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Don't Make Me Think! – Chapter 1

In his book, *Don't Make Me Think*, Steve Krug states that the first law of usability when it comes to building a website is "don't make me think!" The web page should be obvious and self-explanatory so that anyone can look at it, know what it is, and easily navigate the website, without having to ask many questions and think about what an action could be.

There are many things on a web page that can make us stop and think unnecessarily. For example, names and terminology can be the difference between obvious and obscure; if a caption, label, header, or title does not read as obvious, then such a situation can cause a user to still think unnecessarily. Krug uses the web design standard of companies' career/hiring sections of their websites. If one were to head to a website like this to look for a job, even the terms can make a big difference; the term 'jobs' is easy to understand, whereas, 'employment opportunities' is a little harder to understand, but essentially still conveys the same information. Finally, in comparison, using a term like "job-o-rama" is obscure, can be missed, and may not be received universally in the same way simply 'jobs' or 'employment opportunities' typically is.

Another example is the visual element of a button; according to Krug, it should not even take a second of thought as to whether something is clickable. At this point, it already causes the user to have to think, when it should be clean and precise and not make the user think at all.

The final example Krug uses to support his notion in the importance of intuitive web design is with navigation and the search tool. The user should not have to think about *how* they have to search for a particular item. Krug observed that most bookstore websites have a quick search with an additional drop down menu with options such as, 'title', 'author', and 'keyword'. Typically, most people search for possible titles and authors of a book, but are required to think about how to enter this information for the computer through deciding whether they want to search for a 'title', 'author', or 'keyword'. All of this can seem like a simple process, but it adds up to many question marks and makes the user think. Instead, taking into account how the average user searches for a book, users should be able to put in the smallest effort possible, type in what they know, and have the computer do the work to find the most accurate result, instead of vice versa.

An example of a good interface is Amazon, which supplies a simple search bar, and does not make the user think about *how* to search. Users can just start typing and search, without thinking – similar to how a Google search functions.

In conclusion, a website should be self-evident, and if it is complicated, should at least be self-explanatory. It should not make us confused on things that don't matter – which wastes our time and energy. Most people will not spend as much time looking at web pages, and so, they must be understandable at a glance.