

# Search, Comments, and Settings Testing: Outcomes & Recommendations

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- Overview
- Process
  - Re-designs of
    - Topical article commenting and reporting.
    - search results, and
    - expand/collapse icons on widgets,
  - validation of design direction for user preferences and settings.
- Tests were conducted 26-29 Sep and 3, 5 Oct, consisted of task analysis, some with A/B scenarios, and were followed by a System Usability Scale questionnaire.
- Participants were drawn from the Insider User Group on an open-invitation basis.
- Response to recruiting was, in a break with past recruitment attempts, very robust. Whereas past testing series have sometimes struggled for weeks to attract a viable number of participants (15-16), within an hour of issuing a call for testers for this round, 70% of the available sessions were filled. This despite the fact the number of sessions was increased by nearly two thirds (36 from 22) over previous test series. (Note 1) With a follow-through rate (those who attended the sessions they scheduled) of 76%, the cohort was large enough to allow for additional or follow-on elements to be added to some tests. As a result, potential solutions to issues revealed in early tests could be investigated in later sessions. Specifically, the expectation by some users to add more information about why they were reporting a comment, lead to a change in the workflow in which users were presented with a dialogue to capture their notes.
- Recommendations
  - The icon used to control the expand-collapse functionality on cards/tiles/widgets should be changed to up (collapse) and down (expand) chevron icons.
  - The User Settings & Preferences page should be positioned in the top right corner of the page and its introduction should be supported with onsite orientation/promotion.
  - Search results should be re-designed to align with the approach used in the testing prototype.
  - The layout of the Comments portion of Topical article pages should be re-designed according to the approach used in the prototype for testing.
  - When flagging content as inappropriate anywhere on the site, users should be presented with an opportunity to note their reasons.

## Overview

### Process

This test series included

- re-designs of
  - Topical article commenting and reporting.
  - search results, and
  - expand/collapse icons on widgets,
- validation of design direction for user preferences and settings.

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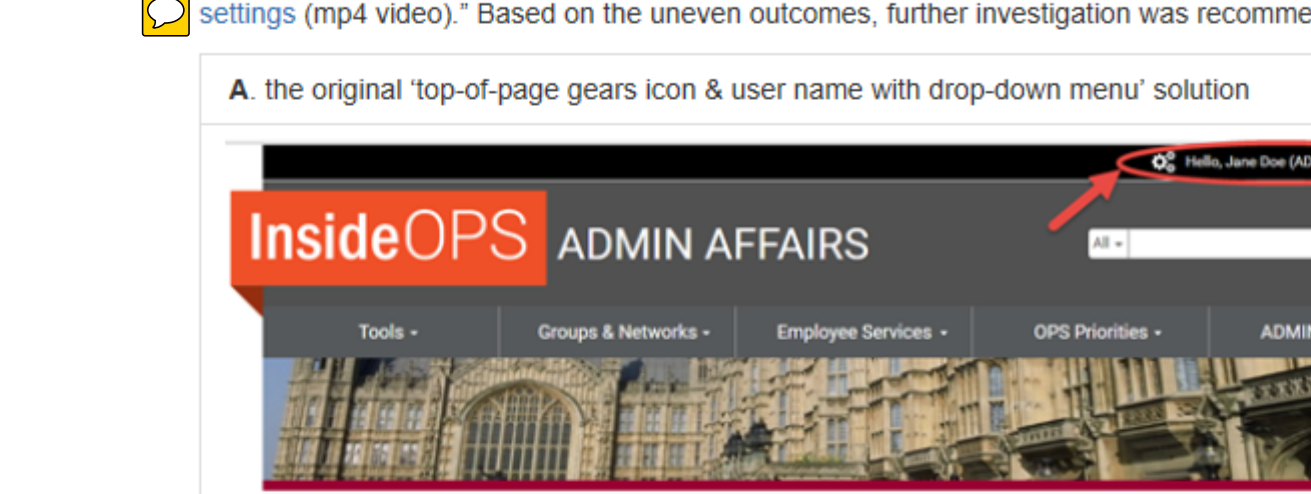
## Task Observations & Outcomes

### Scenario 1

#### Description

What does THAT (card expand/collapse icon) do? (Start on Home page)

Testing of unrelated functionality in a previous test series revealed many users did not recognise the "..." icon used on cards to trigger the expand-collapse function. (Note 2) In many cases, users selected the icon expecting to see more content or navigate to another page (mp4 video). In this round, participants were presented cards with one of two options (A/B).



