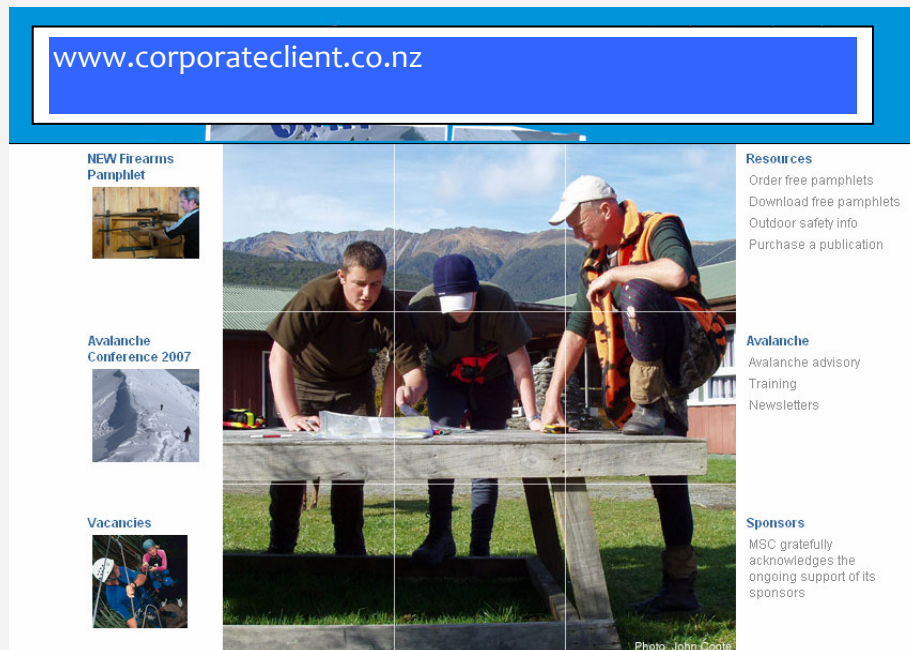


Homepage Usability Report: www.corporateclient.co.nz

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Prepared for:
A . Manager

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Introduction:

The homepage has been evaluated across the four main characteristics of a user-centred homepage, based on the work of international usability expert, Jakob Nielsen. They are:

- Make the site's purpose clear
- Help users find what they need
- Reveal site content
- Use visual design to enhance interaction design

Each characteristic is considered under five secondary factors, making 20 in all. Each factor has a possible high score of five, giving a total score out of 100.

The main concerns with each characteristic are listed in the [Executive Summary](#), followed by the principal [Recommendations](#) in order of importance. The [Key findings](#) relating to each characteristic are then summarised in the following sections. The full evaluation scores will be found in the [Appendix](#).

Executive summary:

Your homepage is a vital part of your site. It has to welcome visitors, explain who you are, what you do, and allow quick access to all your site content. If your homepage does a better job, a greater number of visitors will have a better experience of your site.

We have evaluated the usability of your homepage across four key characteristics, and it has scored XX out of a possible 100 points.

- **1. Make the site's purpose clear**

Overall it is strongly-branded and visually appealing, but it does not communicate your organisation's mission and the content of the site as clearly as it might. The absence of a 'tagline' with the logo, which summarises the site's purpose, is a serious omission.

- **2. Help users find what they need**

The placement and design of the navigation is neither completely consistent nor completely clear. These characteristics are essential in usable homepage navigation.

- **3. Reveal site content**

The homepage lacks explicit information about the company its mission and its activities. All this content must be inferred from navigation headings. Making your site users 'think' too much decreases the effectiveness of your site and makes it less likely that casual visitors will persist.

- **4. Use visual design to enhance interaction design**

The lowest-scoring characteristic is the 'use of visual design to enhance user experience and interactivity'. The sheer size of the ever-changing photo graphics, and the intrusive banner, impede the communication of vital information. Improvements here will do most to enhance the experience your users have visiting the site.

