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Recap - Disrupt SF Hackathon 2012

UserTesting Picks Up \$3M To Bring Usability Testing To Mobile Apps And Abroad



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It's a terribly common situation: after hundreds of hours of thinking through and building a product, a startup finds that its users stumble through a sign-up flow or in finding a feature. That's in part why usability testing is a no brainer.

In fact, there's a bit of a cottage industry around this. Up until now, [UserTesting.com \(http://www.usertesting.com/\)](http://www.usertesting.com/) had been a bootstrapped business. It emerged over the past five years to attract between 11 and 12,000 customers who use it to record short videos of users testing their products and mobile apps. That roster includes clientele like Home Depot, Sears, Zappos and Dell. Former OpenTable CEO and Andreessen Horowitz general partner Jeff Jordan [even raved about the service in a recent post \(http://gigaom.com/2012/02/18/data-killed-the-hippo-star/\)](http://gigaom.com/2012/02/18/data-killed-the-hippo-star/), saying it helped them identify where users were dropping off in finalizing restaurant reservations.

So it's little surprise that the company is looking to scale up its business with some additional funding. The company's taking \$3 million in financing from San Francisco-based private equity firm Kern Whelan. While Kern Whelan isn't a traditional venture investor, it might be more well-suited to a business like UserTesting, which may have a more gradual natural growth trajectory than the 10X or 100X that a classic venture firm would be looking for.

"The company has already grown nicely on a pay-as-you-go basis," said [Darrell Benatar \(http://www.linkedin.com/in/benatar\)](http://www.linkedin.com/in/benatar), who co-founded the now 30-person company.

The funding will go toward UserTesting's expansion abroad and into mobile app usability testing, which is a veritable goldmine

considering all of the devices, OS versions and platforms that have to be accounted for in making an app bullet-proof. [\(More on that headache here.\)](http://techcrunch.com/2012/06/02/android-qa-testing-quality-assurance/)

“Our mobile device testing solution works the same no matter what device you’re testing on,” Benatar said. “It’s the good, old-fashioned way. It’s the user holding their device underneath the camera talking out loud about their experience.”

The company parcels out a few tests per month to different contractors, and coaches them initially on how to talk through their experience of a product. Clients pay about \$39 per video and also rate testers for how helpful they are. They can specify the demographic they want to reach, like if they only want testers who are women aged 35 to 44. It’s best used in concert with data and funnel analysis, where you can see where users are dropping off in aggregate in an application.

Benatar said he co-founded the company five years ago out of frustration with existing usability testing options.

“There was this hole in the world of user testing,” Benatar said. “You’d find and pay a consultant, who would go in and then find a target user. They’d schedule them to come into a laboratory, then they’d write a big report with recommendations that costs tens of thousands of dollars.” Benatar’s company does this for a fraction of the cost.

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