Users asked to predict what effect selecting the "..." icon would have were routinely surprised with the actual result. Users overwhelmingly predicted the outcome of selecting the "..." accurately.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"This would indicate there is more news -- that the content being displayed isn't current."</li> <li>"That would tell me I'm able to go on to a new page."</li> <li>"You click it to access an additional menu."</li> <li>"Either a menu or will change the options."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Collapse and expand."</li> <li>"Makes it squish."</li> <li>"More or less option -- you can minimize or maximize area."</li> <li>"Can open and close the window."</li> </ul>
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#### Outcomes & Recommendations

The icon used to control the expand-collapse functionality on cards/tiles/widgets should be changed to up (collapse) and down (expand) chevron icons per Home page B in prototype.

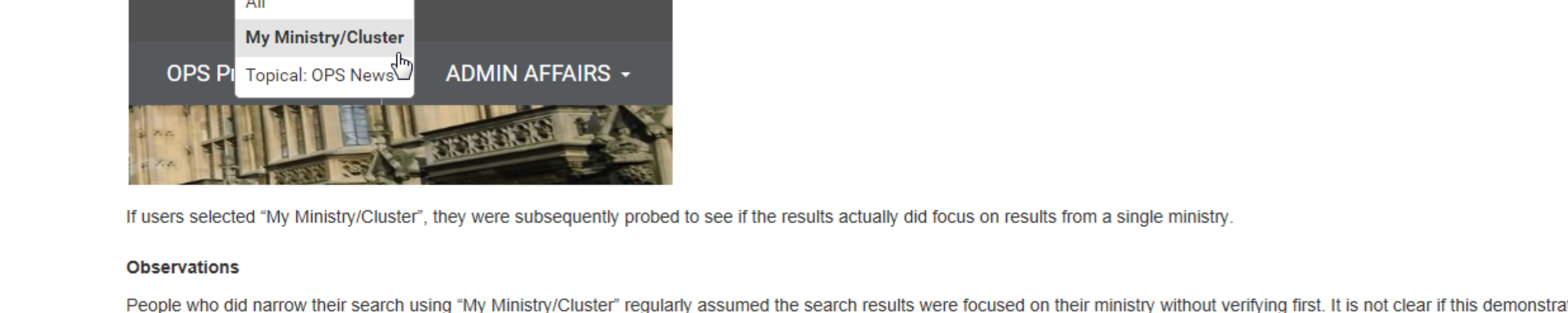
### Scenario 2

#### Description

Imagine you're Jane Doe, an employee in the Ministry of Administrative Affairs on a short secondment to the Ministry of Labour. Your email doesn't change, so InsideOPS continues to display Admin Affairs news on your Home page.

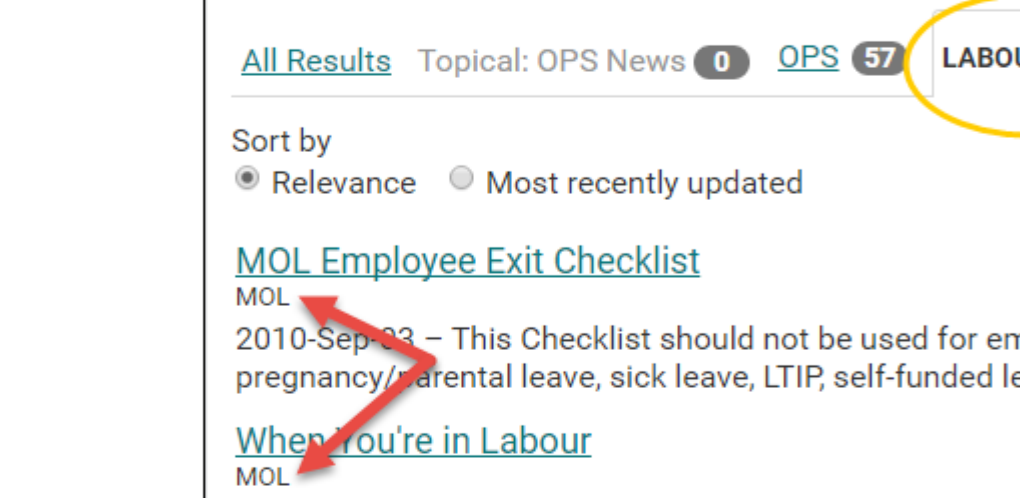
How would you go about changing the ministry news that appears on your Home page from Admin Affairs to Labour? (Start on Home page)

Previous testing indicated a less than broadly uniform level of uptake with the original solution (gears icon and user name with drop-down menu). "Younger users, or those more tech savvy, quickly associated the gears icon with 'settings', recognising the similarity to icons used for settings in apps and other Web sites. ... while other ... users were slow to perceive the 'conuser name combination as a potential path to settings' (mp4 video)." Based on the uneven outcomes, further investigation was recommended and an A/B task analysis was created. In the task, participants were presented pages with one of two options.



