

EVALUATION OF SHOREWOOD SWIM CLUB'S WEBSITE

A HEURISTIC EVALUATION

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CONTENTS

About the Website	1
The Tasks of the User	2
Heuristic Principles	2
Accessibility Assessment.....	8
Contrast.....	8
Color.....	8
Alternative Text.....	8
Heading Styles.....	8
List Styles.....	8
Links	8
Multimedia	8
Movement, Animations, and Flashing.....	8
Shape, Size, and Position	9
Keyboard Navigation	9
Resize Text	9
Suggestions for Improvement.....	9

ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The website for the Shorewood Swim Club does not include an *About* page where we can learn about the organization or the goals of the website. I do not like to summarize what a website is without referring to its own *About* page, but since that resource is lacking for this website, I will summarize this website based off the content of its homepage and the information I could put together through its various pages.

On the homepage, there is a gallery that shows children in 'Shor' t-shirts and children in swimsuits at what looks to be a swim meet. Below the two cycling images, there are 3 buttons: *Register Here*, *Calendars*, *New Members*. Below those buttons, there are several sections: *Social Feed*, *Latest News*, and *Sponsors &*

Partners. Under the *Links* page, there are links to national swimming resources and one link to a state swimming resource, *Wisconsin Swimming*. From what I can tell, this website seems to be a homepage for a Wisconsin state swim team called 'Shor', which I gathered from their logo, the topics of the *Links* page, and the shirts the children are wearing in one of the homepage images.

The website can be visited at this link: <https://www.gomotionapp.com/team/wissc/page/home>

THE TASKS OF THE USER

Generally, I decide what tasks to test from looking over a website's *About* page so that I can learn about the goal of the website and its purpose, but given the absence of an about page, I've chosen the tasks by establishing a user story:

As a parent with a child who would like to join the Shor swim team, I would like to visit the Shor website to:

1. Learn about the team
2. Learn about becoming a new member
3. Learn about the registration process
4. View upcoming events

So that I can be more informed about the swimming club and know if it is a good fit for my child.

HEURISTIC PRINCIPLES

There are 10 heuristic principles. Each principle is defined below. I examine the presence of each principle in the Shorewood Swim Team's website and provide a rating. The rating is on a scale of 1 to 10, wherein:

- 1 is the principle is not applied at all.
- 5 is neutral (i.e. the principle is not present, but the website doesn't especially have content that demands the presence of the principle).
- 10 is the principle is applied wonderfully.

VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS

DEFINITION

As our tools have increased in complexity, so has our need to know what our tools are doing while we are using them. When we use a hammer, we know the state of the hammer: it is at rest, it is in use, or it is damaged by rust or cracks. It is easy to know the status of a physical object that doesn't have anything going on beneath the surface. Before cars had complex computers managing their systems, a driver could tell if a car was running or not; if the brakes were being applied or not; if the engine sounded like it was struggling or not. But there was much the driver could not know or see about the status of the car, hence the world of mechanics with varying opinions and the wildly successful NPR radio show, *Car Talk*.

Software and websites increase the importance of communicating with the user about the state of the system; this is because they are systems that run another system: our computer. As a user, I do not want software to be doing something on my computer that I don't understand. Also, if the software or website isn't responding, I want to know why, and I want to know if it is working on the task that I requested of it.

EXAMINATION

I did not come across any screens that handled system status during the completion of my user tasks, but at the same time there was not really any content on the website that would cause much in the way of system status changes. The only form I could locate was to create a new account, but that was not for the Swim website: rather it was for *sportsengine*, the platform hosting the team website. I am not testing *sportsengine*, so I did not examine the swim club website's integration with that system.

I did attempt to load archived Team Events on the calendar page as part of my user tasks: there was no loading results screen while it loaded, though it loaded very quickly: it may have loaded so quickly because no matter how far back in time I set the event search filter, the only results that came up were for the current month, April 2024. There were events earlier this month and later this month, but nothing earlier than this month and nothing beyond it. There was no message above or below the results explaining why I could only access April 2024, or April really was the only month with events – past or future.

