SnapRuler Mac App
a case study

Overview:

SnapRuler is a utility for professional designers that runs on every Mac OS X.

SnapRuler waits in the background and enables the user to instantly measure any object visible on screen (etc. parts of the user interface).

Additionally, SnapRuler uses proprietary, advanced computer vision algorithms which enable the app to recognise boundaries of real objects present on screen, as humans perceive them, and allow the user easily measure those objects without having to point their exactly with mouse pointer, rather "snapping" it to the nearest edge or corner. This means that measuring even rounded objects is blazingly quick.

Challenge:

To make tedious tasks enjoyable, and quick. Save precious designer time and reduce frustration.

The app should not only have a very easy to use and intuitive interface but also be visually appealing, as target users are designers with well developed aesthetic taste.

Popular software used for application design (like Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator) feature a kind of "ruler" tool but those tools are limited to measuring objects present inside the application's canvas. While designing applications, it's often the case that designers need to comply with the style and dimensions used by the operating system's interface.

The challenge was to provide a tool capable of measuring all objects visible on the screen, including the OS, application, as well as on static images.

On top of that SnapRuler needed to be extremely light and undemanding in terms of system resources, as it should run all the time in background ready to be called by the user, exactly in the second it's needed – and start measuring instantly.

Solution:

SnapRuler is the first on-screen measuring tool which gets the job done.

It's extremely lightweight. SnapRuler can run on all versions of modern OS X, from Snow Leopard to Mountain Lion. It supports multiple screens (user can even measure object spanning multiple screens) and works well on Retina display.

SnapRuler can be brought to front using a customisable hotkey. User can snap the cursor to visible edges and corners in order to make the measurements quicker.

Additionally user can easily fine-tune the measurement by slowing down the mouse pointer or refine the measurement pixel-by-pixel using arrow keys.

On top of that we added a special feature: each taken measurement can be copied to clipboard by just one click – in formats including CSS, HTML, jQuery, CoreGraphics or Action Script., This enables front-end engineers to paste the dimensions straight to the code editor, enabling a seamless and more streamlined workflow. Version 1.2 added ability to take screenshots of measured elements.

The app has a clean, minimalistic design which looks good on both bright and dark backgrounds.

To achieve all of the above a very deep understanding of inner-works of Mac OS X was required. SnapRuler doesn't run like an ordinary app, the amount of interaction

with system internals it requires to run flawlessly is vast.

Accolades:

SnapRuler achieved #2 on Graphics & Design Top Paid apps chart in the US. It has about 40 five-star rankings in US App Store and more than a dozen compelling reviews in App Stores across Europe. It received many enthusiastic press reviews including The Next Web and The Unofficial Apple Weblog. SnapRuler was featured by Lukas Mathis, expert on interface design and published author, on his blog devoted to design: ignorethecode.net. SnapRuler was also a featured deal on Mac Update, the biggest discounted Mac Apps marketplace. We believe our biggest success is the fact that we constantly receive thank-you notes from designers around the world telling their story about how SnapRuler made their life better.

Further reference:

Official webpage
Twitter search for "SnapRuler"