

MER Project; Usability Testing

Goal

The goal is finding out if the stakeholders can find the information with the current layout of the website design/hierarchy of the website.

Research question: Is the information that the stakeholders are looking for in places the stakeholders expect the information to be?

Motivation

If the stakeholders have difficulty finding the information they need, the platform is no longer useful. For this reason we need to test the design on its usability.

Participants

Ideally only stakeholders will be taking part in the tests. Unfortunately, that will likely not be the case since it's difficult to contact them. Non-stakeholders can give us valuable information as well though since they are likely to have similar interpretations/views of the website's hierarchy.

Method

Card Sorting is the method that will be used. Each test participant will take an open and closed card sorting test. The tool that I will be using to create card sorting tests is [Optimalworkshop.com](https://optimalworkshop.com).

Why card sorting

"Card sorting is a method used to help design or evaluate the information architecture of a site. In a card sorting session, participants organize topics into categories that make sense to them and they may also help you label these groups." ~ usability.gov

Since the platform is designed to serve different groups of stakeholders, a card sorting test is very suitable. Different kind of stakeholders will navigate differently through the page. This makes it difficult to design correctly without letting the stakeholders test it. The platform is supposed to be informative so testing on usability is more important than user experience.

An open card sorting test will be used. In an open card sorting participants sort cards into categories that make sense to them, and label each category themselves. It will be useful to use this, because this way we can see what users expect the category names to be and what sections of the website belong to each of the named categories.

In addition, a closed card sorting test will be taken by the participants after the open card sorting test. In a closed card sorting participants sort cards into categories you give them. This is useful to do after the open card sorting test since the participants will have to sort the sections/cards into categories that are set already so we can see where the user expects the sections/cards to be at

Rules

- Each participant will get a short introduction in which is being explained why/for what they're taking card sorting tests. We expect that the stakeholders/visitors of the website already know (to some extent) what kind of website this is (informative) so it's necessary to give this context to the test participants as well.
- Each participant is told to try to explain their choices during the sorting so that it's easier to recognize when things are clear/unclear.

- The participants are not allowed to get help. If they ask something about what a certain card means, I am not allowed to explain it, because otherwise this will affect their decisions

Card Sorting Test

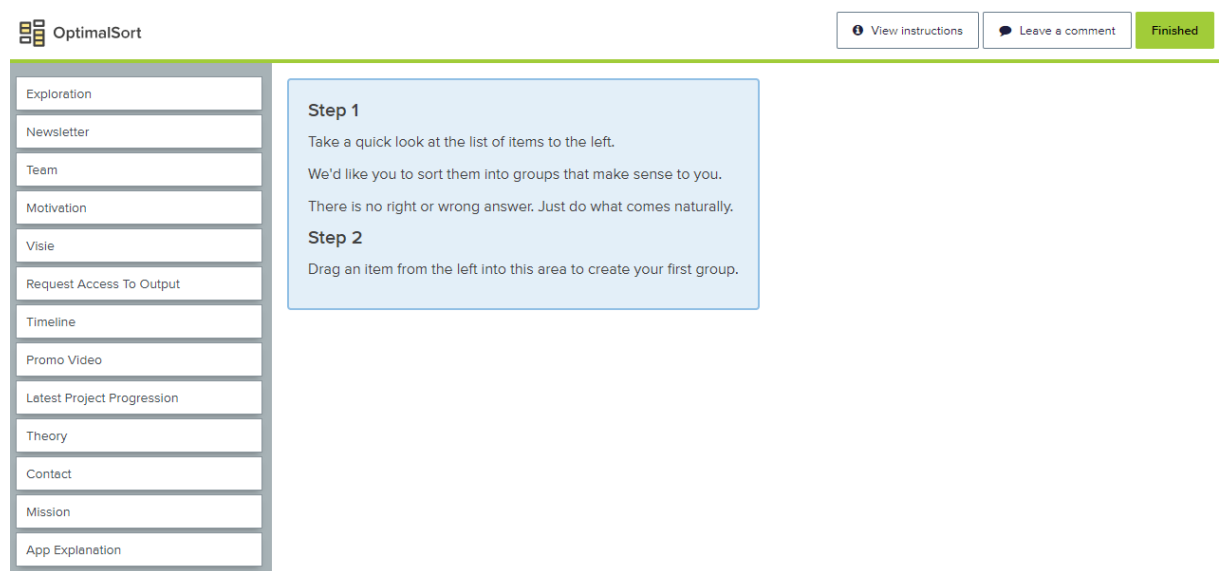
1. Send the link that contains the test to the participant
2. Let the participant share their screen

You are going to take two so called card sorting tests. The first test is going to be an open card sorting test. This means you are going to see certain sections of a website and sort these into categories. You'll make these categories yourself and give them a name.

You're about to see the different sections of the Music Enabled Running project website. The goal of this website is to inform the stakeholders about the project. These tests will tell us if the information on the website is easy to find.