There is no content on the website that handles changes to the state other than loading between pages or loading calendar results. There was no issue in loading the pages; they changed instantly to the next page. I was not able to test for slow or failed connections. There was no pause in loading calendar results, as only 4 events from April 2024 would load, no matter what dates I set. If other results were not loading as an error, then I had no way of knowing. There was no text to tell me that my results had been loaded.

RATING

1 - Principle is not present at all.

MATCH BETWEEN THE SYSTEM AND THE REAL WORLD

DEFINITION

At any point in time, there are usually agreed upon standards for most anything that people make and sell or share with others: a toaster should have a letter and dial or buttons with numbers to set the cook level. It might be creative if someone messed with those expectations, but most people would likely find that frustrating. This principle of matching between the system and the real world builds on that aspect of human expectations.

EXAMINATION

My first thought about the Shorewood Swim Club website was that frequent users probably know exactly what they are looking for: news and events details. There is not a lot of news or events, it seems, for a swim team, so it is easy to view a few shots of the team and see what is coming up on the homepage. However, for my user story I am not an established parent of a swim team member: I am a parent researching swim team options for my child.

My first task was to learn about the team: I was not able to do so. Nothing on the website told me about the team or the culture and time commitment needed to be on the team. Modern website convention demands that a homepage tell us a little bit about the goal and content of the website. Furthermore, modern convention demands an About page where we learn what we need to know about the organization, who we can contact, and how we can learn more.

I was finally able to find some information about the swim team, but it was not where I would expect it: it was all in the *New Members* button, whose icon is an exclamation point with an emphasis bubble around it and the button is in red. This reads more like a warning button to me and it also conveyed that it was a section exclusively pertaining to new members. I am not a new member: I am a user researching swim options for my child, so I didn't think to click on that button until I clicked everything else on the website.

In the *New Members* warning button I finally found something of an *About* page. It mentions swim assessment schedules, a contact email for a head coach, a guide for 'Prospective Swimmers and Families', a philosophy statement, history, locations, training groups, seasons, meets, etc. Basically, in that one button for *New Members*, we find the content of entire website written as one bulleted text document. This does not follow the convention to have all the important information be in one long scrolling document under the heading of a button that doesn't really make sense for the content. Why would all this information only matter to new members?

A few other points:

1. clicking the logo in the nav bar doesn't take you back to the home page: it is convention that selecting the logo in the nav bar takes a user to the home page.
2. There is a sign in button in nav bar, but nowhere in the site does it tell you why you would sign in and what you would have access to if you created a user account. Convention demands that a user should know why they are signing up for a website, especially since it is asking the user to sign up not for the website, but for the platform that hosts the website.
3. The website has a logo that merely reads 'Shor', yet the New Members page never refers to the club or the team as 'Shor': rather, it is simply called the Shorewood Swim Club. The URL doesn't mention either name: it is 'gomotionapp.com with a long URL route many pages deep. What is Shor? Convention dictates that a user should be able to make a connection between the URL, the Logo or title on the home page, and the content on the website. Not only does this help with clarity, but it promotes a sense of security: is this the right page, or a phishing page? All the disconnect between URL, header, and content makes this site seem suspicious.

RATING

2 – There are some elements in play like news and events that meet website conventions, but there are some major departures from convention that made completing all my users' tasks impossible or difficult.

USER CONTROL AND FREEDOM

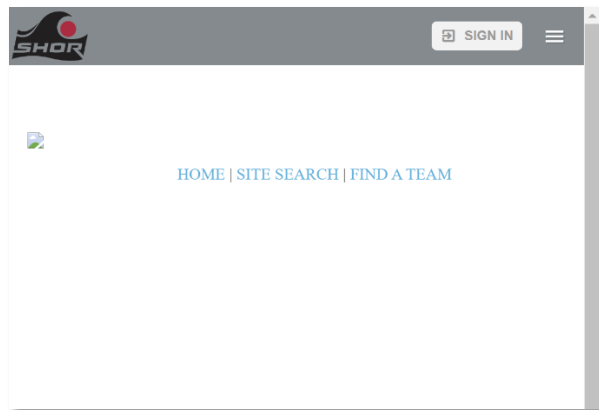
DEFINITION

Mistakes happen. Sometimes a user will get themselves into something they didn't mean to get into. That is why websites and software need to have what is known as "emergency exits". A button or link that is clear,

easy to find, and takes the user back to a place that is familiar and orienting. This principle is all about those emergency exits. Those exits boost user confidence in navigating the site and inspire the user to engage with the site on deeper levels.

