Website Evaluation

Heuristic Toolkit

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We get it… work gets busy. You've got meetings, projects, business trips, emails, reports and more. Oh, and then there's the thing called "your website" that needs to be maintained, nurtured and updated.

But too often, we find that marketers become so familiar with their business and their website that they overlook its faults and don't take a holistic view of the site's presentation and performance. When you are that close to it, you just gloss or click right past usability issues that are making your site hard to use for your key audiences – which is probably causing lost opportunities for you and your organization.

This is where the concept of a "Heuristic Evaluation" comes in. While Wikipedia and we web professionals have a nice complex definition, a heuristic evaluation is basically "an outsider's review of your website focusing on web site usability." A complete review covers a few key areas:

- Appearance & Design
- Content
- Navigation
- Efficiency & Accessibility
- Mobile Experience

We have provided the following checklist as a tool for you to review your site and give yourself a grade. (*Don't you wish you could have graded yourself in school?*) The best reviews are done by a team of external usability professionals who are skilled at evaluating sites. However, for an internal review we recommend having at least two staff members who are web savvy but not intimately involved with the website conduct the review.

Happy reviewing!

Appearance & Design:

First impressions are important and make the difference between staying or going on your site. They set the tone for your brand and communicate your organization's impact.

Heuristic	Y	N	n/a	Comments
Primary goal/purpose is clear				
Clean, simple design				
Pleasing, color scheme				
Appropriate use of white space				
Consistent design				
Text and colors are consistent				
Icons are universally understood				
Images are used, are meaningful and serve a purpose				

Content:

Your users have come to your site for a reason and to solve their problem. Make it easy for them to do that and make it easy for them find and use your site.

Heuristic	Y	N	n/a	Comments
Major headings are easy to understand				
Copy is concise & explanatory				
Content is easy to scan				
Most important content is easily identified on the page				
Clear terminology, no jargon				
Links are clear and follow conventions				
Search is easy to find				
URLs are meaningful and user friendly				
Proper use of meta data (title, description, open graph, etc..)				

Clear, appropriate Calls-to-Action				
Content guides user through the site (conversation spectrum)				

Navigation:

How users get around your site. Is it easy to use? Does it make sense to the user? Does it help them solve their problem?

Heuristic	Y	N	n/a	Comments
Primary navigation is easily identifiable				
Navigation labels are clear and concise				
The number links or buttons is reasonable				
Main logo links back to homepage				
Internal links are consistent and easy to identify within the content				
Search is easy to find				
Proper use of breadcrumbs				
Includes footer navigation to most important pages				

Efficiency & Accessibility:

How does the site perform? Does it functionally do what it needs to do to reduce user frustration? Can all users access and use the site?

Heuristic	Y	N	n/a	Comments
Website loads quickly (generally most functional areas should load within 3 seconds)				
Images are optimized for fast loading				
Website is secure with an SSL certificate				

Flash & add-ons are used sparingly				
Pop-ups are minimized or are unobtrusive				
User knows if they are logged in/out (if site has login)				
404 errors configured with custom page				
Error messages are configured and are meaningful (e.g. login error, 503, etc.)				
No broken links				
Adequate text to background contrast				
Images have ALT tags				
Contact information is easy to find				
Login in upper right corner				
Are XML sitemaps configured				

Mobile Experience:

Mobile web usage is exploding and more users will come to your site for "in the know" and "need it now" moments. What will their experience be?

Heuristic	Y	N	n/a	Comments
Website is mobile friendly (at least responsive)				
Mobile site loads quickly				
Navigation in an easy to reach area (holding phone in right hand, touch with thumb)				
Icons/links are large enough for touch				
Key content appears upon mobile page load				
Site uses AMP configuration for Google Mobile searches				

Testing Tools

As you work on your website review, there are a number free tools available to test and review your site. Here are some of our top recommendations:

- Google's Site Testing Tool for Mobile and Page Speed
    - https://testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com/
- Google's Mobile Friendly Test Tool
    - https://search.google.com/search-console/mobile-friendly
- Web Accessibility Tool (WAVE)
    - http://wave.webaim.org/
- MOZ Free Tools for SEO:
    - https://moz.com/free-seo-tools

Conclusions

How did you do? How does your site perform? Your evaluation will most definitely identify things in your site that are making it harder than it should be for your users and areas or sections that need improvements. Some of these may be small things a developer or content specialist can take care of. Others may require significant structural changes to your site. The goal is to build a list and start working through the improvements.

Ready for some help? Get in touch.

We are sure some of what you found in your review is overwhelming. But the good news is we're only an email away. We're web usability specialists and are ready to dive into your site and help you enhance your web presence.

Get in touch with us at questions@yokoco.com

or visit our website at www.yokoco.com