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# techniartist/media

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SampleWebsite.com  
Client Name  
Client Company  
Client Address  
Client Details

## Usability Testing Document. Findings;

### First Impressions

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

Wow. This is the Amazon of Rustic Log Furniture! I hit the jackpot!

The site layout seems professional, and clean, as though a professional designer works on staff creating, updating, and maintaining the aesthetical endeavor of the company. When I think of rustic furniture, I think of art-- because it is art in a way; living art, or rather, art to live with, and in.

The navigation of the site seems simple. The product listings and categories are right in front of me, so I may begin browsing the items at my leisure. There is even a search feature, so if I see something that I like, I may come back to it later on through a simple search, and make my final decision.

They have policy. They have a customer service link. Their phone number and contact information are right on the front of the site, so I know they're not trying to hide anything. They are a reputable company with years of experience, and I can trust them with such sensitive information such as my credit card and payment information. They are not the type to spam with solicitation e-mails if I sign up for their newsletter.

They even have the color scheme down-- a site in which sells rustic woods, and really shows it.

I can't wait to find exactly what I'm looking for, and get it shipped here.

web design and associated services



www.techniartist.com

## The Kicker; A Big Disappointment

<http://order.portal.com/cgi-bin/wg-order?samplewebsite>

As usual, before I begin browsing an online store, I make sure their ordering process will be carefree, and organized. An online store which has their act together in a functional shopping cart, which is easy to use and submit information to gains my trust.

Clicking on the "VIEW ORDER" link on the main page of the site, in order to see how they go about processing their orders and taking customer information-- the fate of the site is sealed.

A Portal Web-store.

This company is no longer as legitimate in my mind. They are a small site, with very little staff, probably no inventory. Everything I purchase will have to be subsequently purchased from one of their suppliers, and shipped directly from the suppliers' warehouse, not SampleWebsite.com.

And here I thought I found the Amazon of rustic furniture.

**\*BIG PROBLEM\*** -- *If you're going to go out on the limb of creating an amazing design and user interaction, don't spare the expense of a custom shopping cart. You want the customers to trust you-- and they almost just did, completely. But now, they get the feeling that something about your company makes it so it cannot handle its own online sales: they have Portal do it instead. In turn, your customer now trusts Portal, Not SampleWebsite.com.*

## Product Listings; Some Ups, Some Downs

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

My palms are sweating, I'm excited. After searching for weeks for one site that does it all, I have finally found it. Finally, the empty spaces in the living room will be filled by rustic wood furniture, as I always have foreseen, and I can get it from all one source.

I click anxiously on "INDOOR FURNITURE", awaiting what I will see listed. I can hardly wait.

First listing I see: "Bedroom Log Furniture, Log Beds, Dressers, Armoires, Nightstands, etc...."

What's the etc? Why couldn't they have broken it down into sub-hierarchies to better the organization of the listing. Instead of finding exactly what I'm looking for, I now have to search through subsequent pages, of what this specific company believe should belong in a certain room of my house. The listing is complicated, and I am unsure of where I should go. I am specifically looking for items for my Living Room or Den, but I may be considering ordering some things for the bedroom.

Where do I go for bedroom furniture? Oh yeah..

"Bedroom Log Furniture, Log Beds, Dressers, Armoires, Nightstands, etc...."

"Custom Log Furniture in Red Cedar" (it has a picture of a bed)

"EXOTIC LOG FURNITURE One of a Kind Custom Designs" (another picture of a bed)

I have just been utterly confused. I now have the options of looking into specific rooms, custom furniture, or Red Cedar furniture. Isn't there a better way they could have listed all of this? Possibly put the bedroom items in the bedroom, whether it was Red Cedar, or standard. Or put Custom Furniture in a completely different area of the site? I'm not looking for Custom Furniture.

