Scenario:

You've been hired to evaluate Hotmail.com, the world's free e-mail service you can access from any internet connected personal computer. The marketing management at Hotmail has sent you the following information which identifies their goals and objectives for this evaluation.

Part One:

Hotmail was recently acquired by Microsoft and can now be accessed from both the following URL's:

www.home.microsoft.com and www.hotmail.com.

Management is very interested in knowing which avenue users are taking to reach their site, and whether or not users' perceptions of Hotmail (and MSN) are influenced by the avenue they choose. [Note: The original Hotmail.com home page and the logo in the top left corner of the navigation bar within the site will most likely change branding in early October. You are required to take a screen shot of the state of the hotmail.com home page you evaluate for the CUE comparison so we can know if different teams evaluated different branding designs.]

If users are already familiar with Hotmail, how do they choose to access it? Is it easier for new users to locate Hotmail from one URL over the other? Is there any distinction in the kinds of users that tend to use the various avenues?

Additionally, Hotmail defaults you to the frames version of their site (if your browser is capable of interpreting frames). Management is very interested in knowing whether users prefer the non-frames version.

Hotmail's biggest competitors are: Yahoo Mail and Netscape WebMail.

Do NOT test the localized versions of HotMail, like www.Hotmail.dk

Part Two:

Management is also very interested in the general usability of their product and has identified some specific areas of concern. Below is a list of features that Marketing and Engineering have identified as benefiting from user feedback: (Listed in order of importance to Product Marketing)

1.Registration
2.Login
3.Logout (what do users expect after hitting the logout button?)
4.Viewing hotmail with or without frames - do users have a preference?
5.Customization (under the 'Options' section, particularly "Preferences" for viewing style)
6.Performance issues (speed, etc.)
7.Compose
8.Password Retrieval
9.Sending and receiving attachments

10.Reminders
11.Hotmail member directory and email lookup
12.Sorting messages in your InBox (by Subject, Date, etc.)
13.Reading a message (related issues: Screen resolution and size; URL recognition when a message has a url in it))
14.Address book
15.Folders
16.POP (under 'Options')
17.Advertisements (general attitude, do users click on them? Why,why not?)
18. When do users try to access Help (do not test help system, just identify when users feel they need help)

General questions which management is interested in addressing are:

1. How do users currently do email?
2. Generally, how much effort do users have to expend to interact with and use hotmail effectively?
3. How satisfied are users with Hotmail?
4. If a first time user, do users think they will continue using Hotmail on their own?
5. Would user recommend Hotmail to others?
6. How reliable do users think Hotmail is? Would they want to use it for urgent or time sensitive information?

HotMail management wants to focus only on the mail features and functions, and not the other services now offered from the site. They are *not* interested in the following areas:

Classifieds
Web Courier
News and Links
or other general portal features.

User Profile:

HotMail is a world-wide free email service targeted towards anyone who would like the convenience of managing their email on-line through a web browser. HotMail can be accessed from any computer or kiosk that provides internet access, making it easy to access your mail from anywhere. Hotmail also allows you to manage all your own personal email without it being recorded on your employer's servers.

Questions?

If you have questions about product goals, user profiles, or product features, please send them to erika@intraspect.com. Erika will forward them on to the HotMail contacts, as well as distribute responses from them. Erika's role as proxy is to limit the number of duplicate questions being sent to HotMail management.