Eric Paulz
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Fix a Website: http://www.usmta.com/

Introduction

The website that I have chosen to review and critique in this paper is www.usmta.com. The website's name is an acronym for United States Muay Thai Association. I have no affiliation with this association, nor do I participate in martial arts of any kind. I came upon this web page by simply doing a Google search for poorly designed websites.

This website seems to be intended as a place where amateur and professional Muay Thai fighters, or just fans, can go to get information about the sport. Different types of things available to a viewer of the site include: recent news in the sport, information about upcoming events, information about various fighters, regulation changes, how to get involved (classes/leagues), and more. In short, the site serves as an online community for those interested in Muay Thai. There is some indication that this site is specific to the "Native American League", but it is difficult to find enough information to confirm this.

Critique

Just from glancing at this website, it is clear that there are many flaws with it from a design standpoint. I will begin my critique by talking about some of the high-level issues that really stand out and then work my way through each component with increasing detail. This section will be strictly critical of the page, and I will suggest some design improvements in the next section.

The first design flaws that stand out to me when visiting this page are the lack of alignment and the fact that the content does not utilize the entire window space. It takes quite a bit of scrolling to get through the whole page, and this is certainly due to the fact that there is so much unused space in the margins. Not only that, but the right margin is more than twice as wide as the left margin is on my screen. It appears that the designers did not implement functionality that would allow the page to adapt to the user's screen size, opting to code it statically. This is definitely an issue because these days there are so many different devices with different screen sizes being used every day by millions of people. Furthermore, after scrolling down a bit, you can see that even the margins for each individual section are slightly different. It completely lacks uniformity, and that makes for a really unpleasant and unattractive user experience. There is no center point that the user can use as a reference while attempting to navigate the page. I can see this being a big issue for people who are not technologically inclined.

Another big issue that I have with this page is its lack of uniformity relating to fonts and colors. In Figure 1 you will find a screenshot of just the main banner at the top of the page. Even in this small example, you can find *at least* five different font styles of varying sizes. In addition, this image is extremely convoluted and difficult to understand. It presents USMTA in large font twice, but underneath each is a different description. This lack of uniformity is a major issue and must be addressed in order for this page to meet most users' design expectations. Simply put, it's an eyesore and I believe that most users will navigate away from the page quickly due to its lack of aesthetic.

Figure 1: Main Banner

The button layout on this website is cringeworthy to say the least. First of all, there are buttons on both sides of the page and they don't seem to be in any kind of order whatsoever. Second, there are a total of 40 buttons (I counted) on this page alone, all of varying style, color, and font. This makes it really difficult for someone to find what they are looking for. The spacing is uneven and buttons aren't even aligned to match each other. Even if someone were a frequent visitor of this site, I imagine it would take at least a few seconds to find the right button. To compound this problem, there is not search functionality built into this page, so the user is stuck manually sorting through 40 buttons to find what they need. This design offers no affordances at all. Figure 2 shows a small sample of the button layout.

Figure 2: Button Layout

Improvements

The very first thing I would do to this page would be to establish some center point off of which every other element could be aligned. This way, even if you don't have functionality to adapt to different screen sizes, everything on the page would be centered in a way that is more appealing. This would help a user to navigate the page and interact with it more effectively.

Next, I would decide on a uniform font and color scheme. I think that introducing this uniformity would enhance the UI's aesthetic appeal tremendously, which would likely lead to more users staying on the page instead of navigating away as soon as they see a jumbled mess.

While alignment, colors and fonts are important for aesthetics, the most important improvement I would make in terms of functionality would be to condense all of the 40 buttons into some sort of menu that would live on the left-hand side of the page. I would suggest a primary menu of 4-5 major categories. When a user clicks on one of the categories, the menu would expand to reveal more options under that category. From there the user could choose which page he/she would like to navigate to and would be taken away from the home page. This would free up a lot of room on the page taken up by buttons, create a more functional way of navigating to sub-pages, and provide a more enjoyable user experience overall. It would also be useful to have a search bar somewhere near this main menu so that you could type in key words and find what you're looking for quickly.

As a last note, I would remove redundancy like repeating "USMTA" over and over again through the page. Just show it once at the top with a brief yet clear explanation of what it is move on with content.