

Question 1: Heuristic Evaluation

Heuristic Evaluation Scale: 1-5

Severity is ranked 1 through 5, with 5 being a “show stopper” and 1 being more of a minor cosmetic suggestion.

Format: Rule Violated (ranked severity)

Rules based on Jakob Nielsen Heuristics found here:

http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html

Index page:

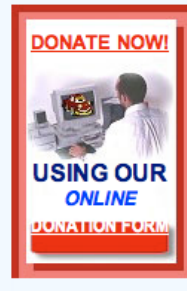
Clearly the most egregious problem with this page is the sheer volume of clutter. Images animate, unstoppable text scrolls by, colors are bright and distracting and even the main text area is muddled by a background image. As a guiding principle, this site should minimize its design so that it can use emphasis to highlight the tasks users come to this site to accomplish. Assuming that most people visit the site to donate their car or to learn

how to donate their car, the most prominent links should not that of classic cars for sale or a kid's art contest. For a site that relies on a strong degree of trust, as this one does, it should take steps to present a professional, stable design. Errors in alignment and color matching in combination with a grade school style color pallet diminish the site's feeling of legitimacy.



Nationwide
Car Donations

Donate your car
with our easy
online form!



Consistency and standards (3)

The index page uses at least 4 different areas and text phrases to link to the donations page. For a user, the lack of consistency of phraseology can make it difficult to know which donation link to pick.

Consistency and standards (3)

Some most links are underlined, but not everything that is underlined is a link. Navigation is not centralized and not all of it follows the same graphical distinction. Underlining is used for headers as well as to emphasize within blocks of text. On the web, the use of underlined text should be primarily reserved for hyperlinks. Using hyperlinks on phone numbers is needless; hyperlinks should only be used where potential exists for users to discover more information about a topic, not on data itself that represents an end goal.

1-800-766-CARE

Recognition rather than recall (2)

With such a long page, the user must constantly scroll to find desired information or links. This requires that the user remember where to find a desired section on the page.

Aesthetic and minimalist design (5)

The clutter and gratuitousness of this page makes it almost unusable. Scrolling text and animated banners distracts users. The over use of color reduces diminishes the ability of the page to emphasize the most important aspects. Useless information like today's date just serves to clutter the page and distracts from the purpose of the user's visit.

Today is ...
Monday, Mar. 20, 2006

How To Donate Page:

All the same layout and clutter problems found on the index page continue to plague this page. To its credit, this page does a better job at addressing the specific needs of the user who visits it. New problems occur in poor wording choices and language inconsistency.

Consistency and standards (3)

Most links are underlined, but not everything that is underlined is a link. Navigation is not centralized and not all of it follows the same graphical distinction. Underlining is used for headers as well to emphasize blocks of text. On the web, the use of underlined text should be



primarily reserved for hyperlinks. For example, the page header, “How To Donate Your Car To Charity,” should not be underlined.

Aesthetic and minimalist design (3)

The over use of color diminishes the ability of the page to emphasize the most important aspects. Useless information like today’s date just serves to clutter the page and distracts from the purpose of the user’s visit.

Help and documentation (2)

“Help your community in an original and effective way: car donations.” This sentence exemplifies the trouble with this page. It lacks consistency in terms of who is the target. It should be assumed that the visitor to this page is an individual who wishes to know the processes involved with donating a car. With that in mind, the page should be written to the user, explaining how to donate. The constant switch in the text copy between “you” and “a donor” needlessly complicates this documentation.

Once you donate your car and it is accepted, one of our tow companies will pick up the vehicle at no cost to the donor, or a donor may drop off the vehicle at one of our car donation center lot locations.

Donation Form:

Typically when a page looks as poorly constructed as this one, I give the developer the benefit of the doubt. Maybe it looks better on whatever browser they used to test it. However, I doubt this page looks good on any browser. This page suffers from alignment issues, layout bugs, inconsistent navigation, poor use of defaults, lack of error checking a generally poor choice or widgets.