A far higher number of participants, approximately two to one, successfully completed the task when presented option A. In some cases, people presented with option B selected the "Hello, Jane Doe (ADMIN AFFAIRS)" text in the top right corner and were frustrated when it did not link them to a Settings page.

(4 min, 38 sec; 15.4Mb; mp4 video)



A small, but distinct, cohort expected a path to settings in the main navigation options. Those people typically went to Tools or Admin Affairs (ministry) saying they expected to find either:

- an option linking them directly to a Settings page or
- a way to navigate to different ministries.

#### Outcomes & Recommendations

The User Settings & Preferences menu should be positioned in the top right corner of the page per option A.

Introduction of the User Settings & Preferences menu could be advanced by feature awareness messaging. The InsideOPS Feature card could, for example, lead to an About InsideOPS page heralding the new functionality. Doing so will not eliminate the likelihood some users will try to navigate to settings via the global navigation, it might well help to offset it.

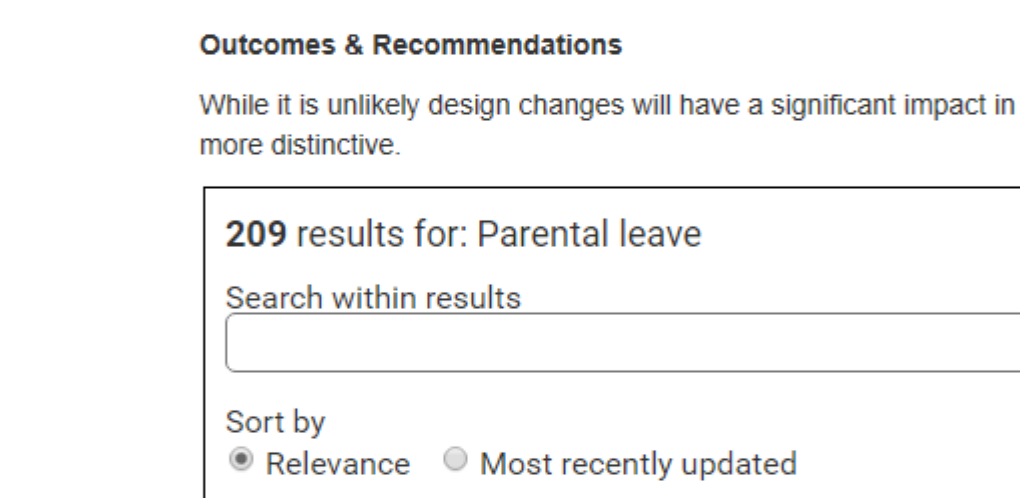
### Scenario 3

#### Description

Imagine you have been researching parental leave. You have gone through all the Shared Services, OPS wide information, but then someone says to you "Don't forget about that ministry checklist you have to fill out." How would you search just your ministry for "parental leave"? (Start on Home page)

Original plans for Search included a filter for search terms. Project leadership requested the filtering option be added to an upcoming release of InsideOPS and a test of its proposed configuration was proposed. Positioned at the front of the Search field was a drop-down menu with the following options:

