

arnoldworldwide

information architecture

CLIENT	Monster.com
PROJECT	Presentation

DOCUMENT	Heuristics Review
VERSION	1.0
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Introduction



In a fast, easy way how can we understand the issues associated with why a web site is not performing up to potential?

- A standard process for this is known as a HEURISTICS REVIEW.

What is a heuristics review?

- An evaluation of an interactive experience by an expert in human-computer interaction (an information architect) based on third party data, research, industry norms and accepted web interface standards.

Evaluating monster.com:

Key areas of consideration for review:

- Overall Site Structure
- Navigation
- Page Structure

Overall Site Structure

Analysis

What's being done right:

1. Most navigation elements are placed at the top of the page
2. User objectives are addressed clearly and prominently on the home page
3. Site appears simple and easy to use from homepage
4. Content is well organized and categorized correctly to meet user needs
5. Depth and breadth of content and services provided to users is excellent
6. New users and user segments are addressed individually providing inherent foundation of personalized approach



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Overall Site Structure- 1

Areas of Opportunity:

- Site structure is not apparent or clearly understood from the initial vantage point or as the user digs further into the site.

From the homepage and particularly the top level navigation, the user does not get a sense of all the great things monster has to offer.

The user is not able to understand this breadth of content from the homepage or as they move deeper into the site.



"The two most important rules about site structure are to have one and to make it reflect the user's view of the site and it's informatin or services. ...no matter what navigation design you pick for your site ...if the structure is a mess, then no navigation design can rescue it. Poor information architecture will always lead to poor usability"

-Jakob Nielsen

Overall Site Structure - 1a

Best Practice:

With a clear delineation and visual clarity users see the full range of options available to them and immediately get a sense of all the content available at the Amex web site.



- User segments are clearly addressed (Business vs. Personal)
- A quick overview of the breadth and depth of the site allows the user to quickly move towards content that they are looking for.

Areas of Opportunity:

- Targeted site sections vs. additional content and service offerings are intermingled. Site structure does not enhance visibility of both.

Sub sections devoted to particular user segments such as chiefmonster and monstertrak and grouped with sections of the site that offer services to all users such as monstermoving and monsterlearning. As these are two different types of areas the value is lost in the grouping.



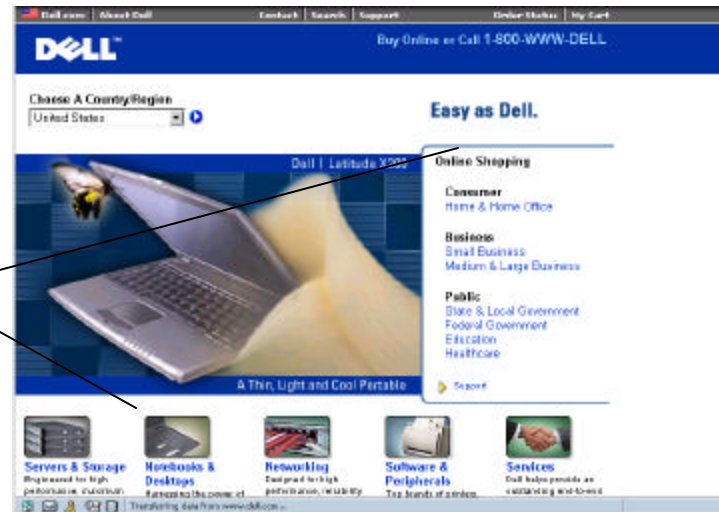
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Overall Site Structure -2a

Best Practice:

User segments are grouped on one section of the page and cross segment areas (content for everyone) are grouped together in another area.



"When users have a low level of agreement with the site's categories, designers need to create more-explicit categories with lots of different trigger words. When there is a high level of agreement, designers can use fewer category links. ...If the users all agree on the category for an item of content, they'll use those categories."

-UIE Reports: Best Practices Series, Getting Them to What They Want. By Erik Ojakaar and Jared M. Spool

Based on this information we can conclude that grouping user needs together and grouping user identities together will enhance the users recognition of what to do or who they are by the very context of the way the categories are presented.

Analysis

What's being done right:

1. Top level categories are limited
2. Labels are clear and user focused



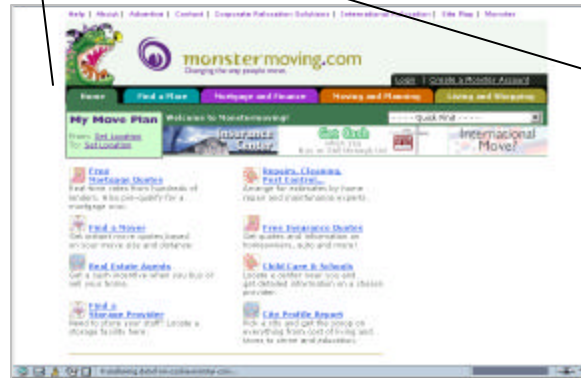
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Areas of Opportunity:

- Lacks Universal navigation system to tie all of the monster site(s) together.