**\*BIG PROBLEM\*** -- *You just introduced to your customer that there is no organization in how your products are listed. At first, s/he thought that everything meant for a bedroom was in the bedroom-- but now, it's not in the bedroom if it's Red Cedar, or custom. Reorganize your hierarchies. Get things organized. If you do, your customer will be able to find what he is looking for. A company unable to organize its product listings, is a company unable to organized payment information.*

The next thing I see:

"About Log Furniture"

Shouldn't this be somewhere else? An "About Us" page, telling the history of log furniture, or on another completely different section of the site? I am at this page looking for products. If I wanted to know about "The Art" I would read about the Art.

*(Random note: The graphic for "About Log Furniture" on this specific page, at first glance, to me, for some reason, looked like a condom. Possibly because I have also done testing on sites selling prophylactics in the past, and it just made some cross in memory. Do you see this as well?)*

"Custom Furniture Designs"

Uhm. Didn't they just list this above, as Exotic Log Furniture in Custom Designs? Okay, I'm starting to get really confused now as to where to go. If I were a customer looking for custom furniture -- I would look to my local handyman or wood carver; this is too much.

"Earn 10% of Sales!  
Join Our Affiliate Team"

You're kidding me. If I were interested in reselling your products, then I would search for that information on the page, or I would e-mail you directly.

**\*BIG PROBLEM\*** -- *You just opened up your customer to a whole battery of What-If questions. Why do you advertise an affiliate program on various pages of your site? Are you hurting that much for sales? Is this a pyramid marketing technique? Do you actually have no inventory, and you are just another affiliate? Are they paying for the product, plus 10% to you, plus 10% to who you are affiliate with, plus 10% to who they are...? If they are interested in contacting you, or learning about your resale opportunities, let them find that by looking through other areas of your site. Do not throw it in their face that you need additional sales reps.*

## Product Page Footer; The Additional Buttons

*<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>*

"How to Order" "Furniture Delivery" "About our Furniture" "Faqs" "E-mail Us"

Are these buttons truly needed here? They seem redundant, and a waste of space, and they are confusing as to the information that they refer to. You have similar links uniformly on the top of the site throughout. Are these buttons just different graphical representation of the same linking information, or do these buttons link to completely different information altogether?

(Random note: Very few people understand the acronym F.A.Q. You might consider making the FAQ portion of the website based on the "How to Order" explanation. As it seems, anyway.. both links refer to the same thing. Is this really necessary?)

## Product Listings - Deeper

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

### **\*BIG PROBLEM\***

*The product listings included in this page are way too cluttered, point blank. I can browse the page, but included in the product listing link is useless information:*

"Floor Sample SALE!! Wrangler Log Bunk Bed & Trundle & Mattresses (50% OFF!)"

This should list as "Wrangler Log Bunk Bed". The Trundle and Mattress should be listed under the specific product page as options.

"Regular price: \$1,878.00  
ON SPECIAL: \$899.00"

It being a floor model or 50% off, or having free shipping should be listed on the specific product page, or underneath the main link with the pricing information. Customers are not going to buy a product only because it's 50% off, or has free shipping. Customers are going to buy a product because they like the product.

The remainder of the listings are sporadic. Some have very short names, some have very long. Some include useless specifics, some don't. Some list pricing information, some don't.

### **Thumbnails:**

The thumbnails displayed on this page are all over the board in style. Some look like professional product photography. Some look like snapshots. Some are bordered, some are white-out, some are cut to mold to the form of the product. Some are feathered to blend into the page. This is killing the uniform of your product listing, and will make the site look to many like confetti. It's hard to look at this page to see what you have available because of the non-uniform listings.

Again: What are these doing here?

"Cedar Wood Care Info"

This belongs on another page entirely, with info about the art. Throwing it in with your product listings just causes confusion.

"About Log Furniture"

The same as above.

"Gift Certificate (\$50 and up)"

If I was looking for gift certificates, I would be looking for gift certificates.

"Contact Us Toll Free"

I already know how to contact you toll free. It's listed on the left side of the site.

It's as if you're trying to sell these additions of information as products themselves. They do not belong in your product listings.

These problems are resilient across the entirety of your product pages.

## Specific Product Pages

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

At first glance, a specific product page looks rather nice. You have the heading of the product (which does not need to contain useless information concerning shipping, etc.), more detailed information, and .. wait, where is the price? I soon find that this isn't a specific product at all, but a page dedicated to a certain manufacturer.