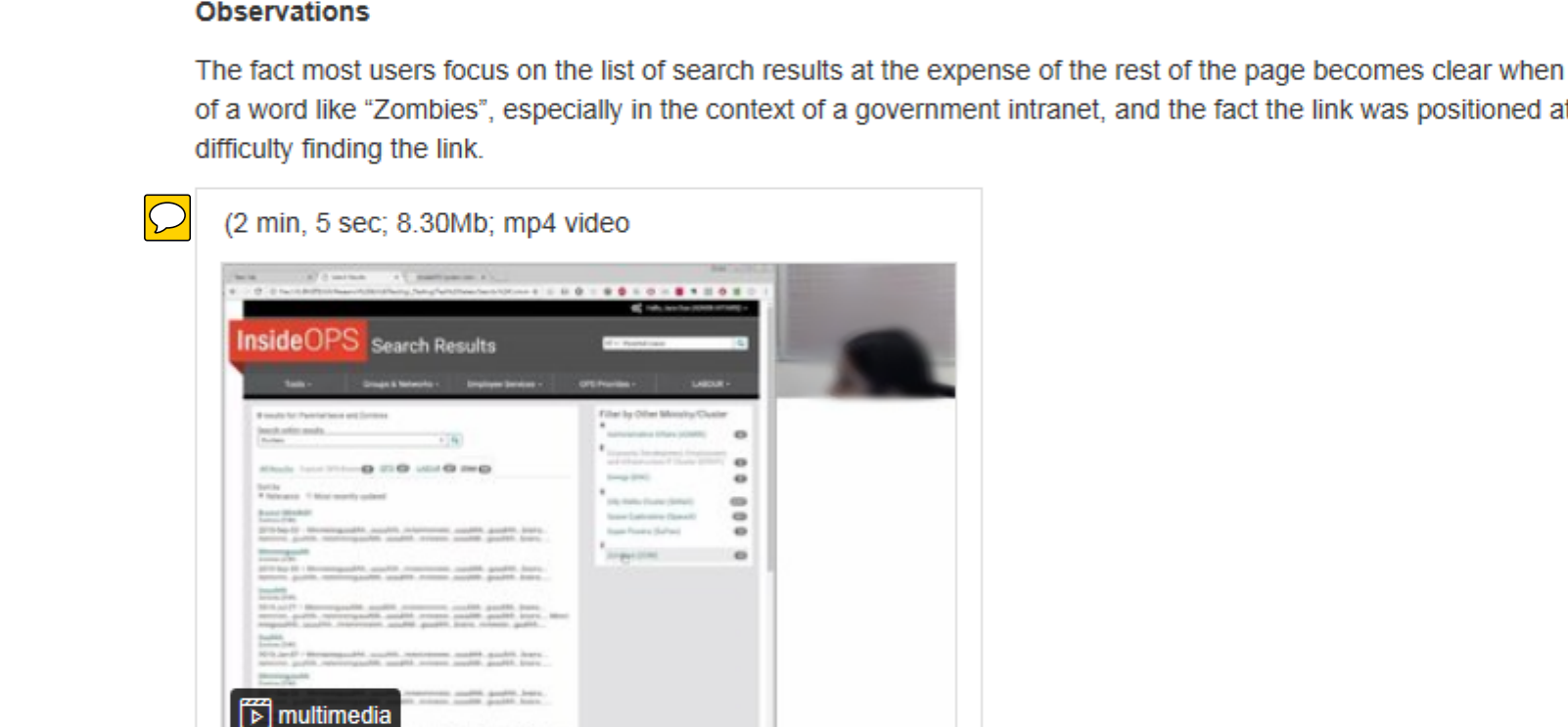
- All
- My Ministry/Cluster
- Topical: OPS News



If users selected "My Ministry/Cluster", they were subsequently probed to see if the results actually did focus on results from a single ministry.

#### Observations

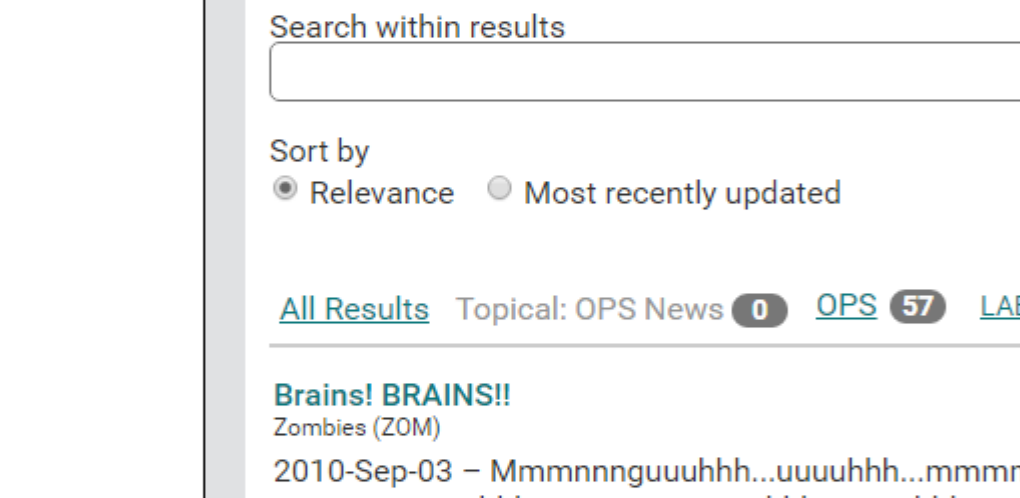
People who did narrow their search using "My Ministry/Cluster" regularly assumed the search results were focused on their ministry without verifying first. It is not clear if this demonstrates a high level of trust in the search capabilities, as many other users preferred to browse for the information, assuming the search would be ineffective based on their experience of MyOPS. When asked how they knew the search results were focused on their ministry, most pointed to the "MOL" under the page header for each result. Few, however, referenced the "LABOUR" tab. Often, the tabs were ignored altogether as users focused their attention on the list of results.



