



White paper

## **Familiarity breeds contentment**

Making product that feel comfortable to use

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Scoutwest, Inc.

## Familiarity breeds contentment

There is a good reason that Microsoft products all look alike. The primary reason is that users feel more comfortable in a familiar environment. It is true that users can also leverage their existing knowledge of Windows and other applications, but the most important reason for a familiar user interface is the sigh of relief they experience when the application is first started.

You've got about 10 minutes to gain the confidence of a prospective customer. If the user fails to understand the basic functionality of your product within this time, they may give up and try something else. That makes your user interface a major factor in the success of your product. It's not just a good suggestion; it's fundamental.

It still surprises me that Windows developers ignore this advice. I'm surprised when I open Windows applications written by major software developers like Oracle or Computer Associates and find that the UI is totally nonstandard. The menus are goofy and hard to navigate. There are strangely worded commands and tool buttons. These products look like they were ported from Unix by Asian toy makers. When you open a product like this, you know you're going to spend a good while figuring it out. Software products are hard enough to figure out without adding an extra layer of complexity.

But what about innovation; isn't it good to be different? Yes, but user interface is not a good candidate for innovation unless you are developing a new operating system. Spend your creative energies on the core competencies of your application, and make the user interface as simple as possible.

## About Us

Scoutwest, Inc. develops and publishes project management and time tracking products for consulting, manufacturing, government, and general business applications.

Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

We specialize in packaged software for timesheets, project management, time tracking, defect tracking, and issue tracking. Standard Time is a web-based timesheet that also runs on Windows, Palm OS, and Pocket PC. It can be used for client billing and task management. Standard Issue is used for bug tracking and general issue tracking.

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