### **\*BIG PROBLEM\***

*Get the organization of your hierarchy down, and list your products with logic. Being a customer, I would be confused now as to where to go, because I've found a dead end. Is this a product, or a range of products? How do I get to the products for this particular manufacturer?*

Again: Listed on the bottom, everything from finding out about log furniture to how to contact you toll free. \*RESERVE YOUR PRODUCT LISTINGS FOR PRODUCT LISTINGS\* If you have added these icons and sections below product listings to fill "white space" you're creating a counter-production, because it just makes it more confusing about where I am.

### **A specific product page.**

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

Somewhat cluttered.

At first I see the heading of the product, then a picture. Then I see a couple of contradictive graphics: "CLICK PICTURE TO ENLARGE" and a "ZOOM" button. Which one do I do? The former does just that, but the latter opens up an empty page. Get uniform on here. I've seen this across numerous product pages. If the product doesn't have a larger photograph, then don't offer the zoom button. If it does, then decide if you want them to click on Zoom, or the picture itself.

### **TELL A FRIEND:**

Good feature. I'm not sure how much it will be utilized, but definitely a good feature.

### **ADD TO ORDER:**

This button references and only moves you further down the page. It's not necessary for it to be here, and it makes me wonder where exactly it's going to take me. However, when I click it, it takes me to an order button further below, with a bunch of other buttons which are redundant, considering the same thing is on the top of the page (and I've already spoken about this).

### **ACCESSORIES:**

This is a good feature to have, but just make sure to keep it uniform. Creating accessories for specific products in this type of environment (where it is obvious that these pages are not generated by a shopping card application is going to get confusing and hazardous to update and maintain.) Customers will not be impressed if they link to accessories that are no longer there, out of stock, or dead links.

## Supportive Areas of the Site

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

This is where I will target some of the support areas of the site that I had a chance to look through. I will explain my understanding of some of your support documents and supporting graphics.

### PRODUCT CATEGORIES:

On the main page of the site, there are several ways for me to get to the main product categories. I can use the link list up top with the pictures, the link list on the site under the search button, or links in the center of the page.

Because these links aren't uniform, I wonder if they will take me to different places. The pictures you have atop the page are not bordered, and although they are fine staying there, they look as though they were put there to fill up white space, rather than to be functional.

The links on the left are what I believe most users will go for, if they are searching for specific products.

### E-MAIL LINKS:

There are e-mail links both at the top and the left side of the page. The links look fantastic and really give your site a flare of professionalism. However, both links refer to only info@ your domain. This does not make me feel as though I am speaking to an expert-- it makes me feel like I am sending an e-mail to a general e-mail address answered by any one person. A contradiction in terms. Consider having these buttons link to a page, offering specific e-mail addresses for Customer Service, Decorating, Shipping, Sales. It will give the illusion of having experts and departments on hand, even if you don't.

### FREE SHIPPING; LEARN MORE:

This is an excellent way to advertise that some of your products do have free shipping, and it looks great. However, there is one thing that I notice about the text you find when clicking the link that rubs me wrong: "FREE SHIPPING really means free shipping as long as you live in the lower 48 US states." While I understand what this means, it does give me a sense that I've been misled. More so the phrase "what this really means." It makes me wonder how many other things you have stated on your site that "really mean" something else. Reword it.

### CALL US TOLL FREE:

Excellent to have your contact information right up front. So many sites bury it for one reason or another. However, offset it from looking like the rest of the links on the left side of the page. It looks like a link, and I kept on clicking on it wondering if it would take me someplace.

### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

Excellent way for you to stay in contact with your potential customers. However when clicking and reading through the additional information, another wording problem came into play: "We believe this medium provides a quick and cost effective way for us to inform"

I am a customer. I do not want to know how this medium makes it cost effective for you to spam with me announcements. I want to know how joining your newsletter will benefit me, not you.

