



Project Name:

Competitive Usability Analysis - Realestate Journal

Reviewers:

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Introduction – Competitive Usability Analysis

The Process

Understanding Context

- A brief knowledge transfer session is held between the client and the analysts.
- The existing knowledge/studies are shared to understand context.

Usability Review

- The website is analyzed by 3-5 usability experts who identify usability issues that can run across several front end aspects of the User Interface . (For example, Navigation, Layout, Detailed Design).
- Issues are identified by evaluating the application against current research in the field, industry standards and best practices.
- If applicable, brief written design recommendations are provided along with each issue identified.

Competitor Analysis

- The usability of competitor websites is reviewed in context to the User Interface (UI) areas covered in the previous stage.
- A generic subjective usability rating is done to identify strong and weak areas of each UI as well as to derive comparative usability scores.

Overall Insights

The usability review identified issues in the following UI categories:

- [Navigation](#)
- [Layout](#)
- [Visual Design](#)
- [Interaction Design & Functionality](#)
- [Content & Labeling](#)

Subjective Rating Scales indicated realestatejournal.com as having medium usability (score = 59).

Realtor's ratings indicate high usability (score = 40)

New York Times' Real Estate ratings indicate low usability (score = 68)

REJ Navigation - Summary

Review indicates some issues in the Navigation of Real Estate Journal:

- There are too many click choices on the page making it difficult for the user to focus/prioritize tasks.
- Illogical categorization of sections. Examples:
 - Presence of “Commercial..” link within the ‘Residential’ tab
 - ‘Discussion’ is a global link, it is placed on the section specific navigation panels.
- Unclear visual cues (affordance) to differentiate links, buttons, tabs etc.
- Page headings and breadcrumbs are not visually differentiated.
- Navigation in some instances is non standard and therefore confusing.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE

The screenshot shows the REJ.com website interface. A blue oval highlights the top navigation bar containing links: HOME, BUYING & SELLING, SECOND HOMES, BUILD & IMPROVE, HOME & GARDEN, COLUMNISTS, and DISCUSSIONS. Another blue oval highlights the 'RESIDENTIAL' and 'COMMERCIAL' tabs. A third blue oval highlights the left sidebar menu with categories like SEARCH PROPERTY, BROWSE REALTORS, and BUYING AND SELLING. Two orange callout boxes provide issue observations and recommendations. A white box at the bottom notes that the issue recurs across other screens.

Issue Observation:

- Multiple main navigation options in addition to several links on the page body. Too many click choices present makes it difficult for users to focus and prioritize.

Recommendation:

- Limit the overall number of main navigation items to between five and seven.

Issue recurs across other screens.

Issue Observation:

- To many link choices on the page body makes it difficult for users to focus and prioritize.

Recommendation:

- Provide links on page body discriminately, only when they are indispensable.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE

The screenshot shows the Real Estate Journal.com website. The main navigation bar includes links for HOME, BUYING & SELLING, SECOND HOMES, BUILD & IMPROVE, HOME & GARDEN, COLUMNISTS, DISCUSSIONS, RESIDENTIAL, and COMMERCIAL. The RESIDENTIAL and COMMERCIAL links are highlighted in blue. A search bar is located in the top left, and a 'TOOLKIT' section is visible in the bottom left. A callout box points to the 'RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE' link in the search bar, which is circled in blue. Another callout box points to the 'COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE' link in the search bar, which is also circled in blue. The callout boxes contain the following text:

Issue Observation:

- Illogical categorization - A 'residential' link is placed within the 'commercial' section. (Same for the 'Residential' link under the 'Commercial' tab)

Recommendation:

- Restructure primary and secondary navigational to reduce redundancy and confusion.

Issue recurs across other screens.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE

Issue Observation:
Illogical categorization - A residential link is placed within the 'commercial' section. (under 'Property Report')

The screenshot shows the navigation menu of REJ.com. At the top right, there are two tabs: 'RESIDENTIAL' and 'COMMERCIAL'. The 'COMMERCIAL' tab is circled in blue. Below this is a horizontal menu with items: 'HOME', 'PROPERTY REPORT', 'REITS', 'INDEPENDENT INVESTOR', 'REAL ESTATE', 'COLUMNISTS', and 'DISCUSSIONS'. The 'PROPERTY REPORT' item is circled in blue. On the left side, there is a vertical sidebar menu with categories: 'PROPERTY SEARCH', 'COMMERCIAL REAL-ESTATE SITES', 'RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE' (with a 'GO' button), 'SEARCH' (with a search box and 'GO' button), 'PROPERTY REPORT', 'APARTMENT', 'HOTEL', 'INDUSTRIAL', 'OFFICE', 'RESIDENTIAL' (circled in blue), 'RETAIL', 'ARCHITECTURE', and 'NEWS & TRENDS'. A yellow callout box points to the 'RESIDENTIAL' link in the sidebar, which is located under the 'PROPERTY REPORT' section. The main content area shows a breadcrumb 'Home > Property Report' and several article teasers, including one about downtown office space and another about Corus investing in the condo market. On the right, there is a 'Capital One Home Loans' advertisement for 'No Hassle Home Equity Loans'.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE

