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Heuristic Evaluation

CompanyX

October 26, 2011

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Heuristic Metrics

H1 Visibility of system status

- Are users kept informed what is going on?
- Appropriate feedback provided within reasonable time around the user's action?
- Do menu instructions, prompts, and error messages appear in the same place(s) on each page?
- Is there some form of system feedback for every operator action?

H2 Match between system and real world

- Is the language used simple?
- Are the words, phrases, concepts, icons familiar to the users?
- Are menu choices ordered in the most logical way?

H3 User control and freedom

- Are there ways of allowing users to easily get back to where they came from?
- When a user's task is complete, does the system wait for a signal from the user before processing?
- Is there an "undo" function at the level of a single action, a data entry, and a complete group of actions?

H4 Consistency and Standards

- Are the ways to performing similar actions consistent?

H5 Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

- Error messages helpful?
- Do they use plain language that describes nature of problem and suggest a way to solve it?

H6 Error Prevention

- Is it easy to make errors?

H7 Recognition rather than recall

- Are objects, actions, and options always visible?
- Have items been grouped into logical zones, and have headings been used to distinguish between zones?

H8 Flexibility and efficiency of use

- Does the system allow novice users to enter the simplest, most common form of each command, and have accelerators been provided that allows more experienced users to carry out task more quickly?

H9 Aesthetic and design

- Is any unnecessary or irrelevant information provided?
- Are field labels brief, familiar and descriptive?

H10 Help and documentation

- Is help information provided that is easily searched and followed?

Rating:
0 = Violates a heuristic but doesn't seem to be a usability issue
1 = Superficial usability problem: may be easily overcome by a user or occurs extremely infrequently.
2 = Minor usability problem: may occur more frequently or be more difficult to overcome. Fixing should be a low priority for next release.
3 = Major usability problem; occurs frequently or users may be unable or unaware of how to fix the problem. Important to fix, so should be given a high priority.
4 = Usability catastrophe: Seriously impairs use of product and cannot be overcome by users. Imperative to fix.

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Home Page

Summary:

CompanyX's home page contains the main navigation and content that describes what the company manufactures. There is a large Flash animation in the center area, top, which features images and copy suggestive of the breadth of applications using CompanyXproducts. The Flash animation is not interactive in any way.

Evaluation:

1) Flash animation is display only and has no interactivity. Most users expect to be able to interact with visual elements in a central display on the home page, particularly as a gateway into specific, featured content
   a. H4: Consistency and Standards
   b. Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue

2) Banner ad-like graphics are often ignored by users. Also, each graphic is visually similar even though content is markedly different: a featured product, a featured service, new software option, online selector tool. The lack of visual distinctiveness may cause them to blend in even further and not cue the user that there could be valuable info here.
   a. H9: Aesthetic and effectiveness
   b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

3) Call to action is not prominent, limited only to navigation link; need to make it clear and easy for the user to take the step of reaching out
   a. H7 Recognition
   b. Rating – 1 Superficial Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Revise animation to a carousel of images linked to key content within the site using Javascript or other non-Flash technology

2) Establish regular locations for specific types of featured content (i.e. one box for training/webinars, one box for product feature, one box for tool, etc.) and develop a subtle but distinct visual cue for each; make it easy for the users to register what's there

3) Develop a visually clear and distinct call to action in a dedicated spot on the site; we want to make it easy for prospects to engage

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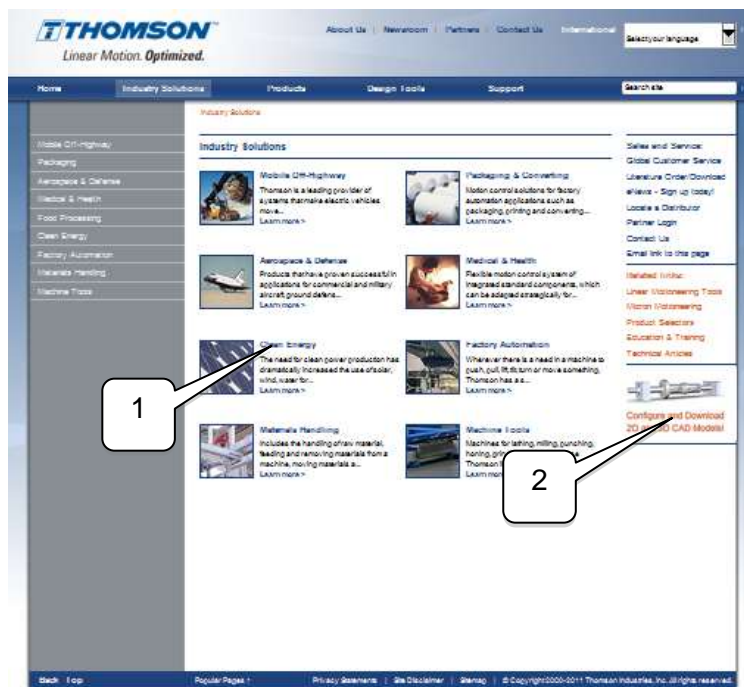
Industry Solutions