Overall lack of integration for entire site via navigation creates a strong sense of separate entities as opposed to a larger offering from one place.



Without a universal navigation system the user feels as though they have entered a different site each time they move from the home page.

There is no reassurance that they are on the right part of the site and no comfort level as to how to get back to get to somewhere else that they meant to go.

It's as if when turning down an aisle in the grocery store you suddenly found yourself unable to get anywhere else in the store and unable to get back to where you turned down the aisle without exiting the store entirely at the end of the aisle you're on.

Navigation - 1a

Best Practice:

Using a tab metaphor Amazon keeps the overall site selections persistently available to the user.

No matter what store the user enters they know where all the other stores are and how to get back to the main page.



"People naturally perceive the world using both local detail and global context. ... Subjects using both viewing methods [hierarchical zooming vs. fisheye] were given problem-solving tasks requiring them to navigate a network, ... Results suggest that the greater context provided by fisheye views significantly improved user performance. Users were quicker to complete their task and made fewer unnecessary navigational steps through the hierarchy."

-Navigating Hierarchically Clustered Networks through Fisheye and Full-Zoom Methods Doug Schaffer, et al. ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1996, Pages 162–188.

Just as in a mall where the ever present store fronts provide context for visitors to locate themselves and navigate, a universal navigation system on a web site provides context and a sense of location for the user.

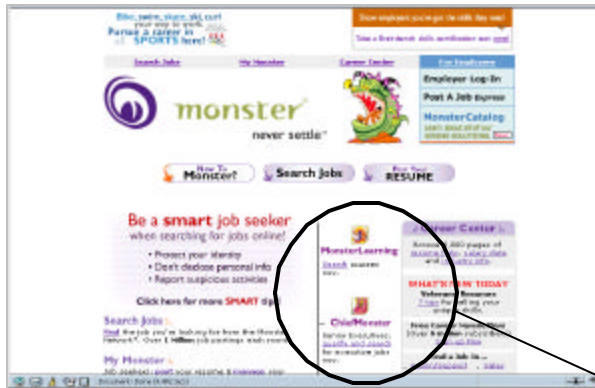
Areas of Opportunity:

- Inconsistent style and structure nav bars makes the overall site feel disjointed and can cause the user to feel lost- although very strong branding helps to tie all elements together except for the main pages.



Areas of Opportunity:

- Inconsistent location/execution of nav elements - main navigation generally appears at the top of the page, but sub nav elements are scattered through out the page in most cases.

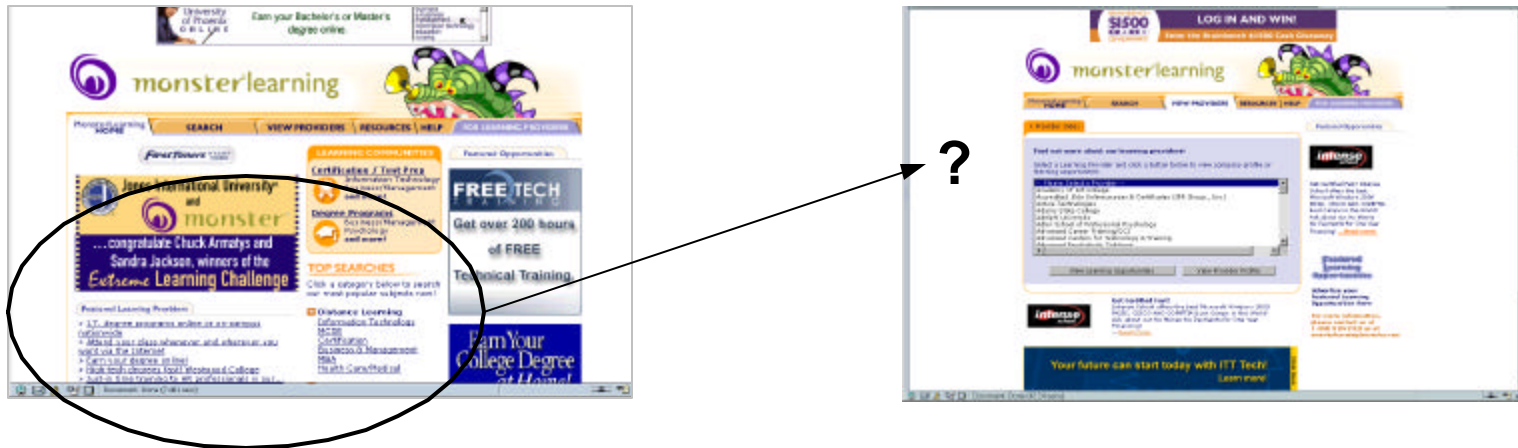


Sub-nav links in many different locations

Each time the user accesses a new part of the site they have to hunt for nav items and relearn locations and options.

