

Usability Testing Report

www.improvementscatalog.com

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Executive Summary

Overview

A usability test was conducted in September 2007 in Ann Arbor, Michigan to aid improvementscatalog.com in finding areas on the current site in need of redesign or enhancement. User specialists recruited five adult participants, each with varying levels of computer experience and backgrounds. The average time spent with each user was one hour.

Focus

The recommendations contained within this report were derived from the users' responses and actions upon being asked to perform a series of tasks on the existing site. The tasks were created with key aspects of the website in mind. Actions such as signing up for email offers, creating an account, finding and purchasing product, and receiving help were essential elements in the testing.

Recommendations

The recommendations summarized here are deemed to be high priority areas for redesign. They are based on the areas of testing that generated the most difficulty for the users. Medium and low priority items can be found in the body of this report.

- ◆ Add a 'Request Catalog' feature to 'Home' page
- ◆ Relocate 'Email Sign Up' field above the fold
- ◆ Add a 'Home' tab to the Global Navigation
- ◆ Reorganize 'Other Ways to Shop' navigation area
- ◆ Change label 'Club Specials' to 'Buyer's Club'
- ◆ Confirm and/or improve functionality of 'Add to Basket' button
- ◆ Implement scripts and forms compatible with all browsers
- ◆ Improve 'Error Message' descriptions
- ◆ Create notification to customers in the event of site maintenance
- ◆ Display actual shipping charges earlier in checkout process
- ◆ Add detailed instructions on 'Returns & Exchanges' page
- ◆ Add a 'Request Catalog' link to 'Catalog' page

Description of Test

Dates of testing:	Weeks of September 22, 2007 and September 29, 2007
Testing location:	Residences of Usability Specialists, Office of Test Subject
Number of users tested:	5
Length of each test:	55 - 70 minutes
Platforms tested on:	Three users tested on Windows XP; two users tested on Mac OS X (choice was given to the user)
Browsers tested on:	Two users tested on Firefox (Windows); one user tested on Internet Explorer (Windows); one user tested on Mozilla Firefox for Mac; one user tested on Safari (choice was given to the user)

Priority Levels

The issues identified through usability testing are grouped into three levels of priority:

High priority: These issues are likely to impact a large number of users significantly. They should be resolved as quickly as resources allow.

Medium priority: Issues at this priority level are also likely to affect a large number of users but generally are less disruptive to the user experience, relative to the high priority issues. If resources are available to address these issues, they should be addressed.

Low priority: Low priority issues typically impact a small subset of the overall user base, although they may impact a larger group. Regardless of the number of users affected, these issues carry only a minor negative impact. Low priority issues are generally easy to resolve. There is less time pressure to fix low priority issues, compared to medium priority issues and especially high priority issues.

Recommended Changes

Home page

High Priority:

- ◆ **Add a 'Request Catalog' feature on the 'Home' page.** All users tested had trouble finding a way to add their names to the mailing list for a catalog. Sub-pages currently hold a feature to request a catalog, however, none of the users thought to navigate to those areas in looking for the sign up form.
- ◆ **Relocate the 'Email' sign up field above the fold.** Users expected to see this function at the top of the page rather than having to scroll down to locate it.

Low Priority:

- ◆ **Enhance the display of the 'Email' sign up field by enlarging the field title.** One user stated that enlarging the text and making the field stand out more would make it more noticeable.

Global Navigation

High Priority:

- ◆ **Add a 'Home' tab to the Global Navigation.** While the current site logo acts as a button to return to the homepage, there is no visual indication of it being a button or link. Some users commented that there was no 'Home' button at all.
- ◆ **Reorganize the 'Other Ways to Shop' navigation area to reflect the other options users have to order products.** A majority of users were confused upon browsing to one of the categories within this area. One user commented that the links in the Global Navigation area were just repeated within this sub-navigation area. This separate navigation should be combined with the global navigation.
- ◆ **Change the label 'Club Specials' to 'Buyer's Club'.** Most users were confused by why products listed under 'Club Specials' were set apart from other products. Most users expected to find products geared to their interests in a section labeled 'Club'. This function is better served by the already existing 'Buyer's Club' rather than products that it appears any visitor could purchase.

Medium Priority:

- ◆ **Change the label 'Storage Spaces' to 'Storage Solutions'.** Users had to think about what the word spaces meant. Solutions would better convey what the category holds.
- ◆ **Change the label 'Catalog Quick Shop' to 'Catalog'.** The term quick shop created confusion for some users who navigated to this section expecting it to hold the site's most popular items, which they did not find.
- ◆ **Add a 'Holiday' tab to accommodate navigation to seasonal products.** Users had difficulty locating items specifically for Christmas within the current navigation scheme.

