**COSI Experience Testing Station**

**“Daily Schedule” Test**

**Rita Deedrick**

**August 13, 2010**

(Revised September 1, 2010)

**Purpose and Research Questions**

As a result of a request to expand the Daily Schedule to include all activities at COSI, the Daily Schedule is being redesigned. The purpose of the test is to help COSI determine the best design for a new, larger schedule based on input from guests.

The research questions for this test were:

Which Daily Schedule design elements function best to…

… increase the likelihood that guests will engage in revenue producing experiences?

…be most understandable and usable by guests?

Secondary research questions were:

What else do guests need in order to plan/navigate their day?

How is the Daily Schedule used in conjunction with the Map?

**Methods and Data Collection**

We decided to take several different versions of a mock-up Daily Schedule to guests with specific questions about preference. The group planning the test (Rita, Joe, Steve W., Kimberly, and Chris) made some preliminary decisions on design in order to keep the number of versions tested to a reasonable level. Specifically, the group (Chris was absent from this meeting) chose the two-box design for the front, highlighting “special activities” (i.e., upcharged) followed by “new at COSI” experiences. We also decided to make this a two-level test, first testing for activity description against no activity description, and then testing for organization by time, activity type, and location of activities in building.

Data were collected the afternoon of Friday, August 13, a moderately busy day. Steve was the “front person” recruiting families to the test; Rita, Kimberly, and later, Carli, engaged participants in the two-level card sort with short interview.

**Results**

A total of 42 interviews were conducted. The interviews focused on adults (sometimes a single adult), and sometimes the adults encouraged the children to contribute.

Activity description vs. no activity description. Of the 42 interviews:

29 preferred the version with the activity descriptions

11 preferred the version with no activity descriptions

2 had no preference

Reasons for choosing the version *with* activity descriptions often included simply “it’s more information” or “helps to know what it is.” Additional comments included:

 Help choose what to do with children especially of varying ages

 Draws/entices you in

 How else would I know what it was? What is “Lily Pad?” “Gadgets Café?”

A few guests thought the words in the “Special Activities” box stood out better than the other version, noting the difference between the bolded and unbolded words and perceiving a larger font size.

Reasons for choosing the version with *no* activity descriptions included:

 Cleaner, uncluttered, easier to read (especially with children)

 Don’t want to read!

 Times stand out more clearly

One guest perceived the font on this version to be bigger than the other version.

Organized by time, activity type, location. Of the 42 interviews:

 35 preferred the version organized by time

 4 preferred the version organized by activity

 3 preferred the version organized by location

The most common reason guests chose the version organized by time is that the times were so clearly visible. On probing, many guests had difficulty articulating why the prominence of time was so important to them, but some comments give insight:

“When you arrive you know what’s going on and how long to stay”

“We’re here [researcher clarified “here” meant “at this time”] and this is what we can do.”

“…would know exactly what’s next.”

“…don’t waste time, start when you get here.”

“See what I’ve missed.”

“Want to know *when* first, and then decide what to do from there.”

Those who chose the version organized by activity wanted to decide on activity first so they could eliminate types of activities they weren’t interested in, and then check times. One felt this one was “a better display of information to know what you’re getting.”

The few who chose the version organized by location felt this version contained more information than other versions and this version lent itself to being organized by topic.

Other things COSI could do to help. Guests were asked if there was anything else COSI could do or provide to help them plan their visit. A summary of comments follows:

* Post the Daily Schedule around the building so it could be referenced often without finding the paper (two guests commented that the 8 ½ x 11 version was too big to carry).
* Activity detail – especially content and age appropriateness – posted at show/activity location to help decide whether or not “to go in.”
* Mobile app with alarms.
* Getting the map and/or schedule BEFORE getting to the Box Office, and/or have available for family who is waiting with the children while one adult goes through the line (one guest furthered that they did not recognize that these were available at the guests services desk; wants to see a large map posted upon entry).
* Larger signs indicating Box Office and exhibit areas.
* Several guests suggested that the Daily Schedule be posted on the web so one could plan before arrival. For the most part, guests wanted the same information as on the Daily Schedule, and they wanted it a day ahead of time.

A few guests mentioned use of the map as help in planning. Some guests mentioned the map after researcher probed about the map. On probe, some guests had used their map and were pleased with it; others had not used the map and reasons varied:

Come all the time/members, don’t need it

Just got here/ have been in Titanic the whole time

Like to wander

It does appear – from this small sample – that many (though not all) people use the map as a tool, but there is little evidence that they use it in conjunction with the Daily Schedule.

**Conclusion**

* A large majority of respondents need and want descriptive information about activities, especially a simple “what is it” and clues for age appropriateness.
* Caution against too much wording – wordy descriptions will be too cluttered and decrease the usefulness of the schedule.
* Varying the font treatment (i.e., bold and unbold) was pleasing and perceived easier to read by some guests.
* A large majority of respondents want the schedule organized by time, and with the times prominently displayed (as in the sample, in the left margin).
* Incorporating activity type would also be useful (though not as important as organized by time).
* The Daily Schedule and the Map are both useful tools, though their joint use is unclear.
* Supplementing the Daily Schedule and Map with additional detail posted around the building would be helpful, namely:
	+ An orienting map near the entrance
	+ Daily Schedule posted around the building
	+ More complete activity descriptions posted at the entrance to the activity
* Recognizing COSI’s limitations on posting a specific schedule in advance of the day, any information COSI can provide via the web that guests can associate with planning their day would be helpful.
	+ “Subject to change” disclaimers on all schedules (via web and on paper) may be necessary to allow for the kind of scheduling flexibility that COSI needs.