SEARCH PROPERTY

- FOR SALE OR RENT
- OPEN HOUSES
- NEW CONSTRUCTION

BROWSE REALTORS

- DISTINCTIVE HOMES
- REAL-ESTATE PARTNERS

ADVERTISE PROPERTY

- FOR SALE OR RENT
- GRAND OPENINGS

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE **GO**

SEARCH

GO

[advanced search](#)

TOOLKIT

- BEST PLACES
- RELOCATION TOOLS
- HOME PRICE CHECK

Find your new home

State:

Area:

City:

ZIP:

Price:

Issue Observation:

- Navigation is non standard and therefore confusing.
- “Open Houses” appears only on clicking “New Construction”.

Recommendation:

- Use standard interactions that users are familiar with based on their experience on other sites.
- Besides, ensure that key navigation items are represented consistently on a persistent navigation panel that can be accessed from all screens.

Issue recurs across other screens.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE



Issue Observation:

- Navigation is non standard in interaction and confusing. “Advertise Property” menu only expands on clicking “New Construction” under “Search Property”.

Recommendation:

- Use standard interactions that users are familiar with based on their experience on other sites.
- Ensure that key navigation items are represented consistently on a persistent navigation panel that can be accessed from all screens.

Navigation – REJ.com

MAJOR ISSUE

The screenshot shows the Real Estate Journal.com website interface. The top navigation bar includes links for HOME, PROPERTY REPORT, REITS, INDEPENDENT INVESTOR, REGIONAL NEWS, COLUMNISTS, and DISCUSSIONS. A secondary bar features RESIDENTIAL and COMMERCIAL tabs. The left sidebar contains a vertical menu with items like PROPERTY SEARCH, COMMERCIAL REAL-ESTATE SITES, RESIDENTIAL REAL-ESTATE, SEARCH, TOOLKIT, and SITE HELP. Several items in this sidebar are circled in blue. The main content area displays news articles such as 'Asian Real Estate Draws A Flood of New Money' and 'Cooling Housing Market in Phoenix Doesn't Damp Commercial Sector'. A yellow callout box on the right side of the page contains the following text:

Issue Observation:

- There is no clear visual cue (affordance) to differentiate between links, buttons, tabs etc. (Clickable links / rollover menu items / just menu headings.)

Recommendation:

- Provide clear visual clues to enhance user understanding of the purpose and function of page elements.

Looking at the competition...

Navigation - Realtor.com

The image shows a screenshot of the Realtor.com website with several annotations. A blue oval highlights the primary navigation menu at the top, which includes 'Find a Home', 'Rentals', 'Home Finance', 'Moving', and 'Home & Garden'. A second blue oval highlights the secondary navigation menu below it, which includes 'Mortgage', 'Home Equity', 'Refinance', and 'Credit Reports'. A third blue oval highlights a vertical menu on the left side of the page, which includes 'Get Ready to Move', 'Moving Tools', and 'Self-Storage Search'. A green box on the left side of the page contains the following text:

Positive:
Clear hierarchy and presentation of main navigation options.
Number of primary navigation options is limited to 5.
The horizontal navigation panel represents primary navigation options, while the secondary options are placed just below the main items. Vertical menu options on the left are page specific options that are in context to the selected primary option.

The screenshot also shows a 'Get a Free Moving Quote' section with a form for 'Select Move Type*', 'Move Date(Approximate)*', 'Move From*', 'Move To*', and 'Move Size(Approximate Weight)*'. There is a 'Get Quote' button next to the form. The main content area features a 'Home Finance' section with a 'Mortgage Calculator' and a 'Home Refinance' section. The 'Home Refinance' section includes a 'Submit' button and a 'Learn' section with links to 'Getting Started' and 'Q&A'. The 'Getting Started' section includes links to '3 Easy Steps to Getting a Mortgage', 'How to Get a Mortgage', '10 Mistakes You Can't Make', and 'Finance Options for House Hunters'. The 'Q&A' section includes links to 'Q&A for Homebuyers age 55 and up', 'Veterans Affairs Loans (VA Loan)', 'Affordable Solutions Q&A', and 'Building and Remodeling Q&A'. The right side of the page features a 'Home Mortgages and Loans' section with 'Compare Loans Instantly' and 'Best Home Loan Quote' options, and a 'Home Refinance' section with a 'Submit' button. The bottom right corner features a 'Save 10%' promotion and a 'Sign up for LowesMoving & start saving today!' button.