

# UX Lessons from testing government websites

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# WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY

- Our work
- What we know
- What are people NOT doing?
- How do we fix it?



# OUR WORK

What makes us think we have any idea  
what we're talking about?



# DATA SOURCES

- Intercept surveys – 20,000+
- Usability Testing – 25+
- Surveys – 500+ results
- 1,000,000+ user visits to sites
- Validated against 3<sup>rd</sup> party research



# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

It's more than the knowledge that this is hard; I promise.



# #1 GOVERNMENT IS DIFFERENT

As if you didn't know that already...



# #1 GOVERNMENT IS DIFFERENT

- Pressure from elected officials
- Pressure from residents, businesses, outside groups
- Pressure from departments and managers
- Sites are used like intranets



# #1 GOVERNMENT IS DIFFERENT

99.9% “It’s on the site somewhere” is true

< 70% “I can find” it is true





# #2 TASK-BASED INTERACTIONS

Accomplishing a task and not just browsing



# #3 SITE SEARCH SUCKS

Only Google is Google





Search bar with a magnifying glass icon on the left, a person icon in a circle, and a microphone icon on the right.

Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky

[Go behind-the-scenes of today's Doodle celebrating the King of the Blues](#)



# #3 SITE SEARCH SUCKS

- If menu items are unclear users immediately move towards search
- Metadata is not useful
- Abundance of duplicated documents and revisions
- No real “source of truth” due to outdated content



# #4 NEWS IS IMPORTANT

Communications fills a void



# #4 NEWS IS IMPORTANT

- Decline in local newspapers
- Communications departments are filling a void
- What is happening where? Usually construction.



# #5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

What's happening locally?



# #5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Correlated more with Parks and & Rec
- Looking for community-based events
- Want to post on the calendar





# #6 DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT GOVERNMENT

What's the difference between a county and a city?



# PERPETUAL INTERMEDIATES

## BEGINNERS

I just want to complain about my neighbor because they're annoying

I want to pay a bill

## INTERMEDIATES

To understand city projects and to see what's going on for my neighborhood.

Looking up information about transportation and bicycles

To be involved in the civic discussion about issues in the city

## EXPERTS

Understand government processes for scoped areas e.g. permits, licensing

Involved in civic discussion. Active in local community.



# WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING?

What we found through analytics



# POLICE



# JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

Always jobs



# PUBLIC WORKS



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# EVENTS

What's happening?



# MAPS

Where is it?





# PARKS & RECREATION

What can I do?



# PAYING A BILL

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# GETTING CONFUSED



# WHAT ARE PEOPLE NOT DOING?



# LOOKING AT PICTURES OF ELECTEDS

Surprised?



# READING CONTENT

Still surprised?



# HOW DO WE FIX IT?

What actionable steps are available to solve this problem?



# TOPIC HUBS

Organize based off of similar topics NOT by department





# TOPIC HUB TIPS

- Group information by common topics
- Provide task-based links e.g. apply for a permit
- Provide contact information
- Provide links to department(s)



# ANSWER THE QUESTION: HOW DO I?

Step-by-step



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# SHOWCASE PROJECTS

And programs.



# GUIDE USERS

Educate and explain programs



# USE PLAIN LANGUAGE

Don't speak government-ese



# THANK YOU

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