Reactive Validation Conundrum

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The Sweet Spot

The sweet spot of how much validation control is put into a web interface is difficult to ascertain. It lies somewhere within the necessary tension of flexible capability and exactitude. Ease of user experience (UX) sells the product, but exactitude maintains background systems smoothly. You cannot fully sacrifice either principle and produce a phenomenal product - hence they embody necessary tension.

Hard Case

Problems in this area tend arise from drastic or unforeseen product use instances that require extensive responses or repairs to remedy. These are hard cases - obstructive to our overall workflow and destructive to product state. I cannot express how much the hard aspect of the case must be weighed carefully. A hard case happening means it is definitely possible, but does not proportionally speak to the probability nor the appropriate solution. Those vary and must be weighed carefully.

Bad Law

Severe degradations in UX are either necessary, unfortunate solutions or likely plain wrong. They are cases of Bad Law. Bad Law arises from the trauma of the hard case rather than carefully weighed solutions. This harms the product overall. It may temporarily alleviate product owner pain, however a severely degraded UX erodes existing product appreciation as well as adoption of a product by new users. Bad Law always yields these types of adverse results.

Knee Jerk

The root problem of Bad Law style solutions is knee jerk reactivity. It is only natural for people to

avoid pain. Hard Cases produce exactly that. But to construct solutions out of a direct high pain/trauma experience is fraught with peril. They overemphasize pain avoidance in design rather than honor the overall ecosystem of the product. This inevitably yields something that prevents future trauma, but also likely degrades overall product quality (typically in the UX dimension).

Take a Breath

Like many areas of conflict we encounter in life, this type of Knee Jerk reaction can be avoided by simply taking a breath. This can include practically doing something like walking away or engaging in an activity that distracts yourself from the trauma of the Hard Case. Once you've retained a stable state of mind, you can effectively re-engage the situation and likely construct a more holistic solution. Those that can manage the trauma more effectively tend to be more efficient in the Hard Case lifecycle.

A Spoonful Of Sugar

Improving on this situation has greater benefits than isolated Hard Case resolution, it progressively evaluates the state of the product against that Sweet Spot of well-balanced flexible capability and exactitude. This style of repeated evaluation during product change iterations adds sweetener to the overall product, getting it closer and closer to that ideal Sweet Spot. This is the kind of iterative development that generates truly great products.

Tags: design, development, failure, UX
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