Summary:

This page displays the various industry solutions associated with CompanyXproducts. Standard left column navigation provides links to all pages within the section; right column links are the same as most other pages.

Evaluation:

1) User Clicks on an image, which opens up another page; however the solution name title itself is not a link and cannot be clicked; most users would expect to be able to click the image, the title, or the "Read More" link to access the indicated page.
   a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use
   b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

2) "Banner" graphic features 2D/3D CAD drawing; potentially could have included link to more relevant content on the Industry Solutions page, such as an appropriate seminar or white paper content
   a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use
   b. Rating – 1 Superficial Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Make industry title names an active link to the internal pages.
2) Change the displayed "banner" to link to industry-related material within the site.

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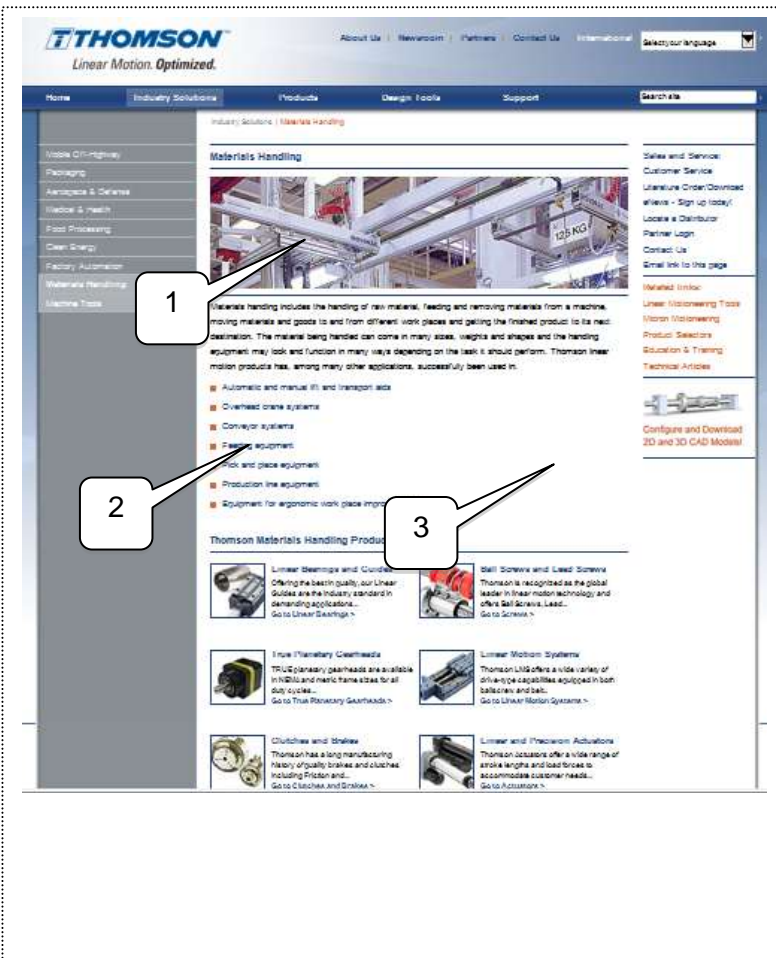
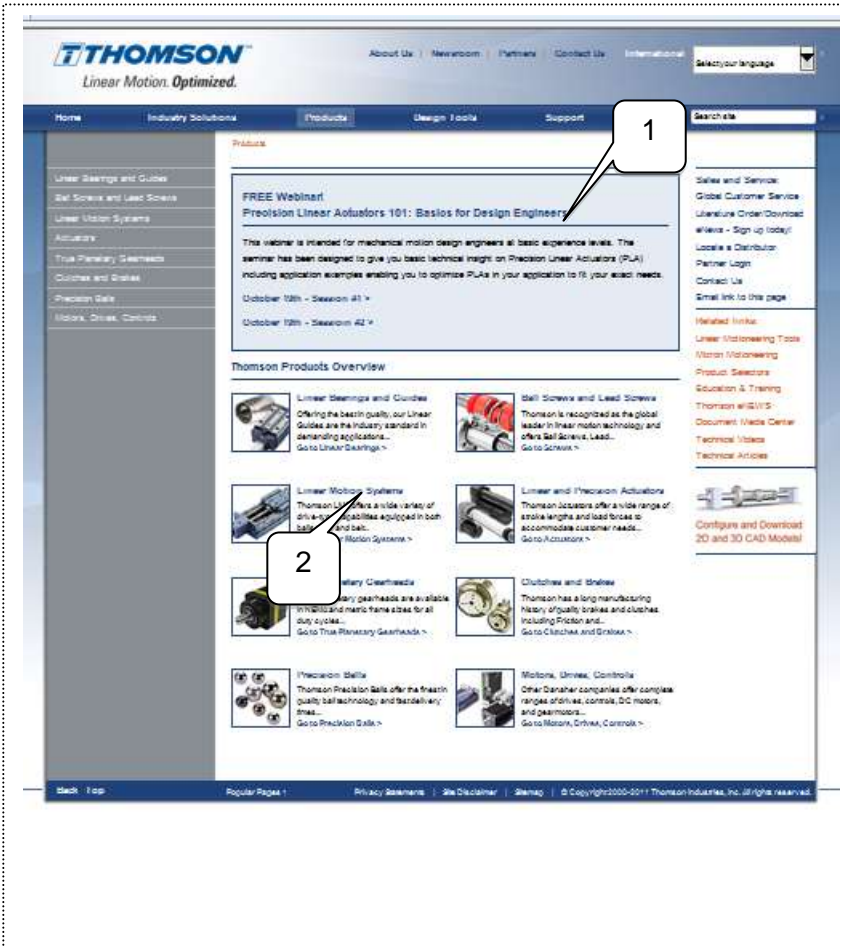# Industry Solution Page: Materials Handling