Open Card Sorting

3. Let the participant start the test



The screenshot shows the OptimalSort web application interface for a card sorting test. At the top left is the OptimalSort logo. At the top right are three buttons: "View instructions", "Leave a comment", and "Finished". On the left side, there is a vertical list of 15 items to be sorted: Exploration, Newsletter, Team, Motivation, Visle, Request Access To Output, Timeline, Promo Video, Latest Project Progression, Theory, Contact, Mission, and App Explanation. In the center, there is a light blue box containing instructions for Step 1 and Step 2. Step 1 instructs the user to take a quick look at the list and sort items into groups that make sense to them, noting that there is no right or wrong answer. Step 2 instructs the user to drag an item from the left into the central area to create their first group.

OptimalSort

View instructions Leave a comment Finished

Step 1
Take a quick look at the list of items to the left.
We'd like you to sort them into groups that make sense to you.
There is no right or wrong answer. Just do what comes naturally.

Step 2
Drag an item from the left into this area to create your first group.

Exploration
Newsletter
Team
Motivation
Visle
Request Access To Output
Timeline
Promo Video
Latest Project Progression
Theory
Contact
Mission
App Explanation

Please try to explain your choices during the sorting.

4. Let the participant finish the test

Closed Card Sorting

The next test is going to be a closed card sorting test. This means you are going to see the same sections/cards you saw in the first test, but this time you can't make your own categories. You will have to order the sections/cards into the existing categories.

5. Let the participant start the test

The screenshot shows the OptimalSort web application interface. On the left is a vertical list of 15 items to be sorted: Team, Contact, Exploration, Motivation, Theory, Latest Project Progression, Newsletter, Timeline, Mission, Visie, App Explanation, Request Access To Output, and Promo Video. On the right are five pre-defined categories, each with a dropdown arrow and a placeholder for 0 items: Progression, About, News, Output, and Home. At the top right, there are three buttons: 'View instructions', 'Leave a comment', and a green 'Finished' button.

Please try to explain your choices during the sorting.

6. Let the participant finish the test
7. Discuss what the participant found hard to do/unclear in the open and closed card sorting tests.
8. Show the existing website design and discuss with the participant whether they expected certain things or not.

