



**SPIRIT**  
S O F T W O R K S



# SUMMARY - 2004 Salary Survey for User Experience Design and Usability Professionals

## Authors:

Pabini Gabriel-Petit ♦ Spirit Softworks ♦ [www.spiritsoftworks.com](http://www.spiritsoftworks.com) ♦  
Silicon Valley, California, USA ♦ [info@spiritsoftworks.com](mailto:info@spiritsoftworks.com) ♦ 831-809-0992

Tania Lang ♦ Peak Usability ♦ [www.peakusability.com.au](http://www.peakusability.com.au) ♦  
Brisbane, Australia ♦ [enquiries@peakusability.com.au](mailto:enquiries@peakusability.com.au) ♦ +61 419 732142

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an international online survey of salaries for user experience design and usability professionals that Peak Usability and Spirit Softworks conducted in the Spring of 2004.

We have endeavored to provide the most comprehensive salary information available for our professional community. World wide, 821 respondents completed the survey. This report breaks down salaries by type of employer, geographical region, role, project focus, education, years of experience, and gender.

---

**Important**—When negotiating salaries, use the information in this report only as a general guide. In many instances, sample sizes were small—therefore, the data may not be generally representative. While we have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the data in this report, Peak Usability and Spirit Softworks do *not* guarantee its accuracy and accept no responsibility or liability for any actions you choose to take based on this information.

---

Do *not* reproduce or publish any part of this publication without the written permission of Peak Usability or Spirit Softworks.

## Summary of Usability Survey Results

The key findings of the survey include the following.

- User experience design and usability professionals in the United States generally earned higher gross incomes than those in other countries, with the exception of independent consultants, academics, and researchers in the United Kingdom.
- Independent consultants had much higher average gross incomes than employees of either companies or consulting firms, while the average gross incomes of academics and researchers were considerably lower.
- Among employees of companies and government organizations in the United States, those working in the San Francisco Bay Area earned the highest average gross income, followed by those working in the metropolitan areas of Boston and Houston.
- Independent consultants working in the metropolitan areas of San Francisco, New York City, and Boston earned the highest average gross incomes.
- Among employees of consulting firms, those working in California, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Atlanta earned the highest average gross incomes.

- Greater numbers of years of experience in user experience design and usability professions generally correlated with increases in gross annual income. However, once the number of years of experience exceeded 15, this correlation no longer held true. In some cases—particularly in the United Kingdom—people with more than 15 years of experience earned less than people with 10 to 15 years of experience.
- Most respondents were highly educated, with the majority (88%) having at least a Bachelor's degree; 36%, a Master's degree; and 13%, a Doctorate.
- More men (55%) than women (45%) work in user experience design and usability professions. The average gross annual income of men was 11% higher than that of women in the United States; 33% higher, in the United Kingdom.
- Among all respondents, the most prevalent primary roles were user experience design, information architecture, and interaction design.
- Approximately 50% or more of respondents indicated that their jobs also encompassed one or more of the following additional roles:
  - interaction or user interface design
  - usability evaluation through expert review or heuristic evaluation
  - user experience design
  - information architecture
  - usability testing
  - user research
  - user experience or user interface design management
- The most common types of projects on which respondents worked were Web applications, followed by Internet sites.
- In addition to their primary projects, approximately 50% or more of respondents also worked on Web applications, Internet sites, Intranet sites, and desktop applications.
- Among all respondents, 81% have been working in user experience design and usability professions for more than 3 years; 45% for 6 or more years.
- The most common professions in which user experience design and usability professionals have previously worked included
  - IT / software development / engineering (41%)
  - graphic / visual design (30%)
  - technical writing / editing (19%)
  - communications / publishing (19%)
  - marketing / advertising (17%)
  - psychology / behavioral science (16%)
  - library science (5%)

Detailed results can be found in the [Usability Salary Survey - Full report](#) (65 pages)