## **THE FOOTER:**

Excellent job in creating this footer. It looks like many others and has become uniform for professional e-tailer sites on the web. This is not redundant information as I have stated about several other areas. This belongs here, and people expect it here.

## Search Features

*<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>*

The search features of your site leave much to be desired. Because of the way you have named your product listings, it gets complex to understand what exactly it is listing because of the frivolous information added. As well, I have no idea how many results it turned up, only to turn to the next page. I would like to see how many results I have, so I know whether or not it will be useful for me to continue looking through the search.

Get your product listings more simple. On the search page, list what category they are with. Manufacturer, etc. Price is not necessary. As it is right now, it's way too cluttered to be fully utilized.

The "ENTER A SEARCH" graphic looks like a click-able item. I wanted to click on that several times instead of the black "Go" button.

## Site Header and Menu/Associated Information

<http://www.samplewebsite.com/sample.html>

This is where I delve into your menu, and the associate information that it links to.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE/POLICIES:**

This listing of policies is too large. Break it down into sub-pages with specific information on returns, shipping, payment, etc. There is way too much here to even interest me into beginning searching for any information I was looking for. If nothing else, add more links on the top of the content, offering different sections of the page that are easily distinguishable from the others. All this information runs together.

### **ABOUT US:**

Good layout. Do you have a picture of your offices? Find something to show that you are real.

The links below your information do not need to be there. There are links to the same information just above the text.

### **SHIPPING:**

This link obviously points to the above reference document. Break it down, make the information easier to find. Explain how a product can be easily recognized as having free shipping.

### **CUSTOMER COMMENTS:**

A for Effort.. horrible execution. The comments run together. Instead of listing all that anyone has ever said before, list the coin phrases. Because of the styling it is hard to discern one thought from the next-- it runs into a jumble.

On the bottom, the "LEAVE A MESSAGE BUTTON" is unneeded, and it's styling clashes with the rest of the site. I already know how to e-mail you, there are links on the top, and left side of the page.

The "Affiliate Program", it belongs somewhere else. Especially not here.

### **SITE MAP:**

This does not need to be here. Break it down to take you to the specific areas of supportive documents on ordering, shipping etc., if nothing else. A master list of your products is unnecessary if you have a search button, and proper product listing. This is a waste of space as it is being used now.

### **FAQS:**

Most people still do not know what a FAQ is. If nothing else, break this down to be indexed, or at least have links at the beginning of the content so a customer can find what he's looking for fast.

As well, many of this information seems to be a repeat of the info in Policies. Does it truly need to be stated again under a different title? Break the other ones down-- and I don't think this needs to be here, or vice versa.

### **VIEW ORDER:**

That's right. You're a Portal store.

## Overall

You have the beginning of a really good e-tailer site here. One that I could imagine could go far and generate a lot of sales. At first glance, the design is superb, and right on the money for the subject matter of rustic artistic furniture. Your designer was brilliant, however, it doesn't seem he was that technically aware of how to appropriately list product listings and organize information.

It can be utilized. You will get orders. Properly marketed, you could be the Amazon of the rustic furniture marketplace. I am very impressed with the overall layout and function.

However, if you were to focus on one thing to improve --

### **GET A CUSTOM SHOPPING CART AND CATALOGING SYSTEM!**

Your product listings are a MESS, a serious one. I would not want to be part of the administrative nightmare that updating this site, adding/removing products is going to become. Obviously the entire product listing is static, and not based on a dynamically generated database or table of products. This is going to be your kicker. This is going to be what turn customers away, because it's just too damn confusing to find the products that they are looking for. I've been in and out of your complete site this morning, and even after several hours of using your listing system, I still do not understand its logic. Get someone to clean it up.

And get rid of Portal stores.

There are much more powerful and functional and secure shopping cart solutions out there that can dynamically generate and organize your product listings. Having your own secure server, and ordering application will generate more trust from your customers. Having a Portal store is stating this to your customers:

*We are not responsible enough or dedicated enough to handle your payment information and other concerns personally within our company.*

## In Closing

I hope I have been of help, and if I can be of any more, please contact me. Thank you for the opportunity to critique your site for usability.