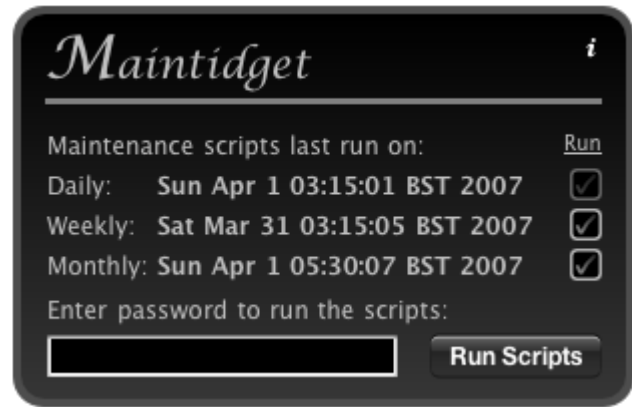


Maintidget

Redesign of a popular Mac OS X maintenance widget.

Background

Maintidget is a popular Mac OS X Dashboard widget which allows users to check the last run time and of the systems maintenance scripts as well as execute them on demand.



In this project I was responsible for the redesign of the widget.

Maintidget is available from

<http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/status/maintidget.html> or
<http://www.giantmike.com/widgets/Maintidget.html>.

User Considerations

Many users of the widget had commented on its poor visual design, and how it lacked the Mac OS X feel.

“Pretty ugly compared to most widgets but seems to do the trick...”

-- Shevek, Version: 1.1, Mar 16 2006,

<http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/29350>

Other user, however, considered the widget to be efficient and usable.

“Excellent, does exactly what it says. Simple but efficient.”

-- GPSTEIN1, Version 1.0, Mar 12 2006,

<http://macupdate.com/info.php/id/20981/Maintidget>

It was important to consider the aesthetics of the design without cluttering the widget or making its purpose more opaque to the end user during the design phase.

Aesthetic Considerations

Apple produce detailed informational specifications on design of applications and widget to ensure ease of use and consistency for end users as well as seamless integration into the operating system. These were studied in depth to provide an understanding of the proper way to apply various elements in the design such as drop shadows.

Project Goal

The widget had to maintain its simple, easy to use interface while allowing the widget to integrate more seamlessly with the Mac OS X user interface, the included OS X widget were considered during the design phase.

Design

The design attempts to keep a consistent style with other OS X widgets with a thick border in a subtle shade combining elements from existing widgets such as the clock and calendar. The text colour and style was adjusted to make the widget more subtle while the heading was strengthened using a serif font and a thick dividing border.

The design breached two important design guidelines, including the title of the widget on the front and the *i* icon which allows the setting page to be accessed was kept at the top of the widget, rather than the bottom right.

The inclusion of the title on the front allured back to the original design where it was prominently featured in a large yellow typeface, and was included primarily to reflect the clients initial design and to maintain the existing style for already familiar users. This design decision was also made on the included *Dictionary* widget, however in this circumstance this also provides part of the interface.

The decision to keep the *i* icon in the upper right was made due to the layout of the widget which provided ample space at the top of the widget. Again, such a design decision was made by Apple with the included *iTunes* widget where the *i* icon is located in the lower middle of the widget where the space more easily allows.

Implementation

Implementation of the design was handled by Mike Vande Ven Jr., the creator and maintainer of the widget, as such some small differences were present between the design and the final release version.

Notes

This design sheet does not include all design changes made to Maintiget, for more information or images please contact Jason Jacques <jtjacques@gmail.com> or alternatively download a copy of the widget from the Apple website: <http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/status/maintidget.html>

Design Comparison

Main Interface

Before:



- Garish font colour
- Poorly space layout
- Inconsistent typeface
- Strange application of gradients

After:

Similar location of *i* icon

New header style

Subtle type style



New check-box style

Gentle vertical gradient

Even spacing

Icon

Before:



Strange aspect ratio

No drop shadow

Unreadable, unnecessary text

After:

Reflection of interface design



Standard aspect ratio

Correctly styled drop shadow