Summary:

This is the start page for the Industry Solution section. Key content includes links to the individual solution pages, represented by graphic images, as well as a general description of the solution-based approach. Images are helpful in making it easy for the user to identify what blocks of content represent, as long as they are clear and easy to understand.

Evaluation:

1) Main image is meant to quickly confirm the page's content, which is good, but uses too much valuable real estate.
    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of Use
    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue
2) Colored bullet text implies clickability, but items link to nothing
    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use
    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue
3) Page lacks further customized content or link related to the page topic, giving page a generic feel
    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of Use
    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Make image smaller to create more room for content
2) Present in a more typical font and color so the user does not assume linkage
3) Add section such as "Additional Resources" which can link to industry-related information that provide value to the user

Products

Summary:

Page structure is similar to the Industry Solutions, with the exception being an intrusive content block at top center advertising a free Linear Actuator webinar. The location of this notice is guaranteed to get the user's attention.

Evaluation:

1) The Free Webinar notice is disruptive and confusing, blocking the user's easy identification of what page s/he is on and what content is available and of value. Also, there is no info about date/time and the links provided go to a webex signup page that dead ends without access to the promised webinar.

    a. H4 Consistency and standards

    b Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue

2) Colored bullet text implies clickability, but items link to nothing

    c. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use

    d. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Consider moving the webinar announcement to another good quality location, such as the left hand column, that does not disrupt the primary purpose of the page