Outcomes & Recommendations

Add the search focus to the search field, per the prototype, with the following changes:

- Change "All" to "All content".
- Add "Search" label.
- Use ministry abbreviation instead of "My Ministry/Cluster".



\*Top\*

### Scenario 4

#### Description

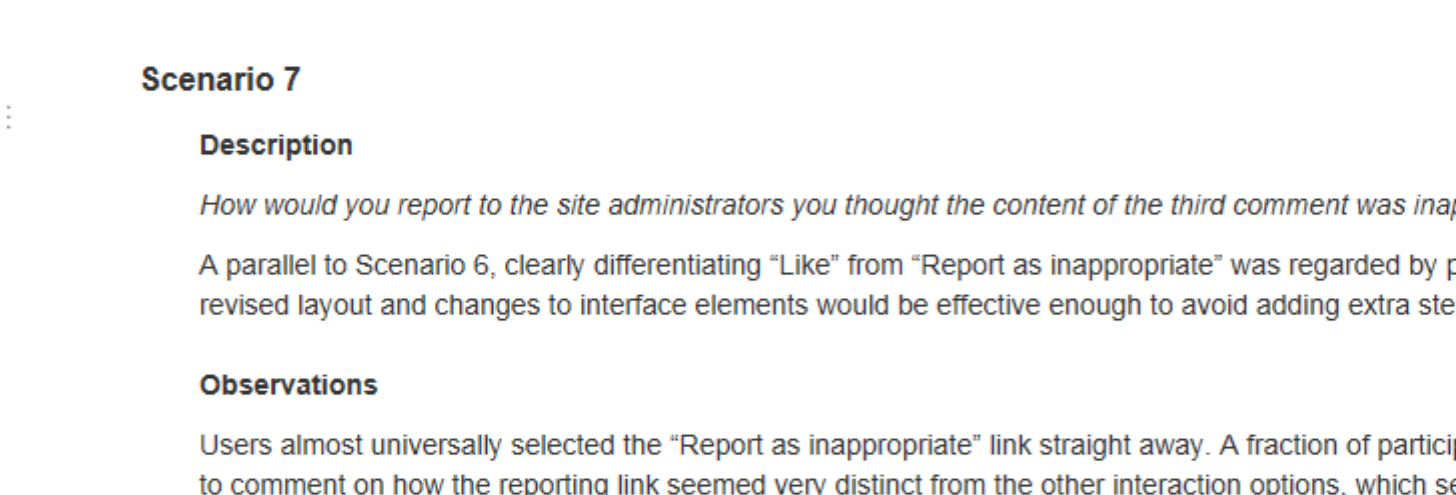
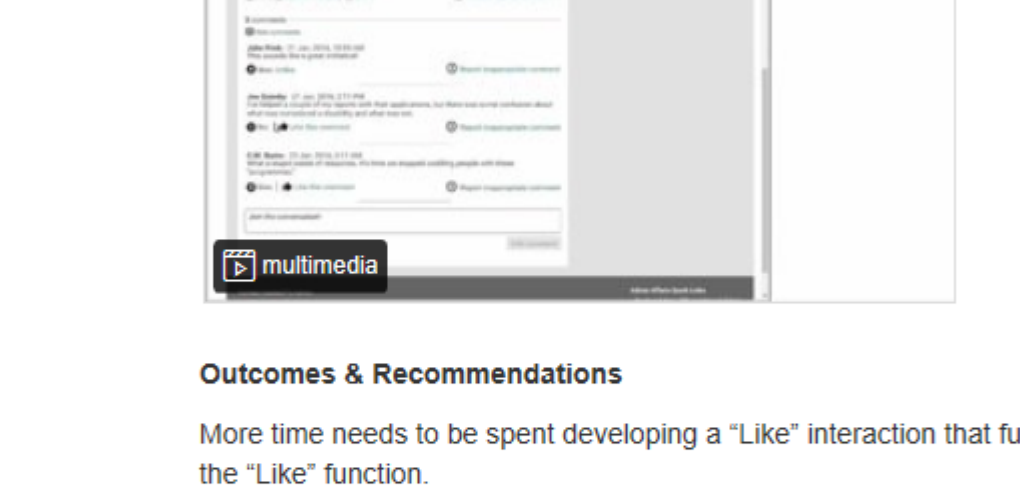
Are there any results available from "Topical: OPS News"? (Start on Search Results page)

An extension of Scenario 3, this task attempted to confirm whether the tabbed separation of search results was intelligible to users.