Results

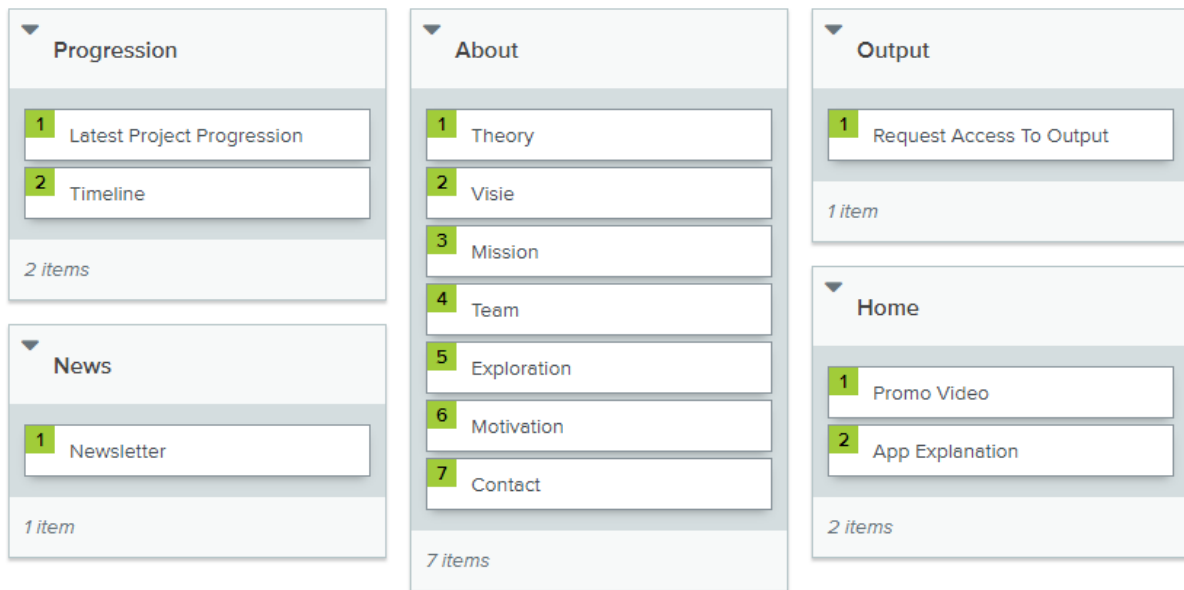
Open Card Sorting

Participant	Age	Quotes	Observations
1	Middle-age	<i>"I expect 'Contact' to be somewhere on the bottom of a page, but not necessarily on a particular page"</i> <i>"'Theory' and 'Request Access to Output' are items I want to see, but I can't really place them in the hierarchy"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participant feels the need to make it a one pager instead of having multiple pages.Participant adds only one category called 'Detailed Info' apart from the Home/Landingspage.
2	Adulthood	<i>"I find it difficult to sort Promo Video. It doesn't really fit anywhere."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participant made a new page called 'Updates'Participant tries to explain why 'Exploration' and 'Timeline' should be in the same category, but can't explain it.
3	Adulthood	<i>"Exploration is probably an option to explore the rest of the website"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participant made a new page called 'More Info' which would contain information that isn't important enough to be on the Home page.Participant put 'Exploration' on the Home page because according to the participant it means 'exploring the website'.
4	Adulthood	<i>"What is theory?" "What is exploration?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participant wasn't able to name most of the categoriesParticipant named a category 'Project', because all the items are giving info about the project according to the participant.
5	Middle-age	-	-
6	Middle-age	<i>"What is exploration?" "What is output?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participant didn't name a category 'Home'Participant put the majority of research/output related items under the name 'Research'Participant put general items like 'Team' and 'Motivation' together under the name 'Who Are We?'

Closed Card Sorting

Participant	Age	Quotes	Observations
1	Middle-age	<p>"I don't know whether 'App Explanation' is a short description or a long description"</p> <p>"I still don't know what 'Exploration' means"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant assumes 'App Explanation' contains a long description.
2	Adulthood	<p>"I think 'Motivation', 'Mission' and 'Vision' should be in the same category but none of the existing categories fit"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant puts 'App Explanation' under the Output page, because it sounds like a product.
3	Adulthood	<p><i>"I mostly used the About page as a place for items I'm hesitant about. Items like 'Contact', 'Vision' and 'Motivation' didn't fit in the other categories so I put them on the About page"</i></p> <p><i>"What does 'Output' mean exactly?"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant put 'Contact' on the Home page, because the participant often sees contact details on the Home page
4	Adulthood	<p><i>"Request Access to Output probably belongs on the Output page. Don't know what it is though."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant thinks 'Exploration' is showing something new so the participant put it on the News section.
5	Middle-age	<p><i>"I don't know if I should sort 'Latest Project Progression' under News or Progression. I guess Progression because it has progression in the name, but News could be a good place as well."</i></p> <p><i>"What is exploration?"</i></p> <p><i>"What is theory?"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant put 'Request Access to Output' on the Home page, because it sounds important
6	Middle-age	<p><i>"Motivation is probably on the Home page, because I often see companies put their motivation on the Home page."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant puts 'Exploration' under Progression, because it sounds like something new/futuristic Participant didn't put 'Motivation' in the same category as 'Mission', 'Vision' and 'Team'

This is the current layout of the website. Ideally, all the participants sort the cards like this:



Popular placements matrix [?](#)

	About	News	Output	Home	Progression
Team	100%				
Visie	83%			17%	
Contact	67%	17%		17%	
Mission	67%			33%	
Motivation	67%			33%	
Theory	33%		33%	33%	
Newsletter		100%			
Request Access To Output			83%	17%	
Exploration		17%	33%	17%	33%
Promo Video				100%	
App Explanation	17%		33%	50%	
Timeline					100%
Latest Project Progression		17%			83%

The results matrix [?](#)

	About	News	Output	Home	Progression
App Explanation	1		2	3	
Timeline					6
Latest Project Progression		1			5
Newsletter		6			
Promo Video				6	
Visie	5			1	
Motivation	4			2	
Mission	4			2	
Theory	2		2	2	
Exploration		1	2	1	2
Team	6				
Contact	4	1		1	
Request Access To Output			5	1	

These matrix's show how many participants expect the placement of each card under a certain category. For example, 50% of the participants expected 'App Explanation' to be present on the Home page. Furthermore, the participants are the most divided when it came to sorting 'Exploration' in one of the categories.

Conclusion

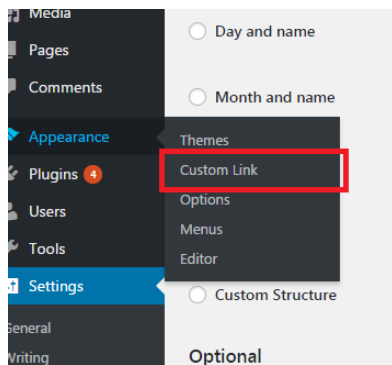
The research question was: *Is the information that the stakeholders are looking for in places the stakeholders expect the information to be?*

The answer is no. After the research it can be concluded that the current website layout and navigation need to be improved since the participants were confused about some of the names of the categories and sections.

There are a couple of sections that need to change name and/or position on the website:

- Exploration (section); needs a new, more specific name since participants had a lot of different interpretations of the word 'Exploration'.
- Theory (section); needs a new name and position since participants couldn't describe it, because it could mean different things. The new position is needed as well since participant didn't really think it fitted in one of the existing categories.
- Output (page); needs a new name since participants either didn't know what it meant or thought it was too generic resulting in participants not knowing what to expect on the page.

Something that could help to solve some of these problems is too add a submenu/dropdown menu (a menu contained in another menu). This way users can see what sections are available on each page.



Disclaimer

Admittedly, these tests only had up to six participants taking them so the drawn conclusions aren't one hundred percent reliable.