

LIS 697-10: Usability Leadership
David Walczyk
10. 29. 2008
Norman, Chapters 5 & 6
student: Cedomir Kovacev
kovacev@earthlink.net

Selective Attention



At the entrance to my building there is a door with three horizontally arranged bars that have to be pushed when opening the door. Behind bars the door is not solid but it has a few rows of small rectangular “windows” with thin glass.

Like everybody else, I assume, I always thought about this in terms of a basic function the door and handles are supposed to perform. I push the bar, the door opens and I am in.

About a year ago a young delivery man was opening the door while trying to help an elderly person go through. His hand slipped and went right through the glass, badly cutting his arm. He panicked (apparently because he was illegal), tried to cross the road and go to the nearest grocery store where his brother was working. He collapsed on the other side of the street, somebody alerted 911 and the ambulance took him. He died on the way to the hospital.

The building Management replaced the glass the same day. Everybody talked about what happened for several days but then inevitably everyday routine prevailed.

This is probably the most extreme example of the power of selective attention. Most of the time, while entering the building I don't think about the tragic incident, probably because I am focused on the immediate task.