Match between system and the real world (2)

Sentences like “All online donations must be qualified by a Cars 4 Causes Representative to complete the process” only serve to confuse the user. This clearly has little bearing on the user before he or she submits the form. Before a user can even begin, he or she are asked to understand what it means to “qualified by” a representative.

All online donations must be qualified by a Cars 4 Causes Representative to complete the process.

User control and freedom (2)

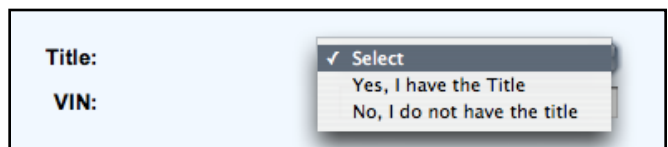
The side navigation, as messy as it was, has been removed from this page. Besides from closing the window or hitting the back button, the user has no way of escaping this form. Heaven forbid the user might wish to find out more about the organization before they complete the lengthy form. At this point the user is forced to commit to a course of action.

Consistency and standards (5)

Web forms are fairly ubiquitous these days and their construction and the correct use of widgets has become standardized. Cars 4 Causes violates several these standards:

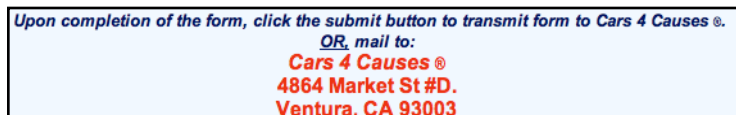
- Always closely align the descriptive label with the form element. Large spacing between the two greatly decreases readability.
- Keep labels consistent. If you spell out “phone” in one form element, spell it out everywhere.
- State drop down lists should be alphabetical, even if a majority of your business comes from California, residents of California are quite used to scrolling down a few items to find their state.
- If there are only two options, and they are clearly in opposition to each other, a checkbox is almost always a better choice. “Tape: <drop down with Select/Yes/No>” should be written as “Vehicle Has a Tape deck: <checkbox>.” Anytime a yes or no answer is required and a reasonable default exists, a checkbox should be considered. In this case, assuming the vehicle has a tape deck and setting that as the default, is unlikely to cause any problems.
- Auto-fill when it is possible. Address information is taken in 3 different places, each time the format is different. If the three instances are all needed, they at least should use the same layout.
- Keep topic subgroups together. The “explain” section of the vehicle damage survey should directly follow the condition rating, so users can explain why they chose the condition they did.

The “Title” selection question would be much better served with a single checkbox indicating if the user has the title.



The image shows a form with two labels, 'Title:' and 'VIN:', on the left. To the right of these labels is a dropdown menu. The dropdown menu is open, showing three options: 'Select' (with a checkmark), 'Yes, I have the Title', and 'No, I do not have the title'.

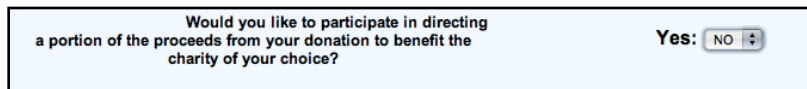
If the user has made it down to the bottom of the form, they should not be asked if they wish to mail it in. This makes no sense at this point of the flow. Address mailing information should be located with the downloadable copies of the form.



The image shows a form footer with the following text: 'Upon completion of the form, click the submit button to transmit form to Cars 4 Causes ®. OR, mail to: Cars 4 Causes ® 4864 Market St #D. Ventura, CA 93003'.

Perhaps my favorite question on this form is simply “Yes:” with the drop down choice of “Yes” or “No.” Clearly this label is unnecessary and should be tied with the actual ques-

tion that is aligned to the left. In general the form should use consistent alignment and formatting.