EXAMINATION

There are no back buttons to take you around the site: the only way to navigate back or forward is to open the nav drop-down burger or to use the browser arrows. Given the website is buried in something called *Gomotionapp* with branding from *TeamUnify*, and *TeamUnify* is by *Sportsengine inc.* which has the NBC logo beside it (seriously, all of that is in the footer of the website), I was incredibly reluctant to navigate through the website or to click on any links. If a website is going to be nested within four companies, the connections between the website and those companies should all be clear. I was left with the impression that any link may take me to one of those parent companies, and getting back to Shor would be impossible. To test my concern, I clicked on the USA Swimming icons at the very top of the navigation panel: I was greeted with a nearly empty page, with an icon for an image that maybe failed to load and three hot links: home, site search, and find a team. Here is the screen:



I was unwilling to click the links on that page. I hovered over the home link and my browser told me it would take me to entirely different website: <https://www.usaswimming.org/home>. There was no button to take me back to the home screen of the Shor website, other than going back into the nav panel and selecting the home option from there. That took me back to the home screen I was expecting, but I didn't feel oriented: I had no idea what trail I'd been taken on, or if my device was safe in clicking around through the unknown URLs.

RATING]

0 – As a user, I was reluctant to click on anything in the page; I did not trust the site to behave in an expected way. Even if there were emergency exits on the website, I would be reluctant to click them given the home page itself is disorienting.

CONSISTENCY AND STANDARDS

DEFINITION

Not only does the content need to be consistent, but the tools and components of the website should be consistent. Consistency means there shouldn't be a feeling of randomness or the unexpected in style or functionality between the website's pages or components. The experience should feel cohesive.

EXAMINATION

It is almost impossible to rate this website for consistency given its staggering lack of content. One could darkly argue that it *consistently* lacks content throughout the website, but that doesn't get at the heart of the principle.

I can say that the general structure of the website aligns with some basic attributes of modern websites: the website is responsive: it works on multiple screen sizes and adopts the flexbox design structure that is the norm for modern websites. It utilizes the collapsing and expanding nav 'burger' on small screens so that the nav menu doesn't clutter the small screen. Also, the way the pages are split up aligns with convention: Home, News, Events, Calendar, Links, etc. These are pages I would expect to find, though, as mentioned it lacks an *About* page.

The Calendar and Events pages behave and are styled in a consistent and conventional manner; however, this is because they are the same page. Furthermore, the only news on the news page is a link to the calendar/events page. All of this could be streamlined.

RATING

5 – Neutral. Some styling and behavior is consistent, but the amount of redundancy and lack of content makes me feel like I am rating the pre-built platform the website is built on and not the design and structure of what has been added to it.

RECOGNITION RATHER THAN RECALL

DEFINITION

A website or application should not be so complex and busy that it relies on the user to memorize too much. Each part of the application should rely as much as it can on recognition, which is to say the content, icons, and design it should be easy for the user to identify without racking their brain for how they accomplished their goal on the application in the past.

EXAMINATION

Again, there is not enough content to speak of. The website doesn't succeed in using recognition, it exceeds in having limited and labyrinthian navigation: the labyrinthian navigation does not really detract from the experience: the user doesn't need recall because it doesn't take long to click everything on the website, and most the links lead to the same content.

RATING

5 – Neutral. The website hasn't fleshed out the content to have evidenced any thought to favoring recognition over recall. In fact, if the website remains structured as it is and a lot more content is added, this score will plummet drastically.