Text Formatting

High Priority:

- ◆ **Improve readability of text by using high contrast colors against the background color; i.e., white text on a dark background, black text on a light background.** Many users commented on the difficulty of reading light gray text on a white background. One user resorted to using the browser's find feature after searching for the return policy near the utility links. The return policy link is currently gray against a gray background effectively hiding it from the user.

Medium Priority:

- ◆ **Increase the text size for page content and utility links to the browser default for 1em.** Comments by users suggested the text was too small for comfortable reading.

My Account

Medium Priority:

- ◆ **Add a form for easy return of merchandise.** Users were able to find the return policy but no clear instructions for handling a return. Most users suggested this information should be accessed from the 'My Account' page.

Customer Service

High Priority:

- ◆ **Add detailed instructions on the 'Returns & Exchanges' page.** All users agreed that more information should be found on this page. Detailed instructions for returns and an address were the most common suggestions.

Catalog Quick Shop

High Priority:

- ◆ **Add a link to the 'Request a Catalog' form.** Users all navigated to this section looking for a way to add their name to the mailing list for a catalog. One user was angered that it was not found on this page.

Product Area 1: Storage Spaces

Low Priority:

- ◆ **Add a link to 'Holiday Storage Items'.** Users were asked to locate storage solutions for Christmas items and were unable to locate these items through the category 'Storage Spaces'.

Product Area 2: Electrical/Lighting

Medium Priority:

- ◆ **Reorganize and/or reallocate products under 'Interior Lighting'.** Several users were surprised that 'Battery/Power Supply' was found under 'Interior Lighting'. Reorganization and reallocation of some of the products in this category would improve navigation.
- ◆ **Add a category labeled 'Electrical Accessories'.** Most items found under 'Interior Lighting' and some under 'Exterior Lighting' and 'Electrical Tools' would be better labeled 'Electrical Accessories'.
 - Moving categories such as 'Outlets', 'Switches', 'Extension Cords/Wiring', 'Bulbs', 'Timers', and 'Battery Storage' to the new category of 'Electrical Accessories' would make it easier for users to find a product for storing batteries.

Functional Aspects

High Priority:

- ◆ **Confirm and/or improve functionality of 'Add to Basket' button.** Upon being asked to add products to the shopping basket using the 'Add to Basket' button, all users encountered an error. The error was non-descriptive and only offered the option to return to the homepage.
 - One user switched his browser from Mozilla Firefox to Safari and then was able to add the product to the shopping basket. The user stated he would only bother to switch browsers if he really wanted the product.
- ◆ **Implement scripts and forms compatible with all browsers.** Users were confused when functional sections of the site failed. One user refreshed the page to see if he still had an Internet connection.
 - A user (using Safari) wished to sort his search results according to price ascending and found the sort to have no effect all. Sort was operational on the product category pages.
 - The same user found another bug when trying to navigate search results using the 'Next Page' button, which also did not work.
- ◆ **Improve 'Error Message' descriptions to indicate what is causing the problem (i.e., unsupported browser).** The error message displayed for the non-functioning 'Add to Basket' button was described by all users who read it as being completely unhelpful and nondescript.
- ◆ **Provide notification to customers in the event of site maintenance.** User Specialists were uncertain to the reason why the 'Add to Basket' button was non-functioning upon testing.
 - If any of the functionality of the site is down for maintenance a notice should be placed on the 'Home' page alerting customers that they will not be able to purchase product at this time.
 - Without this notification users are left feeling confused and lose confidence in the ability of the site to handle their personal information.

Checkout Process

High Priority:

- ♦ **Display actual shipping charges earlier in the checkout process.** One user stopped one page shy of discovering actual shipping charges because he was scared he would accidentally purchase something before he found the shipping charges.

Medium Priority:

- ♦ **Increase size and change location of 'Step' indicator in checkout process.** Enlarge the size and add text detailing each step of the process. Move the indicator to the left top section of the page. The current location and size on page doesn't stand out to catch the user's attention.

Low Priority:

- ♦ **Enhance the display of 'Estimated Shipping Charges' by using color or making it bold.** Some users thought the estimated shipping charges were enough information to decide whether they would continue the purchase or not. However, other users didn't notice the estimated shipping charges at all on the page.