2) Present in a more typical font and color so the user does not assume hypertext linking
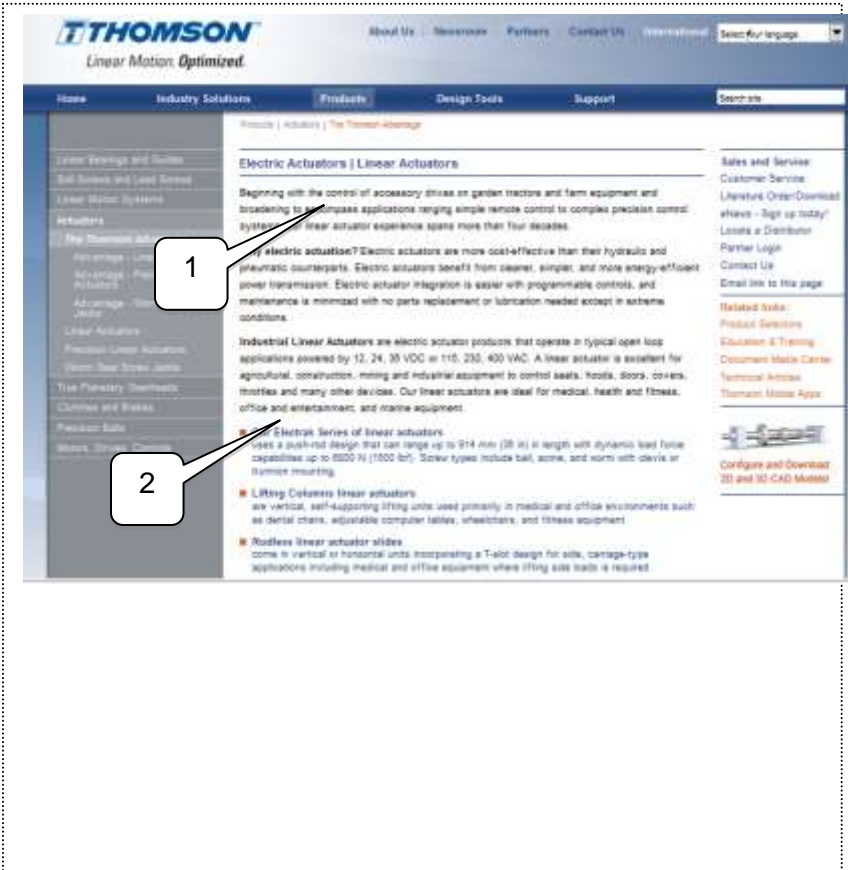
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Individual Product Page

Summary:

Content on this page is grouped around a specific category of products, such as Actuators.

Evaluation:

1) As echoed in the usability study conducted in November 2010, this page should contain more substantive product information; currently the content is fairly general and does not include product specification. While understanding that this is the general "Actuators" product family start page, still it might be reasonable for users to expect clear access to detailed product info from this page.

    a. H4 Consistency and standards

    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

2) Colored bullet text implies clickability, but items link to nothing

    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use

    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

3) The material available on the tabbed parts is confusing at best; Literature and Capabilities tabs reveal lists of PDF documents with the same or similar names and no clarification of why the user should choose one over the other; language variants are not clearly marked; and the distinction between what the tabs represent is not clear.

    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use

    b. Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Restructure page content to include clearer links to items such as product specification sheets, operating data, catalogs or product lists, etc.

2) Present in a more typical font and color so the user does not assume hypertext linking\

3) Consider renaming or reorganizing tabs to prevent confusion.
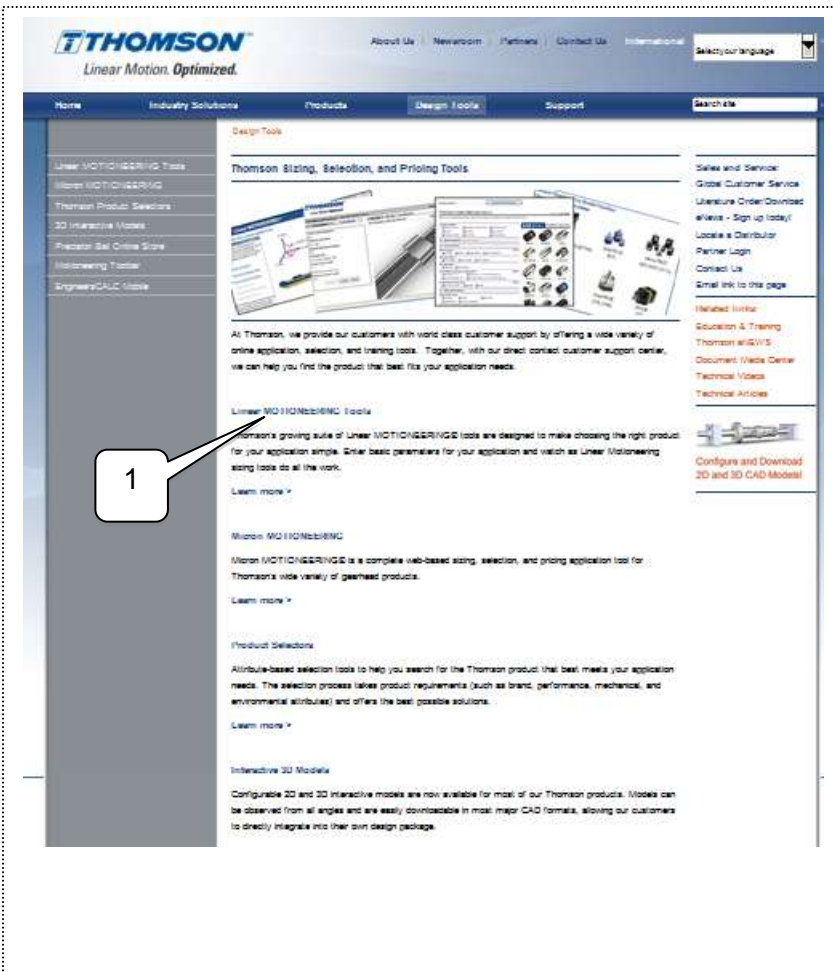
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CompanyX Advantage

