

Usability Case Study Map Your Mind

Sot  pia

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1. The client

Map Your Mind is an infomediary between business people, students and people who are interested in mind mapping® and manufacturers developing mind mapping software.

Map Your Mind is an information channel about new software products, literature, research programs and training regarding mind mapping.

2. The Objective of the analysis

The objective of this analysis was reviewing the usability of the web site taking in consideration usability guidelines. This involves examining the interface and checking its compliance with standard usability principles, that means to detect confusing elements in the design on the basis of usability criteria only.

3. Sotopia's role

Conduct an expert review¹ using a heuristics checklist (guidelines on usability principles). Translate the problems found into design solutions and deliver them to the customer.

4. Client impact

The results from the review allowed Map Your Mind to recognise the weaknesses of the web site in terms of usability and achievement of web site goals - sales.

The recommendations provided are based on the results of the review and are expected to improve the usability of www.mapyourmind.com by 20-30% in terms of user satisfaction.

This translates into an average reduction of 4 to 8 minutes in search of information.
Sales of software products and book sales increased 12% compared with the previous year's first quarter.

¹ **NOTE:** It is important to know that an Expert Review is a quick and low-cost evaluation of a user-interface design. It is a fast way of finding those usability problems that an experienced evaluator can detect from a user perspective. Only 60 to 70% of the web site's problems are covered therefore it is highly recommend performing user testing to validate the changes and to find out other design flaws that were not recognized by the usability expert.

5. Main Problems encountered and given solutions

5.1 Homepage

Problem

Users have to choose one of the options presented in order to go deeper in the site. Since there's no immediate view of what the web site has to offer users leave without entering it and, therefore mapyourmind.com may be missing potential buyers.

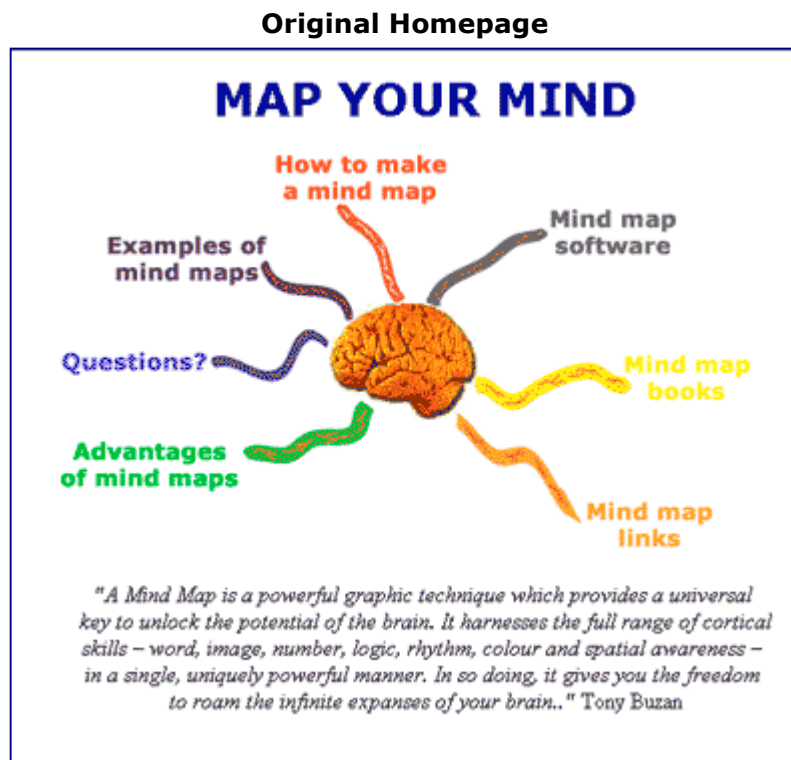


Fig. 1: Original Homepage

Solution

Tell users what is the purpose of the web site, what does the web site offer, what do they get by visiting the site. Show the most important features of the site at the homepage.

Give special attention to the best purchases of the month, and the latest software and/or book releases.

Recommended homepage



Fig.2: Recommended homepage

5.2 Right hand menu

Problem

The main problem of the right hand menu was its lack of consistency. There were different link colours, not all the options were available in all of the pages and ultimately there was not a meaningful organisation between the items.