#### Observations

While users generally found the "Topical: OPS News (0)" tab and determined there were no results for Topical, some floundered for a while before landing on a solution.

(3 min, 18 sec; 12.1Mb; mp4 video)



\*Top\*

### Scenario 5

#### Description

How would you find search results from the Ministry of Zombies? (Start on Search Results page)

As more ministries and clusters migrate to InsideOPS, the current approach to enabling users to focus search results on a single ministry or cluster will become unwieldy. A more scalable solution to be used the right columns to house a listing of ministries and clusters. Doing so would also enable users to keep their current ministry/cluster search results in one tab while asking results from another ministry in a separate tab. The inevitable downside to this approach (just as in the current solution), however, is users tend to focus on actual search results, overlooking other content and functionality. (Note 4)

#### Observations

The fact most users focus on the list of search results at the expense of the rest of the page becomes clear when users are asked to find a way to add results below the Ministry of Zombies. Despite the uniqueness of a word like "Zombies", especially in the context of an internal intranet, and the fact the link was positioned at the bottom of a list with no other content below, it was not uncommon for some users to have difficulty finding the link.

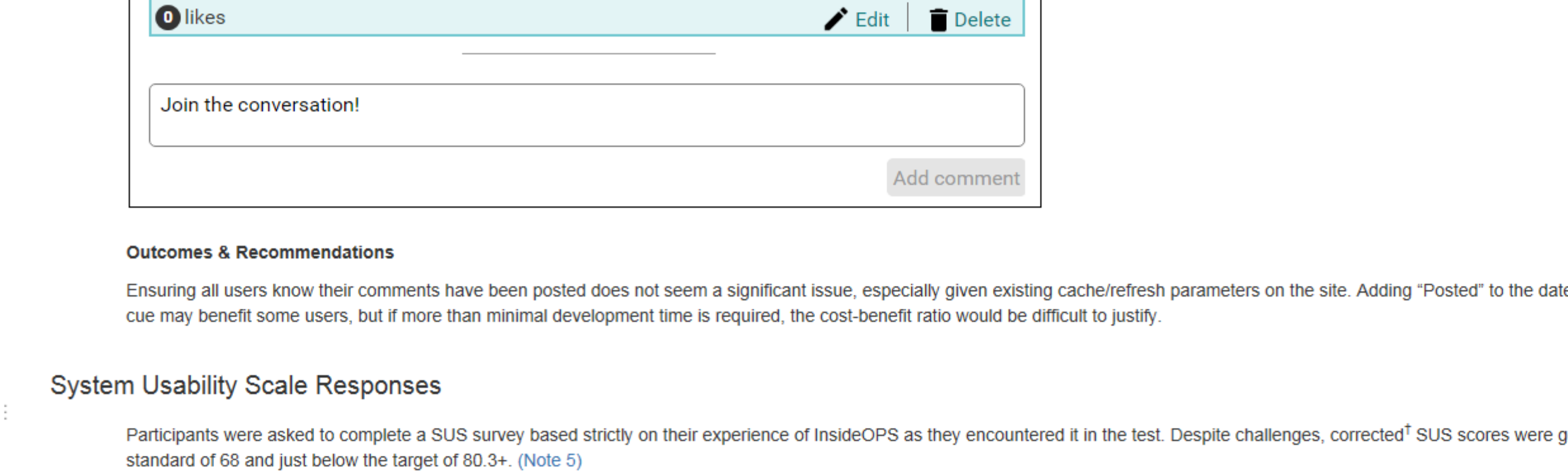
(2 min, 5 sec; 8.30Mb; mp4 video)



The fact some users reported "I just didn't look over there" when asked why they didn't use the link in the "Additional Ministries" section is hardly unusual and is, in fact, to be expected.

#### Outcomes & Recommendations

Moving from the tab menu approach to the right column card will bring greater scalability and additional context while introducing no new disadvantages. Slow, steady uptake by users should be expected with the understanding design or layout changes are unlikely to overcome the inherent constraints.