Summary:

Each product section includes a version of this page, presumably intended to describe the special value CompanyX brings to this category. All the pages are text-heavy and do not feature any photography, video, or other interactive elements. The different pages vary in content and structure and, aside from all being copy-only, do not maintain any consistency in how they present information.

Evaluation:

1) Pages do not have the same structure or similar types of content. Users have no cues as to what type of information is where on the page, and may not choose to read the paragraphs of text.
    a. H4 Consistency and standards, and H7 Recognition rather than recall
    b. Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue
2) Colored bullet text implies clickability, but items link to nothing
    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of use
    b. Rating – 2 Minor Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Create a template for use in every Comnpany X Advantage page; segment the information in a way that the user will appreciate, and use web-friendly writing: short paragraphs focused on a single key message or point of information; bullets or outlined text, for enhanced scanability; clean, jargon-free copy
2) Present in a more typical font and color so the user does not assume hypertext linking\

Design Tools

Summary:

This page aggregates information about the various online applications CompanyX has created to help engineers identify the right product model for their specific needs.

Evaluation:

1) The apps and tools are either categorized and described using CompanyX-specific brand names, such as MOTIONEERING, or with generic terms like Product Selectors which seem to overlap with the other category titles. It is confusing for the user to know where to find a specific type of application. Also, the long page requires the user to scroll down in order to see the options and decide whether or not they want to follow any links.

    a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of Use

    b. Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Reorganize page to present links to the various tools grouped together in thematically clear and easily understable ways. This is probably via three columns and three categories:

    a. Product Sizing and Configuration Tools

    b. Product Selector Tools

    c. Utilities

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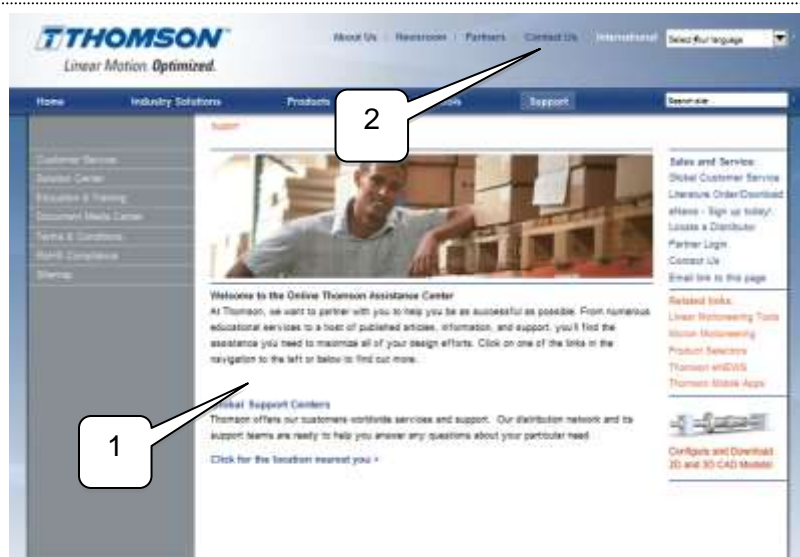
Support

Summary:

The Support page is part of an architecture that requires too many page levels before the user gets to useful content. The Contact Us page is separate from Support and contains only a contact form; the Support page has neither form nor phone numbers, which are relegated to the Customer Service page.

Evaluation:

1) The user has a reasonable expectation to get useful contact info—which could be either phone numbers/address info, email info, or a form—at the initial page of whatever path, via Support or Contact us, s/he chooses to follow.
   a. H8 Flexibility and Ease of Use
   b. Rating – 3 Major Usability Issue

2) There appear to be two pages with the same content: global_customer_service_na.php and contact_us_support.php. This can be a violation of search engine rules and could result in penalties from Google and the others.
   a. H4 Consistency and standards
   b. Rating—2 Minor Usability Issue

Recommendations:

1) Reorganize page to include access to contact information first, at the highest level of either Contact Us or Customer Service;
   a. Address and phone number of each office, globally
   b. Email address
   c. Contact Us form

2) Check navigation and eliminate duplicate page names