iPhone User Interface Anti-Patterns

Eric Hackathorn
UCAR Software Engineering Assembly
February 23, 2012
UI Anti-Pattern: A design that causes at least as many problems as it solves, despite better options being available.

- Sleight of Hand
- Billboards
- Bullhorns
- The Bouncer
- Gesture Hijacking

Ideas “borrowed” from:

[Image of a book cover with the title 'Programming the iPhone User Experience']
Sleight of Hand
Swapping Meaning for Hot Areas

iPhone is Locked

iPhone is Unlocked
Sleight of Hand
Swapping Meaning for Hot Areas

• Consider muscle memory and habit
• Overlay screens and consider proximity
• Account for an extra and accidental touch
Billboards
Avoid Displaying An About or Splash Screen

- Forget “quit” and “launch”
- Replace with “pause” and “un-pause”
- Think about fast application cycling
- Don’t put branding ahead of users
A Better Method: Progressive Reveal

- Show a structured screen without the user data
- Give the impression that your application un-pauses
- Make application cycling addictive
Bullhorns

Notification mechanisms that are disproportional to the message

It works, but it detracts from the immersive experience
A Better Method: Appropriate Notifications

Keep the message as passive as the situation merits
The Bouncer
Providing Value only for Registered Users
A Better Method

- If possible, allow users to register from the application
- Provide value and information
- Reward installs instead of penalizing or stonewalling
Gesture Hijacking
Using Established Gestures for Novel Behavior in a Single Application

• Gestures are learned, not genetically bestowed
• Hijacking learned gestures creates uncertainty, hindering the user experience
A Better Method: Details View

Crowded interfaces are a real challenge.

Novel gestures might seem like a solution, but they too must be learned.
Summary

• UI anti-patterns are not bugs, dumb features, or bad code
• Best practices (and the worst) are still emerging
• Compete in the App Store, cooperate on the device
• Differentiate, but not at the expense of usability

Questions?