Usability Engineering Assignment 1

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The Usability of Seek.com

Introduction

According to the Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business[1], 60% of Australia's current job opportunities can be found online. With employers turning to online searches as a way of finding the best candidate, how does the modern employee put themselves up for the job? Enter Seek.com.au, The self-proclaimed "No.1 jobs, employment, career and recruitment site"[2] in Australia. With multiple websites setting out to attract potential users, has seek ensured they have created a good user experience to retain potential employers and employees? The following is a report on the results of a study on Seek.com.au and its usability in reference to Whitney Queensberry's 5E's of usability[3].

User Interview

To assess the usability of Seek.com, an individual user was asked to complete a series of tasks on the Seek website varying in difficulty. The user was also asked questions relating to their experience in use of similar sites as well as the expected experience with Seek.com.au.

"Has the user looked for jobs before? If so, How?"

Our user responded that they have looked for jobs before, in a variety of ways. These include using similar job finding websites such as Seek to hunt down individual job positions, seeking out individual company career websites to apply to positions listed within a company, searching the user's university's internal jobs website (such as RMIT Connect) as well as traditional methods such as doorknocking and word of mouth for jobs in their youth. From this response our user is experienced in this field and knows that to expect during a job-hunting experience, leading us to our next question.

"What information does the user want to know to decide on the relevance of a job?"

This query was met with a quick reply of multiple points, the user made it clear that what they most valued was salary, hours (if not a full-time job), location, skills required, experience, qualities required such as independence or leadership skills, the starting date and the closing date of the application. From this answer we can gather a set criterion that Seek needs to fulfil in order to meet user expectations.

"What does the user want in applying for a job?"

Extending into a more specific field than the previous query, this question propositions the user to explain what features and information is wanted when using Seek.com. The user responded that they wanted to know who the main point of contact was whether it be a HR representative or a general manager and through which means contact was going to be

established. The user also stated that they wished to be able to find out more about the company they would be applying with and wanted to be able to see some past projects the company had undertaken. Lastly the user wanted the ability to be able to save changes to an application and be able to quit and come back without losing progress as well as the ability to delete a profile/application.

After asking our user these questions, the user was asked to complete 4 different tasks under direct observation to better assess seeks usability.

User Test and Findings
Task 1: Find a UX designer job.

Starting from the home page of Seek.com.au, the user immediately opted for the search bar located near the top of the page $_{fig.1}$ and entered a few keywords, returning a number of UX designer jobs. This task was completed in less than 10 seconds with a few clicks, suggesting that Seek has done a good job of enabling users to search efficiently and effectively for a job.
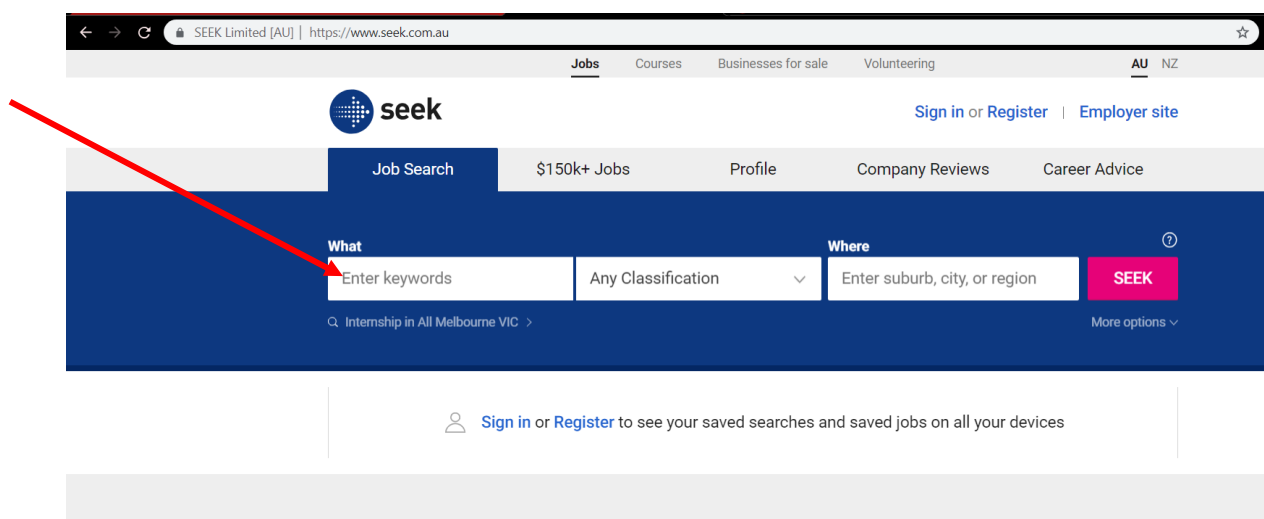

Figure 1 - Seek.com.au homepage

Task 2: Find a group to join.

The second task of this user test proved to be very difficult, perhaps in part due to the ambiguity of the question. The user was allowed 3 minutes to attempt to try and join a group with but was unsuccessful. This timeframe was intended to be the maximum time a user not under test conditions would search for a feature before giving up. The user explored multiple areas including searching through the explore careers section, the help page and even made an account (outside the timeframe) to attempt to join a group. The user was able to follow numerous companies to gain some hint of a social system, but no actual groups option was found. Whether or not this is a design flaw or a testing flaw

remains unclear, as with even more time multiple users were still unable to find any groups to join indicating that Seek may not offer a forum/social media scheme. If they do exist however it would reflect extremely badly on seeks usability, especially in reference to its effectiveness as no user was able to achieve the goal.