Areas of Opportunity:

- Views of lower level navigation options not available in sub site pages making horizontal movement impossible except by user of the browser back button.

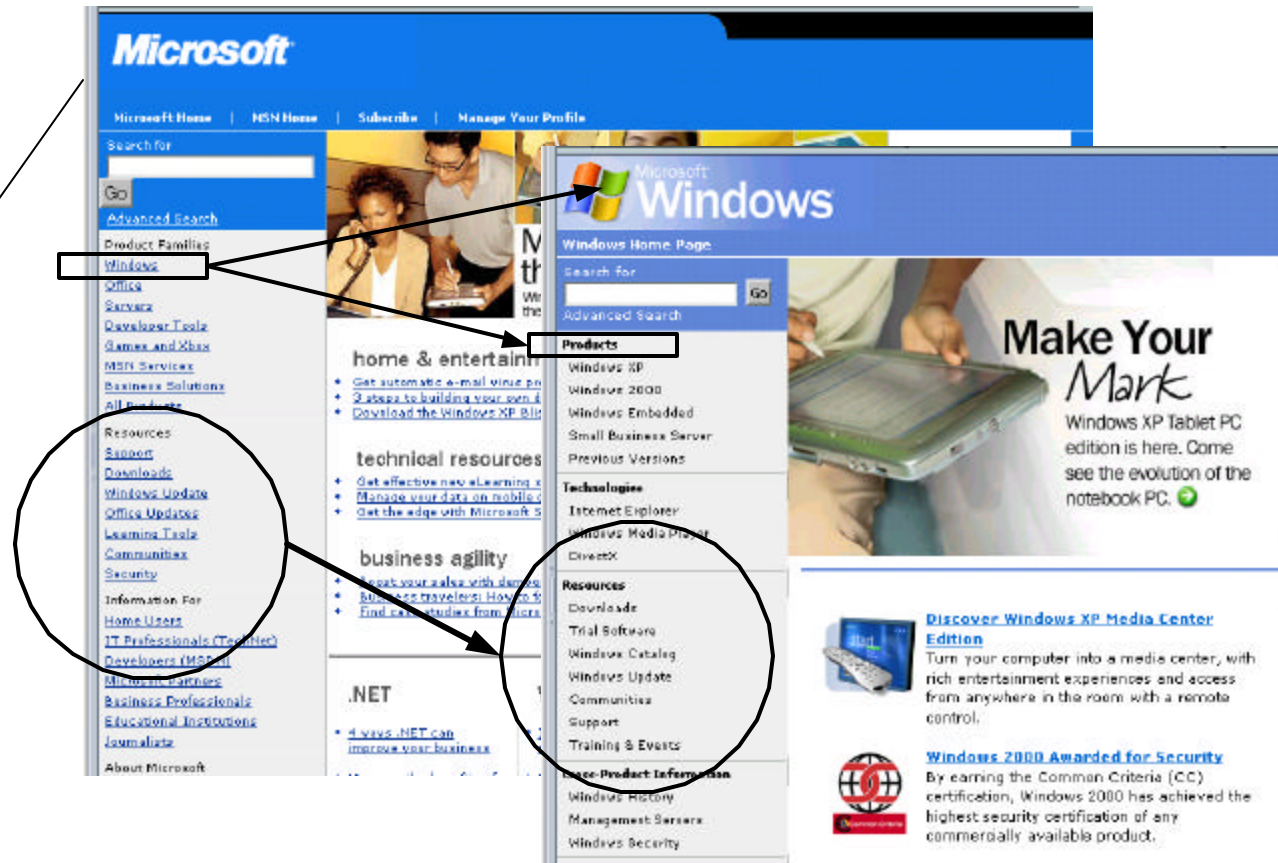


As soon as the user moves from the home page all of the rich content is no longer available. A sub nav system would allow better access across information areas at lower levels precluding the need for the user to go up a level to then go back down again.

Navigation - 4a

Best Practice:

Microsoft uses direct transfer of sub-level items (Resources) as well as category break-out expansion (Windows) to give the user as much flexibility as possible in navigating across the site without having to continually move vertically to get to what they want.



One of the major problems with current hypermedia systems is being lost in hyperspace. ... This is primarily a result of the user's lack of knowledge of the overall structure of the information space. For this purpose overview diagrams or navigational views are very useful. By presenting a map of the underlying information space, they allow the users to see where they are, what other information is available and how to access the other information. In fact, they are one of the best tools for orientation and navigation in hypermedia documents.

-World Wide Hypermedia - ECHT94 keynote address by Tim Berners-Lee, MIT & CERN

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