



**Web Conference:
Usability and Information
Architecture Best Practices for
Online Assistance Resources**

Andy Bray, NEWMOA

May 23, 2006



What We'll Cover

- ◆ Why is usability important?
- ◆ The basics, but still worth mentioning
- ◆ Site navigation – don't make me think
- ◆ Feedback methods
- ◆ Evaluating usability

Usability Return on Investment

ROI

- ◆ Investment ~ 10% of project budget should spent on usability
 - varies with project size; some activities cost about the same regardless of project size
- ◆ Following a usability redesign, websites increase desired metrics by 135% on

Usability ROI (continued)

Metric	Average Improvement Across Web Projects
Sales / conversion rate	100%
Traffic / visitor count	150%
User performance / productivity	161%
Use of specific (target) features	202%

Heuristics

◆ adjective

- enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves.
- proceeding to a solution by trial and error or by rules that are only loosely defined.

◆ noun

- the study and use of heuristic techniques.
- a heuristic process or method.

(source: askoxford.com)

Usability Heuristics

- ◆ **Visibility of system status**
- ◆ **Match between system and the real world**
- ◆ **User control and freedom**
- ◆ **Consistency and standards**
- ◆ **Error prevention**

Usability Heuristics (continued)

- ◆ Recognition rather than recall
- ◆ Flexibility and efficiency of use
- ◆ Aesthetic and minimalist design
- ◆ Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
- ◆ Help and documentation

Page Basics

- ◆ Check page load speeds
- ◆ Let users contact you
- ◆ Test pages at different screen resolutions
- ◆ Check page display in multiple browsers

Page Load Speeds

◆ Home page

- Target: downloads within 10 seconds

◆ Internal pages

- Target: download within 15 seconds

◆ How to test load speeds

- Local scripts
- Online tools

Test for Different Screen Resolution

◆ 800x600

~ 14% of users

~ 98% of all users at or above

■ Good minimum target

◆ 1024x768

~ 60% of users

◆ 1280X1024

~ 25%

Test for Different Browsers

- ◆ **Explorer**
- ◆ **Netscape**
- ◆ **Firefox**
- ◆ **AOL**
- ◆ **WebTV**
- ◆ **Opera**

Site Navigation

- ◆ Clear and simple navigation
- ◆ Basics – general rules to live by
- ◆ Navigation Dos and DON'Ts

Clear and Simple Navigation

A good navigation system should answer three questions:

- Where am I?
- Where have I been?
- Where can I go?

(Jakob Nielsen)

Navigation Basics

- ◆ Be consistent
- ◆ Use appropriate text for links
- ◆ Use CSS to emphasize links
 - “well, that’s nice to look at, but...”
- ◆ Always include text links
 - accessibility

Navigation Basics (continued)

- ◆ Text-based site map
- ◆ Include a home page link in main navigation
- ◆ Link logo to home page
- ◆ Include a site search box
- ◆ Custom error pages

Navigation DOs

◆ DOs

- Keep site navigation consistent throughout
- Separate global navigation from local navigation
- Brand site throughout
- Link to HOME
- Support know item searching and browsing

Navigation DON'Ts

◆ DON'Ts

- Excessive text links
- Inconsistent page design or navigation scheme
- Disabling the browser's navigational features
- Orphans pages
- Multiple navigational devices

Clear and Lean Content

- ◆ Less is more
 - Writing for the web
 - Pages are scanned, not read
- ◆ Don't save the best for last
 - Put the most important information above the fold
- ◆ Every item on a page competes equally with the most important items

Feedback Methods

- ◆ User satisfaction surveys
- ◆ Rate this resource
- ◆ Allow visitors to report broken links
- ◆ "Contact Us"/feedback on every page
 - Forms – keep them simple

Evaluating Usability

- ◆ Methods for evaluating usability
- ◆ Usability testing misconceptions
- ◆ Low-cost usability testing

Methods for Evaluating Usability

- ◆ Usability inspection
- ◆ Peer walk-through
- ◆ Heuristic inspection

Usability Testing Misconceptions

- ◆ Focus groups are not usability tests
 - Usability tests are trying, not brainstorming
- ◆ Don't have the expertise
- ◆ Don't have the testing facilities
- ◆ Testing is expensive

Low-cost Usability Testing

Who

What

Where

When

How

Andy Bray

P2Rx National Program Manager

NEWMOA

129 Portland Street, Suite 602

Boston, MA 02114

617-367-8558 ext. 306

abray@newmoa.org

<http://www.newmoa.org>