Task 3: Find out what it costs to put up a job ad.

Once again starting from the homepage, the user quickly scanned the header of the web page before dropping down to the footer fig.2 to search through the quick links. The user then clicked the "Post a job ad" link, taking them to a new page and asking them to sign in. This page did not have ad prices however, and the user quickly discovered they were stuck on the employee version of the seek site, raising the issue of error tolerance. After navigating back to the main site, the user was able to find the products and prices page and identify the cost of posting several different types of job ads. This task took an experienced user just under 35 seconds, and with multiple clicks and redirects being involved Seek should aim to clear up any confusion by perhaps re-titling or grouping the two very similar links.
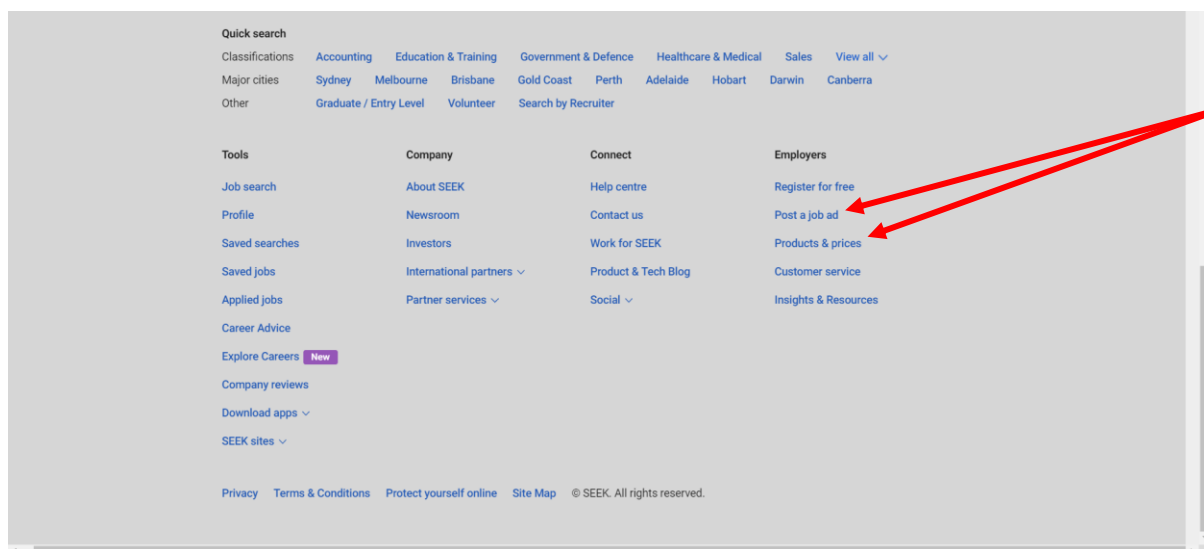

Figure 2 – Seek.com.au footer section

Task 4: Find out the average wage, job satisfaction and projected job growth of a marketing manager.

The purpose of this task was to determine whether or not users could easily find Seek.com.au's new "Explore Careers" page and its features, as it was not initially advertised on the home page. The user started this task on the final page from task 3, testing the ability to navigate between pages. The user once again found themselves stuck on the seek employee page and had to repeatedly go back to get to the seek home page. The user searched for some marketing jobs but still did not find the required information, after close

to 60 seconds, the user realised they had visited the explore careers page in a previous task and navigated to the page from the footer section once again. After a quick search in the explore career section a page holding all the required information was found for a total time of 1 minute and 27s. The results of this test show faults in Seeks design, as taking such a long time to achieve this task is certainly not efficient and once again the error tolerance for Seeks users who end up on their employee site is very low. It should be noted however that the user was impressed with the explore careers page once it was found, implying that Seek has done a good job in creating engaging elements of their website.

Conclusion and Suggestions

To summarize, Seek.com.au has produced mixed results across the varying tasks undertaken by the user. The results of task 1 suggest that Seek has implemented both great efficiency and effectiveness with the main function of their website, searching for jobs, with users able to bring up a wide selection in seconds. The results of task 2 must be taken with a grain of salt, as afore-mentioned there may have been no real solution to the task given. The task did result in great data for the general navigation of the site however, showing that the user was able to navigate through the main layout of the site with initial ease, demonstrating some level of Queensberry's final E – Easy to Learn. The main problem came from Seeks error tolerance, namely from being stuck on the employer pages. Seek proved to have a good level of Engagement on some individual features such as the "Explore Careers" page and the "Products and Prices" page. These tasks also revealed more issues with efficiency and error tolerance with users continuing to get stuck on the employee website. I would suggest that Seek attempt to further separate their employer website whilst also creating a link in the header of the employer pages that allows users to return to the regular seek website. I would also recommend that Seek create a more visible pathway to their "explore careers" section as currently it is quite difficult to access without prior knowledge as learned in the user test. The results of this study are also limited, as with a small sample group (n=1) and partial testing data may be insufficient to draw accurate conclusions. With a greater sample size and more testing such as interviews or focus groups on top of the contextual inquiry used it is likely that we could more accurately examine Seek.com.au's usability.

References

1. https://www.jobs.gov.au/newsroom/sixty-cent-job-vacancies-australia-are-advertised-online
2. https://www.seek.com.au/about/ (Also found under title in google search)
3. Whitney Queensberry: Balancing the 5 E's of usability (2004).

Fig.1 and Fig.2 https://www.seek.com.au/ homepage.