### Scenario 6

#### Description

How would you add a "Like" to the first comment? (Start on Topical Article page)

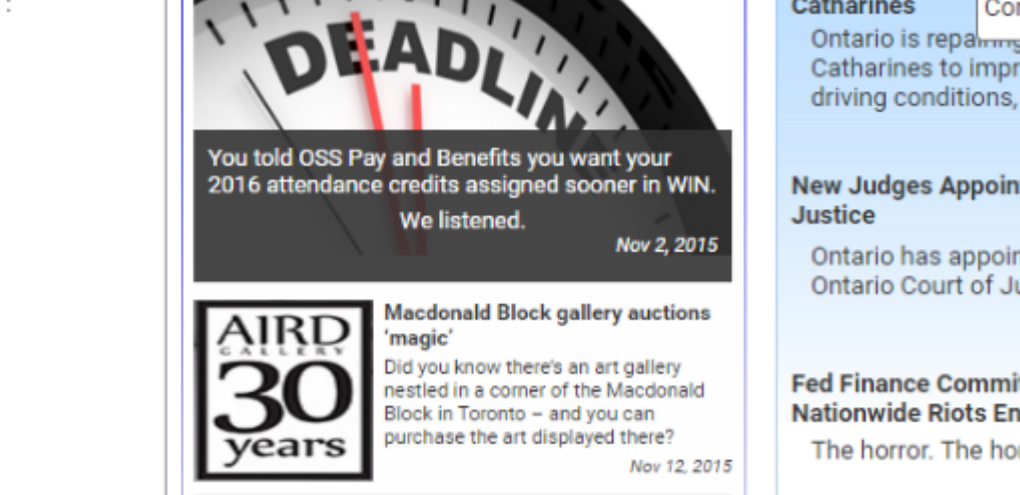
Administrators have been plagued by reports of inappropriate comments that, upon investigation, are revealed as unintentional (false positives). It was hoped by re-designing some of the interface elements and altering their layout, it would be possible to prevent false positives without having to complicate the workflow. The re-design included:

- making "Like" more explicit by replacing it with "Like this comment",
- adding a more obvious indication the user had already liked a comment, and
- not displaying a "Like" option when it could not be used (e.g. user's own comment).

#### Observations

Most users reported the "Like" function behaved as they expected. Some were, however, confused by the change from "Like this comment" to "Unlike this comment."

(2 min, 11 sec; 5.8Mb; mp4 video)



#### Outcomes & Recommendations

While flagging content as inappropriate anywhere on the site, users should be presented with an opportunity to note their reasons. Providing a summary of what is considered inappropriate as opposed to disagreeable, would likely increase users' comfort and confidence.

### Scenario 7

#### Description

How would you report to the site administrators you thought the content of the third comment was inappropriate? (Start on Topical Article page)

A parallel to Scenario 6, clearly differentiating "Like" from "Report as inappropriate" was regarded by project leadership as important, given the time expended by administrators on false positives. It was hoped a revised layout and changes to interface elements would be effective enough to avoid adding extra steps to the work flow just for the sake of verification.

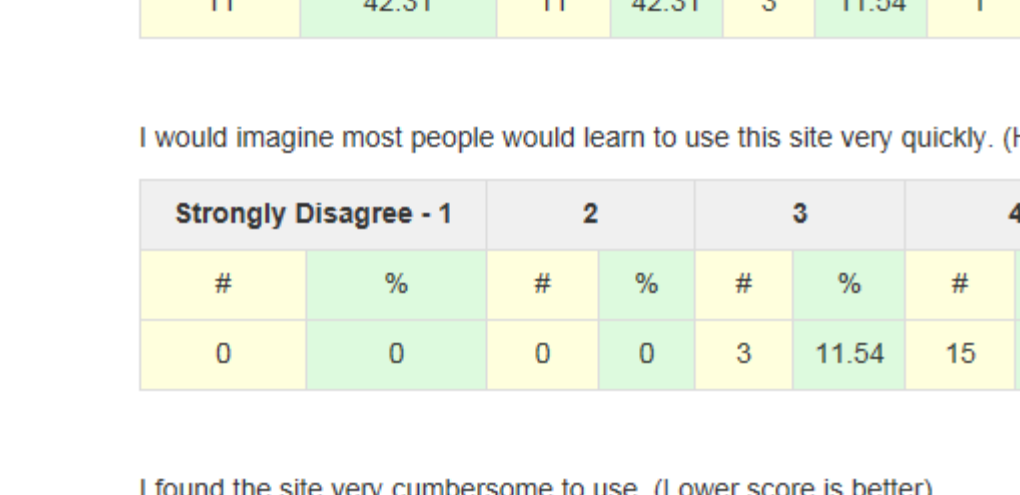
#### Observations

Users almost universally reported the "Report as inappropriate" link straight away. A fraction of participants took slightly longer than others, but no one failed to complete the task. Some users went far as to comment on how the reporting link seemed very distinct from the other interaction options, which seemed to vindicate the design-over-confirmation dialogue approach.