Would you like to participate in directing a portion of the proceeds from your donation to benefit the charity of your choice? Yes: ☒ NO ☐

Vehicle address field says to “Leave Blank if Same,” but places this message in the text field itself. This makes it unclear if one needs to remove that text to indicate the same address or it can be safely left there. If a user does delete that text, that instruction is no longer available.

Error prevention (5)

The form has zero error detection as far as I can tell. Even required fields can be left blank and submitted without trouble. Letters can be placed in zip code fields and cars can have model years in the 15th century.

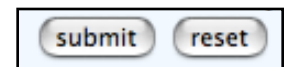


How Long Sitting:

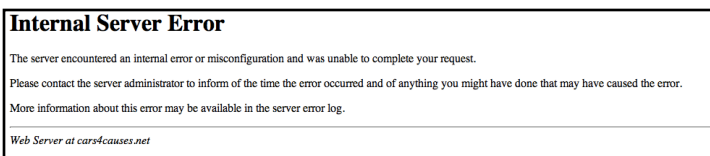
In addition, with the reset and submit button so similar and close together, and neither with any confirmation, it is easy to see how a user might complete the form and inadvertently erase the entire thing. Depending on which operating system you are familiar with, the reset/cancel button might actually be on the wrong side.

Flexibility and efficiency of use (1)

Intelligent guesses as to the default state could be made based on previously entered data. There are several places where address information could be pre-propagated based on information already known. If the user has a home address in MD, there is a good chance this is where the vehicle is registered.



Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors (3)



Internal Server Error
The server encountered an internal error or misconfiguration and was unable to complete your request.
Please contact the server administrator to inform of the time the error occurred and of anything you might have done that may have caused the error.
More information about this error may be available in the server error log.
Web Server at cars4causes.net

This is the only error message I was able to generate, so clearly there is little in the way of error help. On the other hand, in most cases, no errors are even reported when bad form data is submitted.

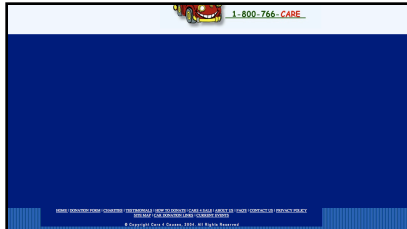
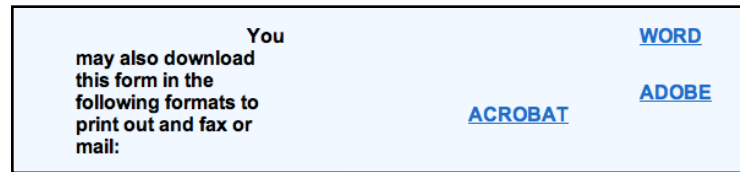
Help and documentation (2)

There is no help documentation that I can find. While the form should be simple enough not to require any, it would be nice to include the option of getting more information about some of the more specific questions associated with the form.

Aesthetic and minimalist design (4)

The same site-wide problems are exhibited on this page. In addition, it is questionable as to if all these fields are actually needed. Cars 4 Causes should consider significantly reducing the amount of initial information needed to donate a car. Perhaps provide optional additional questions later in the process. The form also should be compacted as to not re-

quire horizontal scrolling. Form elements should be brought closer to their labels and the whole thing should be consistently aligned. The whole process is clearly daunting to any user.



The end of the page has such a gaping blank spot, a user might wonder if maybe some information is missing.

Kids Art Contest:

Confusing in itself, this is actually just the winners page, not a page providing information about an ongoing art contest. What seems like two different links from the navigation area both go to the same page that shows this year's winners. The page suffers from the same poor choices in navigation and title image. It excels in its misuse of underline text that is not hyper-linked. The new problem introduced by this page is the jarring movement of images when you mouse over them. The enlargement shifts all text and even displaces the navigation.



