
Should Californian campaign sites be recalled too?

News and Business editors

Fergus, Ontario - October 21, 2003

PRESS RELEASE

Campaign sites miss opportunities to connect with Californian voters

The people of California have spoken: Gray Davis will no longer serve as their Governor. Ahnold is the new Governor. He and other candidates campaigned for weeks to become Davis' successor. One channel through which they tried to influence voters is the Internet. UsabilityReviews.com took a close look at the web sites of the main candidates and published its findings on www.usabilityreviews.com. The study found that many opportunities to connect with voters were lost. Unintuitive navigation, difficult domain names and fundamental design mistakes are just a few of the web design pitfalls that could have been avoided. Those challenges are universal: every organization can learn from websites of (in alphabetical order) Cruz Bustamante, Peter Camejo, Gray Davis, Arianna Huffington, Tom McClintock, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Peter Ueberroth.

Web site visitors want to find what they are looking for fast. The competition is only a click away if a web page doesn't keep the user's interest, or if it annoys the user. The campaign sites sported a number of pitfalls that should be avoided.

One of the recommendations of the review is to choose domain names wisely. For instance Cruz Bustamante's www.noonrecallyesonbustamante.com is very hard to remember, and *Democratic* Governor Gray Davis' www.no-recall.com is a little too much like the Antelope Valley *Republican* Party's www.norecall.com (without the hyphen).

Some of the problems found on the campaign sites are the result of poor quality control, such as web pages that load too slowly or that are only *just* too wide for the second most used screen width.

... Californian campaign sites ...

Other issues stem from not utilizing available knowledge about online user behavior. Global research into the likes and dislikes of Internet users has provided Internet developers with many usability guidelines. However, not all web designers apply these best practices, or are even aware of them. And in many cases, the client doesn't want to pay the additional investment to do a thorough job.

Usabilityreview.com's founder Nardo Kuitert suggests: "Writers won't publish their work unless it has been edited. Web designers too can benefit immensely from a web site editor. A heuristic review and guidance from a usability expert can prevent or mend usability problems and increase web effectiveness: it has an astounding return on investment"

The review also compliments some sites on their communication strategy. Tom McClintock's site for instance receives positive comments on its effective use of a Flash movie, while Arnold Schwarzenegger's site is praised for its clear call to action, learning from its competitors and offering a Spanish version of the site – amazingly offered by nobody else but Peter Camejo.

The full article on this review, with supporting screenshots, is available on www.usabilityreviews.com/california-recall.htm.

Nardo Kuitert is a Web Site Optimizer with UsabilityReviews.com, a service provided by Ontario Web Site Optimization firm U-C WEBS (www.u-cwebs.com). U-C WEBS helps organizations large and small to optimize their web sites. Its low-end service is a Quick & Dirty Homepage Review™. More in-depth expert reviews like the Homepage Scorecard™ consist of 112-point inspections.

Contact information:

Usabilityreviews.com

Nardo Kuitert, +1 (519) 787-7612.

nardo@usabilityreviews.com

- End of press release -