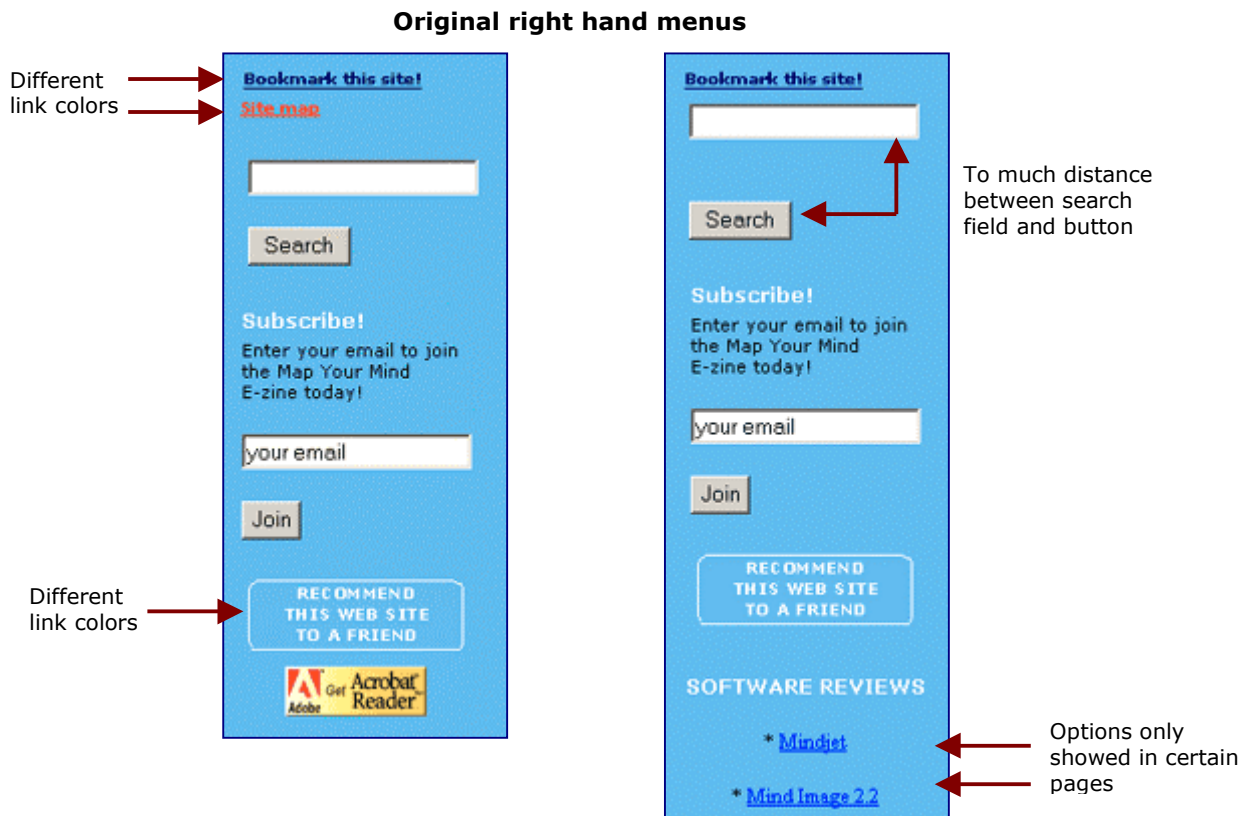


Fig.3: Original right hand menus

Solution

The need of a secondary menu, such as the right hand menu, is to provide quick access to additional features of the web site such as: "subscribe", "recommend to a friend", "latest software releases" and "software reviews". For that reason it should be clear and organised so users have a good understanding of its functionality's

The action to be taken here is to divide this secondary menu in categories, making sure all the options will be available in all screens consistently so that users have a quicker scanning of its functions and are able to use them wherever they are located in the site.

The search function was removed from this menu and allocated on the top right hand side of the page, the reason for that was to avoid confusing and mixing up buttons and boxes and keep it well distinguished from the "subscribe" option.