Consistency and standards (3)

The standard way of showing an image gallery involves giving the user an option of clicking on an image to see a larger view. This often happens in a new window, so as not to prevent the user from continuing to use the site while the image loads. This can also help to prevent the workflow from being interrupted. In this case, the user mouses towards an image and is greeted by the image growing several times in size. This displaces both the page text and the layout, distracting



any notion of flow. The expansion also often makes it difficult to read the text that credits the image. In addition, it becomes difficult to compare multiple images as only one can be enlarged at a time.

Again we see the use of the underline tag to call attention to text that is not a hyperlink.

I would also suggest that if “super-duper” were a real word, it

super, duper

would be spelled with a hyphen, not with a comma. There is no point in teaching children bad grammar.



Aesthetic and minimalist design (3)

The same navigation problems hold. For this particular page the choice of colors and large cartoon icons is actually appropriate, but it should not be adopted for the entire site. In addition, the vertical layout would not scale well if the site wished to show any more entries.

Help and documentation (1)

The very fact that this explanation is needed signals trouble with the design.

“For a larger view of each of the drawings, simply scroll down until the picture you want to see is near the top of your computer screen, then hold your mouse pointer over the picture for a few seconds and, like magic, it will grow! Then, when you move your mouse pointer away from the larger picture, it will return to its smaller size.”

The request that the user positions the image near the top of the screen is unneeded. A different method for enlargement should have been used, but if Cars 4 Causes is wedded to this method, this instruction set could be much more succinctly written. “Move the mouse over a drawing to watch it expand.” (Subtext: and then wish you hadn’t.)

About Us

The about us page should be where the organization really puts its most professional foot forward. Unfortunately, grammatical errors and a strange five-item list mar this attempt. The text is for the most part understated. Color is only used consistently to highlight the organization’s name.



1. Vehicle Donation Program

Funds are raised through the acquisition and sale of donated vehicles.

2. Cars 4 Clean AirSM

The C4C Air ProgramSM is utilized when donated vehicles are classified as "clunkers". In our charitable services, namely - providing scrap car dealership services for donated used vehicles, we are thereby removing them as hazards on the road, and eliminating the toxic pollutants they regularly emit, while still providing needed resources to charities.

3. Cars to Charities Program

Selected donated cars not designated to a specific charity by the donor, are donated by Cars 4 Causes® to non-profit groups who in turn direct them to qualified needy families or individuals.

4. Cars 4 Caring ®

5. Cars With A CauseSM

Charitable fund raising for donor designated charities, namely, soliciting, repairing, and selling donated vehicles for charitable fund raising purposes.

Consistency and standards (2)

Again we see the use of underlining to highlight something that is not a hyperlink. The page contains a five-part list, with the title of each list item underlined. This gives the impression that clicking on this list item can lead to more information. Of course, they are not links, so there is nothing more to see. It is even unclear what is contained in the list. Some seem to be programs, but the exact relation to the main organization is unclear.

Oddly enough the list has 5 parts, but item number 4 has no proceeding information. It is unclear what is this item's role. In this case, it would actually be very helpful if it were a hyperlink.

Aesthetic and minimalist design (3)

The same navigation issues exist on this page as they do on the rest of the site. Again to-day's date is needlessly displayed on the upper right hand corner of the page. The "about text" fails to provide important information such as address, email contact or even charity ID number. Instead it includes poorly worded sentences like this one:

"During this time, a vision that every young person deserved an opportunity to learn, live and excel, was emerging and began to grow."

Most of the text fails to provide valuable information to someone looking to donate a car. I would suggest that much of this information could be farmed off to an Organization History page.

Question 2: Cognitive Questions in Tandem w/ Redesign

Current Problem:

The current light switch design consists of three identical switches. The ones in the front of the room have an additional slider which can be used to dim the switch.

There are several problems with the current design. Foremost there appears to be no natural mapping between the switch position and the lights. Even if you understood the three sets of lights, it would not be clear which switch con-

