

Communication Design for Interactive Media II

Project 2: Site Audit

DES 596 B2 | Winter 2010

Schedule

Project 2 Assigned
February 7, 2012

Project 2 Due
Presentation and written site
audit are due on individually
assigned dates.

March 20, 2012
Presentation 1+2

March 22, 2012
Presentation 3+4+5

March 27, 2012
Presentation 6+7

April 03, 2012
Presentation 8+9

April 05, 2012
Presentation 10+11

NOTES:

*You can add more sub-headings/
criteria if needed.

**Some types of sites may focus
more on some of these areas
than others.

***Think of how you want to
present this visually. I expect
something that looks profes-
sional (built in Powerpoint, Flash
or Keynote). Or better yet a PDF
file (could be from InDesign).
Remember images are good
(screenshots) and not too much
text.

You are responsible for performing a site audit on an assigned site. The goal of a site audit is to thoroughly analyze a site against specific criteria and then to be able to distill this analysis into a written and oral report.

Your site audit will contain three sections: **Purpose of the Site**, **Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics** and **Recommendations**. Note that you must include all of these Nielsen's subheadings.* The questions listed in each subheading are good starting points that you can expand and add to. ** Note that I use the word site here to mean both a website and as an app.

Submission Requirements:

- Written Site Audit (2-4 pages, bullet point form is recommended)
- Presentation of Audit (10 minutes, plus 5 minutes Q&A) ***

Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to:

- a) Quality of proposed submission, both written and oral
- b) Quality / quantity of class participation

A) PURPOSE OF THE SITE

- What is the site content and what is the purpose of the site?
- Who is the target audience for this site?
- Why do you think they are the target audience?

B) JACOB NEILSEN'S 10 USABILITY HEURISTICS

1. Visibility of System Status (Norman: Visibility p.17, Feedback p.27)

The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

- What feedback is provided to the users? Is it helpful?
- If a site requires extra time to load due to added functionality (i.e. video, database interactivity), is there an indication of what is happening and how long it will take?
- Are links up to date and working? Is there a last update indicated?

2. Match Between System and the Real World (Norman: Natural mapping p.23, Affordance p.9)

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

- Does the site use any natural mapping? How would/could it be helpful?
- Is the content divided into the most clear categories?
- Does the content logically fit into its category / categories? Does the design of the navigation reflect a logical order or system of hierarchy?
- Is there significant overlap of content between categories? Is this un/helpful for the user?
- Is the text well written and concise?
- Is the tone of the text and imagery effective for the target audience?

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Definitions

Affordance

Visual clues (actionable properties) to the function of an object.

Audience

The specific group of people(s) or organisation(s) that you are communicating to. There could be numerous audiences.

Client

The person or group that instigated the design process, possibly paying for it and making decisions concerning its direction and format.

Heuristic

Serving to promote discovery or learning; used especially of theories or paradigms which stimulate new ideas for discovering facts in experimental sciences.

Interface

Where two components come together, for our purpose usually the user and the computer / screen / device. Also see GUI.

GUI

Graphical User Interface, a user interface based on graphics (icons and pictures and menus) instead of text; uses a mouse as well as a keyboard as an input device.

3. User Control and Freedom (Norman: Don't Take Away Control p.197)

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

- Does it function on multiple platforms? (i.e. iPhone vs Android, etc.) and at various connection speeds?
- Is the user able to easily change the size of the text?
- Is the use given multiple methods for performing the same function?

4. Consistency and Standards (Krugg: Conventions are your friends p.34)

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

- Does the site present a consistent GUI throughout?

5. Error Prevention (Norman: Constraints pp. 60, 81)

Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

- Are forms designed in such a way that make them "self-evident"

6. Recognition Rather than Recall (Norman: Memory pp.54 - 80)

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

- Is the main navigation present and clearly visible throughout the site?
- On each page, is it clear where you are, where you have come from?
- Does the site ever rely upon the use of lengthy instructions to the user?

7. Flexibility and Efficiency of Use (Norman: Memory pp.54 - 80)

Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

- Does the site load quickly?
- How does it rank on various search engines?
- What software or plug-ins are required to access information?
- How do the general requirements for the use of this site rate against the majority of sites? (i.e. Does it require high-bandwidth?)

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Mapping

Concerns the linkage between what you want to do and what appears possible.

8. Aesthetic (and Minimalist design) (Use your 3+ years experience as a designer for this section)

Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

- In what 'landscape' does this site fall in? (i.e. Non-profit, health, services, sales, promotion)
- Comment on the branding of the institutions of a similar nature. (Try to use sites of these institutions as your example)
- Is the site visually consistent in its branding? (The typography, layout, colour, etc.)
- What is the overall impact of the homepage? Is it effective/appropriate for the target audiences or not? Why?
- As a designer what are your impressions of the site? (Do you feel that good design principles have been employed?)
- How and why is imagery used?
- Are there areas of innovation? (i.e. Features, content, visual appearance, etc.)
- Does the visual style of the site compliment or distract from its purpose? Why?
- Overall do you feel the site seems credible? Why? (Use specific examples - these can be visual or can relate to content on the site)

9. Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors (Norman: Design for Errors p.105)

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

- Intentionally make an error when submitting a form, is it clear how to resolve the error?

10. Help and Documentation (Norman: Design for Errors pp.105-140)

Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

- Is there a place on site where you are directed to someone or some resource that may answer questions / problems / errors not answered / addressed on the site
- Is there contact information provided?

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C) RECOMMENDATIONS

For each problem/issue that you identify, suggest a possible remedy.

For example:

- What would you change visually?
- What features would you add / remove?
- What would you change about the information architecture?

When making recommendations for each problem, use a labelling system that explicitly shows which problem/issue you are referring to from the evaluation above (i.e. numbering system).

Bibliography

Krug, Steve. (2000). *Don't Make Me Think*. Indianapolis: New Riders Publishing.

Nielsen, Jakob. *Ten Usability Heuristics*. "Use-it.com." <http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html>, posted: 2005, viewed: Oct 22, 2007.

Nielsen, Jakob. (2000) *Designing Web Usability*. Indianapolis: New Riders Publishing.

Norman, Donald. (2002). *The Design of Everyday Things* (1st Basic Paperback. ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Sites to be Audited

Courtesy of C. Couldwell (again)

1. The Times of London, by Times Newspapers
2. The Telegraph, by The Telegraph
3. Edmonton Sun, by Canoe
4. Edmonton Journal, by Postmedia Network
5. HuffingtonPost.com, by HuffingtonPost.com
6. Time Mobile, by Time Inc.
7. The Globe and Mail News, by The Globe and Mail Inc.
8. National Post Mobile, by National Post