Recommended - Right hand menu

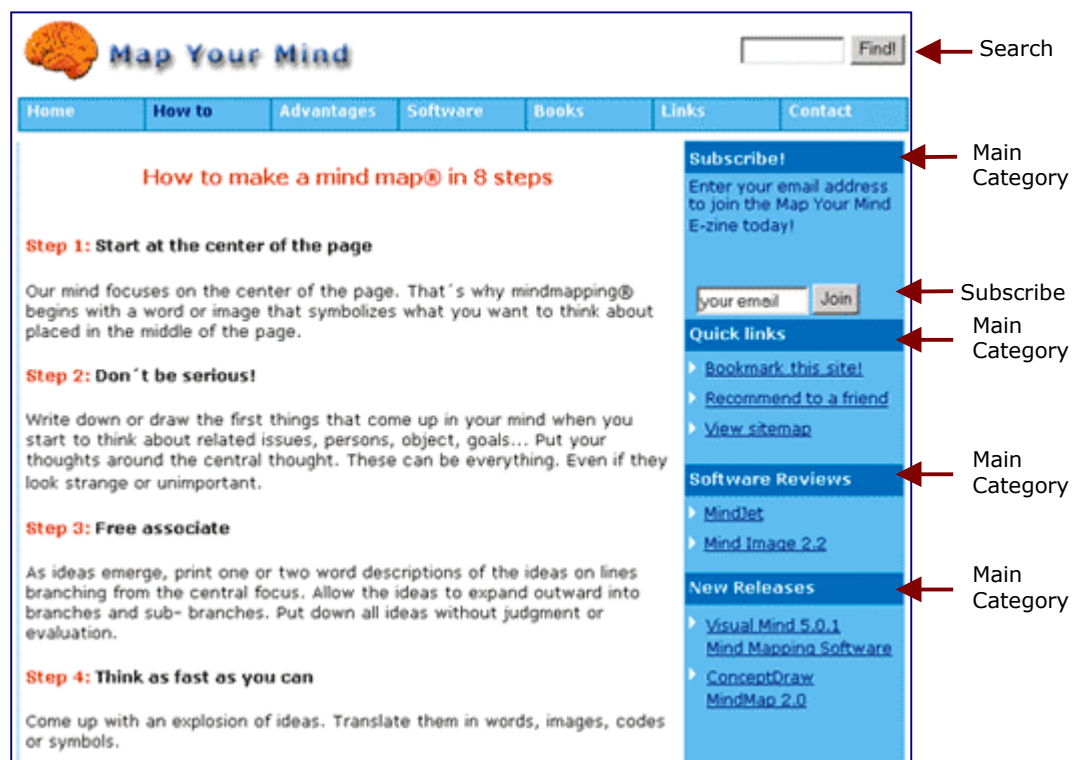


Fig.4: Recommended right hand menu

5.3 Content organisation

Problem

Being Map Your Mind an educational web site the content layout is extremely important.

Most of the pages of the Map Your Mind have a lot of content, that alone is already a disadvantage, but in this case is emphasised with its poor organisation layout.

Everything is clustered together making it very hard to read and/or scan, which becomes a painful exercise for users to find what they are looking for.

Original page layout

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "Mind Map® Software". The content is as follows:

Map Your Mind presents you a wide range of different software products to make your own mind map® on your computer.

Click on the pictures or the links to visit our partners web sites to download a demo or order a complete product. Map your mind is just a source of information about mind mapping®. We are never responsible for the products of our partners. Prices below are excluding shipping, handling costs and taxes. Prices are subject to change.

MindManager® 2002 Business Edition

MindManager® Business Edition, a Microsoft® Office® companion application, enhances productivity and stimulates innovation. It empowers your teams to maximize ROI by allowing them to:

- Efficiently capture and communicate knowledge assets
- Quickly generate, organize and display ideas in rich detail
- Map out processes and tasks for easier comprehension

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MindManager® 2002 Enterprise Edition up to 100 users
US\$ 255,55 each
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MindManager® 2002 Standard Edition

MindManager® 2002 Standard Edition allows anyone to attain their professional and personal goals

Annotations on the screenshot:

- "Little differentiation between titles and text" points to the "Mind Map® Software" title and the introductory paragraph.
- "Little differentiation between titles and text" points to the "MindManager® 2002 Business Edition" title and its description.
- "Little difference between the 'order' hyperlink and 'read about the latest...'" points to the "Click here to order..." and "Read about the latest..." links.

Fig.5: Original page layout

Solution

Web pages should be ready to scan so the eye can rapidly identify changes of context, and differentiate what is important from what is less important. Research has shown that most users don't read line by line but in diagonal, from top left to down right. Therefore it is important to build a layout which allows them accessible and fast reading. That can be achieved by dividing the content in areas and differentiate titles with a different colour and font style. It is also important to provide fast access to the top of the page (avoiding having to scroll) when pages are long.

Recommended – page layout

Clear distinction between titles and text

Mind Map® Software for Windows

Map Your Mind presents you a wide range of different software products to make your own mind map® on your computer.

Click on the pictures or the links to visit our partners web sites to download a demo or order a complete product. Map Your Mind is just a source of information about mind mapping®.

We are never responsible for the products of our partners. Prices below are excluding shipping, handling costs and taxes. Prices are subject to change.



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Clear distinction between titles and text

The "order" hyperlink is more prominent

Separation line which makes it easier to scan long listings

Possibility to go back to the top of the page, avoiding the use of the scroll bar

Fig.6: Recommended page layout

6. Conclusion

A lot of money is invested in online applications and web sites however building a web site it is only one of the first steps in e-business. Companies nowadays have the opportunity to test their online environments in real time and usability testing will prevent them from inaccessible web sites and abandoning visitors.

A small investment of only € 3.500 will increase your online sales significantly and will improve your customer satisfaction. Sotopia would like to share their ideas with you on how to make your web site more successful. Feel free to visit www.sotopia.com and have a chat with one of our usability advisors.

7. Contact Information

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