As users moved through the workflow, however, many expressed surprise at the lack of a confirmation dialogue. They expected to have an opportunity to add a note explaining why they were reporting the comment. The progression from selecting the "Report as inappropriate" link to seeing the "You reported this comment..." note was far too abrupt for an action with the possibility of negative repercussions for the original commenter.

Given the large number of participants, it was possible to build on the initial feedback and create two groups, each of which would complete the scenario either with or without a system dialogue. More than half the users who didn't encounter the dialogue reported expecting it and all users who did encounter it appreciated the opportunity it afforded them.

(4 min, 27 sec; 12.5Mb; mp4 video)



#### Outcomes & Recommendations

Ensuring all users know their comments have been posted does not seem a significant issue, especially given existing cache/refresh parameters on the site. Adding "Posted" to the date-time stamp or some other cue may benefit some users, but if more than minimal development time is required, the cost-benefit ratio would be difficult to justify.

## System Usability Scale Responses

Participants were asked to complete a SUS survey based strictly on their experience of InsideOPS as they encountered it in the test. Despite challenges, corrected SUS scores were good, far above the industry standard of 68 and just below the target of 80+ (Note 5)

The full set of SUS scores and ranges is available in Appendix A.

	Avg	A Avg	B Avg	High	Low
Raw	81.44	75.54	81.54	100	60
Corrected <sup>†</sup>	78.07	79.79	78.00	97.5	60

<sup>†</sup> Scores of "100" removed from calculation.

\*Top\*

## Endnotes

- By offering more sessions, spread over more days, it was hoped a few more people would sign-up than had in the past, resulting in a trade-off between having enough participants, but with large gaps between testing sessions.
- The original design of the cards included personalisation and customisation options, enabling users to early card configure the size, position, and availability of cards. An "..." icon is commonly used as a trigger for displaying menus of options related to the configuration of interface elements and was incorporated into enabling card designs.



Customisation options were eventually backgrounded, but the icon remained as the placeholder for the eventual configuration. Without the options, however, the icons were emptied of their original, and expected, meaning. The recommendations from that test series was to:

- Bernady and Lane created the term "Banner Blindness" in 1996, who over some experiments found that even after trying to make banners large, attention grabbing and brightly coloured, they were still ignored by participants who were looking for specific information to complete the assigned task. The banners were also ignored even when it was embedded with helpful information regarding the task. ... Many experts believe that when users browse through a website, they are in a "search mode" and hence ignore anything irrelevant." (Ankit Oberoi, "How Humans Read Web Pages: Reducing Banner Blindness" AdPostUp Blog, October 13, 2013).
- When people are seeking out specific information on Web sites, they skip content and interface elements that do not immediately signal a link between themselves and the sought after information. (Proff, Peter L.T. Information Foraging Theory: Adaptive Interaction with Information. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Jeff Sauro, "Measuring Usability With The System Usability Scale (SUS)" MeasuringU, 02-Feb-2011.

## Appendix A: SUS Scores

I think I would like to use this site frequently. (Higher score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
0	0	1	3.85	4	15.38	9	34.62	12	45.15	4.23

I found the site unnecessarily complex. (Lower score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
12	45.15	9	34.62	5	19.23	0	0	0	0	1.73

I thought the site was easy to use. (Higher score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
0	0	0	0	5	19.23	14	53.85	7	26.92	4.08

I think I would need someone's help to be able to use this site. (Lower score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
19	73.08	6	23.08	1	3.85	0	0	0	0	1.31

I found the various functions in this site were well integrated. (Higher score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
0	0	0	0	8	30.77	9	34.62	9	34.62	4.04

I thought there was too much inconsistency in this site. (Lower score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
11	42.31	11	42.31	3	11.54	1	3.85	0	0	1.77

I would imagine most people would learn to use this site very quickly. (Higher score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
0	0	0	0	3	11.54	15	57.69	8	30.77	4.19

I found the site very cumbersome to use. (Lower score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
16	61.54	8	30.77	2	7.69	0	0	0	0	1.46

I felt very confident using the site. (Higher score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
1	3.85	1	3.85	3	11.54	10	38.46	11	42.31	4.12

I needed to figure out a lot of things before I could get going with this site. (Lower score is better)

Strongly Disagree - 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree - 5	Weighted Average					
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
14	53.85	6	23.08	6	23.08	0	0	0	0	1.69