AESTHETICS AND MINIMAL DESIGN

DEFINITION

Aesthetics, the way a website looks, are important because quality aesthetics connotes quality construction. The very definition of aesthetics implies that the eye is happy and free to move about the entire composition without feeling disoriented or pulled back and forth through a chaotic scene. The eye does better and feels more relaxed to have open, uncluttered spaces so that it can find the important information, take everything in, and not be overwhelmed in the process.

EXAMINATION

There is no issue with minimal design. Aesthetics are lacking, but there is a packaged, default look to everything, and that packaged, default look is not too cluttered or overwhelming. I would argue that the color of the home buttons (the big red squares with dark grey text that switch to grey on hover) is poorly chosen. Yes, they seem to match the swim club's colors, but giant red buttons are typically panic buttons for escape or to access important warnings. The grey text on the red clashes and strains my eyes to look at very long, and it makes me want to scroll past them quickly: which is also a problem because one of them, the New Members button, is one of the most important sources of information on the website.

RATING

6 – the aesthetic and design seem prepackaged, but it gets the job done.

HELP AND DOCUMENTATION

DEFINITION

For a complex site, a help page or documentation section is crucial. Help/documentation should provide a well written, well-organized part of the website where a user can learn whatever they need to know about using the site or application in an efficient manner.

EXAMINATION

A simple team website does not need to have a help section or a documentation section, but a quality site map can help lost users find their way. This website does have a site map, but it is marginally helpful. While it will show you all the main navigation options to the site's various pages, the website lacks a page for new users or those who have come to learn about the swim club: the missing *About* page. The person most likely to need a site map will be looking for information for new or prospective members. They will not be able to find what they are looking for from the site map, as they will need to discover, without help, that the red panic

button on the home screen, 'New Members' is the only page where they will find any meaningful information. Neither the site map or the links page has any links, email, or phone number for someone they can reach out to if they don't understand the website. There is no Contact page. This is a serious oversight that affects users' ability to find information or find someone they can ask for support.

RATING

3 – There is a site map, but the website still lacks some important pages that make a site map useful to new users: there is not an *About* or *Contact* page to orient new users.

ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

CONTRAST

- 16 failed color contrast tests for HTML elements on the home page and navigation bar.

COLOR

- No issues with color were found.

ALTERNATIVE TEXT

- 44 images (all images) on the home screen lacked an alternative text.

HEADING STYLES

- No issues were found with heading styles were found.

LIST STYLES

- No issues with list styles were found.

LINKS

- 6 issues were found links on the home page:
 - o The element is in tab order and does not have accessible text.
 - o The element does not have text that is visible to screen readers, or the aria-label attribute does not exist / is empty.

MULTIMEDIA

- No issues with multimedia, though no multimedia is present in the website.

MOVEMENT, ANIMATIONS, AND FLASHING

- No issues

SHAPE, SIZE, AND POSITION

- 1 issue was found with sizing limitations: the HTML <meta> element for viewport is set to disable zooming on mobile devices. In accordance with WCAG 1.4.4, an application should not disable zooming on mobile devices, as it limits accessibility.

KEYBOARD NAVIGATION

- No issues were found with keyboard navigation.

RESIZE TEXT

- No issues were found with resizing text.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Move New Members link content to an *About* page.
2. Add a Contact page.
3. Add alternative texts to all images.
4. Add orienting content to the home page that helps both new and returning users orient themselves to the website.
5. Consolidate Events and Calendar to one page title either Events or Calendar.
6. Be consistent about referring to the name of the swim club: is it Shorewood Swim Club? Is it Shor? If you are using both, make it clear what the distinction is across the website.
7. Make the site logo a link to the homepage.
8. Make sure to explain why there is a sign in button in the header in the About page: explain why it is there and who it is for.
9. Explain the URL and orient the user to the nest of companies featured across the website: users should know why they are on “gomotionapp.com” and that it is where they are supposed to be. They should know how it connects to “sportsengine” and “TeamUnify”. A website should never have an unexplained host of businesses claiming responsibility for a website.
10. Improve style and consistency at large. Fix failed color contrast for texts.