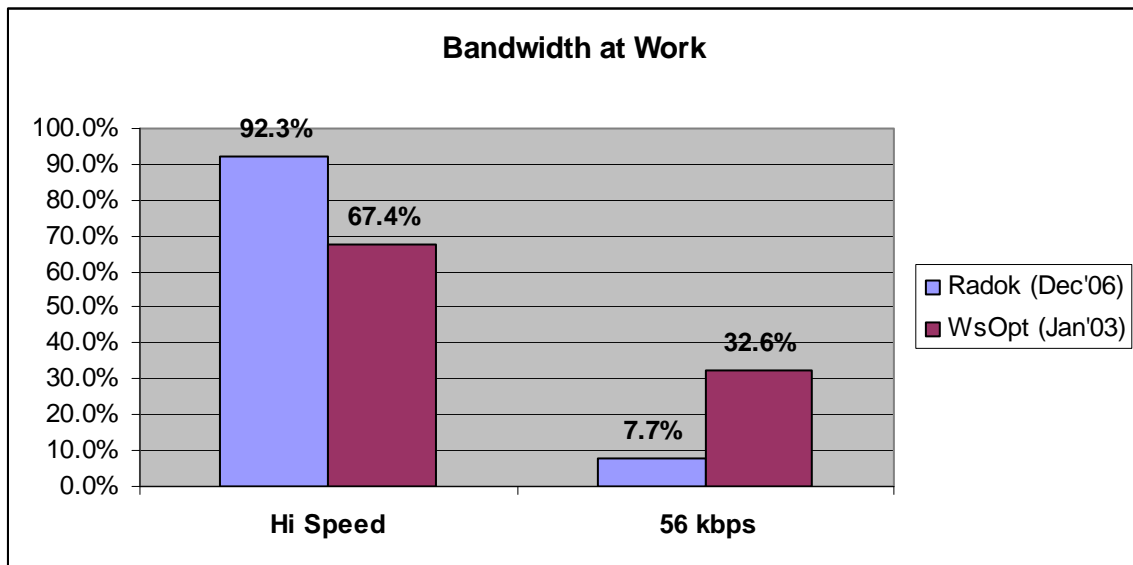**Figure 10   Environment – Question 3**

- Back to Environment Analysis –

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