



The Mountaineers

Redesign Project Proposal

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History

[The Mountaineers](#) is a nonprofit organization and outdoor community teaching you skills to explore the outdoors safely and responsibly. Founded in 1906, the Mountaineers is dedicated to the education and the preservation of the outdoors and have been getting people of all ages outside for over 100 years. The Mountaineers have many programs for individuals and groups of all ages pertaining to outdoor activities and education including climbing, scrambling, mountaineering, wilderness first aid, navigation, cross country/backcountry skiing, avalanche awareness, kayaking, kids mountain workshop programs, and basically anything outdoor related.

Since the majority of these programs are volunteer ran, they also have many volunteering and stewardship opportunities as well. The Mountaineers have played a significant role in the growth of the greater outdoor community in the Pacific Northwest. Many of today's

recreational resources have come from the actions and activities of early Mountaineers members including the creation of trails, wilderness areas, and national parks.

The organization also established Mountaineers Books in 1960 to express and share its love and devotion to the outdoors. The non profit book publishing arm of the Mountaineers has more than 500 titles in print- with a variety of outdoor recreation, sustainable lifestyle, and conservation advocacy books, including many award winners.

The Mountaineers Mission:

“Our mission is to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.”

Objectives, Measures & Scopes

As a team, we aim to thoroughly research, analyze and conduct usability tests on the Mountaineers website in order to identify gaps and issues that may exist within the site currently, leading us to suggest potential solutions. Our research methods will include Competitive Analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of other competitor websites, a Heuristic Evaluation for usability inspection of the user interface design, followed by Card Sorting to collect user data, which will inform our design of usability tests using volunteer test participants. Our goal is to collect enough significant data and information to provide ample constructive feedback and suggest potential solutions for a site redesign.

Methods

We will be using four User Experience(UX) research methods in our investigation of Mountaineers.org: Competitive Analysis, Heuristic Evaluation, Card Sorting, and Usability Testing.

-Competitive Analysis assesses the strengths and weaknesses of current and potential competitors' User Experiences on the web. This helps to clarify points of focus for the client including: Strengths, Weaknesses, User Base, Price Points, Features and Functionality, Reputation, and Technical Requirements (browser, hardware, etc)

-Heuristic Evaluation is a quick, cheap, and easy method in which UX experts evaluate the user interface using widely recognized UX principles to find Usability Problems in the interface design. Jakob Nielsen, in [Ten Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](#), identifies the following heuristics/principles:

- 1) **Visibility of system status:** The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.
- 2) **Match between system and the real world:** 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.
- 3) **User control and freedom:** 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.

- 4) Consistency and standards: Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.
- 5) Error prevention: 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.
- 6) Recognition rather than recall: 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.
- 7) Flexibility and efficiency of use: 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.
- 8) Aesthetic and minimalist design: 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.
- 9) Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors: Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.
- 10) Help and documentation: 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.

-Card Sorting is a method that investigates what the Information Architecture (IA) of a website should be. Information Architecture refers to the structure of a website's information and how it's found and presented. This generally focuses on how information is conceptually grouped, the sequence of steps required to navigate between groups of information, and meaningful and helpful page naming conventions.

Card Sorting involves presenting research participants with a number of cards labeled with pieces of information the website provides. The participants are then asked to group these cards together into the categories that make the most sense to them.

-Usability Testing improves our understanding of a website's [Usability](#), which Nielsen defines using 5 components quality components:

- 1) Learnability: How easy is it for users to accomplish basic tasks the first time they encounter the design?
- 2) Efficiency: Once users have learned the design, how quickly can they perform tasks?
- 3) Memorability: When users return to the design after a period of not using it, how easily can they reestablish proficiency?
- 4) Errors: How many errors do users make, how severe are these errors, and how easily can they recover from the errors?
- 5) Satisfaction: How pleasant is it to use the design?

For Usability Testing we task research participants to take on the role of a representative user and use the website to accomplish the basic goals of those users (determined by using the

above research methods) eg. book a lesson, become a volunteer etc. We then observe the participants to determine:

- 1) Was the task completed successfully?
- 2) How long did it take to accomplish a task?
- 3) How satisfied were the users/participants in using the website?
- 4) What changes are required to improve user performance and satisfaction?
- 5) Does the performance meet our usability requirements

User Profiles

User Type	Description	Task
The Volunteer/instructor	The Volunteer wants to find opportunities to get involved and instruct an activity. The volunteer can be from any background and interested in anything be it first aid, navigation, avalanche safety etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Register as a volunteer ● Look for opportunities to instruct ● Schedule an activity ● Schedule a seminar
Family	The family is looking to get quality family time together and get involved in outdoor activities while being in a safe and fun environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make lodge reservations ● Schedule a family adventure
Youth	Youth will visit the website primarily to explore opportunities for outdoor adventure and find avenues of learning new skills. They would want information regarding various outdoor clubs and the dates to sign up for summer camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Join outdoor clubs ● Sign up for workshops ● Register for summer camps ● Register for youth volunteering activities

<p>Environmentalism</p>	<p>The environmentalist is concerned about the environment and wants to get involved with conservation efforts. He wants to learn about responsible recreation and about protecting the outdoors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find stewardship activities ● Sign up for trail maintenance ● Read conservation blogs ● Get involved with advocacy ● Donate
<p>Book enthusiast</p>	<p>Most book enthusiasts will visit the website to check the library hours, membership prices and view the selection of books for educational or recreational purposes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Register as a member ● Find directions ● Check out hours of operation ● Purchase a book ● Gift a membership
<p>Outdoor Enthusiast</p>	<p>The outdoor enthusiast is interested in the plethora of activities offered like climbing, backpacking, sea kayaking, snowshoeing etc and would want to find out about schedule their next adventure, They would also want to read about other adventurers trip reports and share their own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find activities ● Look up routes ● View trip reports ● Share trip reports ● Check out upcoming events ● Donate

Recruitment

This study will require participants to take part in testing procedures. Since it is a class project recruitment will primarily be done from among our classmates. If required we will also recruit close friends and family for their valued feedback.

Incentives

In the event of an actual usability test, we would offer an incentive to participants such as an Amazon or Starbucks gift card. For the purposes of this class project, we will ask for the participation of fellow classmates. In return, we too will participate in other classmate's usability tests.

Responsibilities & (Proposed) Schedule

01/20/2017 - Proposal of Project & Research Activities

01/27/2017 - Website Competitive Analysis Report

02/03/2017 - Heuristic Evaluation for Websites Report

02/17/2017 - Card Sorting for Website Information Architecture Report

03/03/2017 - Usability Testing for Website Kit

03/17/2017 - Usability Testing for Website Interface

03/22/2017 - Research Activities Final Presentation