Recommendations:

(In descending order of importance from most to least essential)

1. Reduce the size of the central photo graphics and relocate on the same level as the logo, above the main navigation. These images can still change, because in this 'banner' location they are less likely to confuse. Use the main part of the homepage for a clear and succinct summary of the Council's mission and services.
2. Remove the intrusive dropdown banner. This should appear in a 'feature box' on the side of the page. New and featured content links should continue to appear on both sides of the page.
3. Adopt a pithy tagline placed with the logo on every page, for example - 'Enjoying yourself safely'.
4. Place a search box above the navigation on every page, and remove the 'Search' page.
5. Move the navigation to the top of every page, and reduce the length of pop down menus. When the pop down appears, the background to the top level heading should clearly change colour to show this is also clickable.
6. Create a 'Contact us' heading. 'About Us' should contain corporate and personnel information only.
- 7.

Key findings:

1. Make the site's purpose clear - 1XX/25

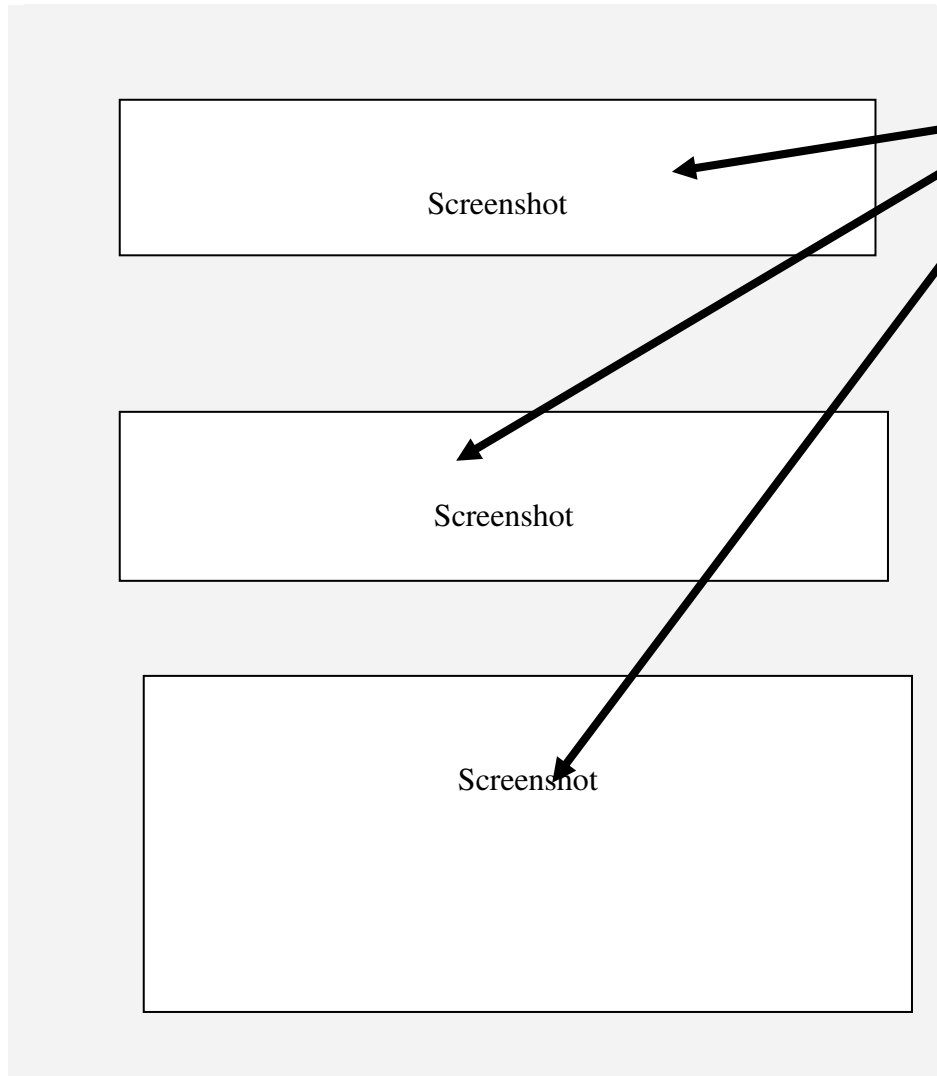
- Apart from inferences based on reading all the main navigation pop down menus, the only information about the overall purpose of the site on the homepage is the **logo** - this is a good logo, but as an information source it is not clear enough on its own.
- Users can guess the kinds of things the company does, and who its audiences are, by looking at page headings, but this makes users think too much, they should be told this clearly and concisely. There is plenty of good content describing these things in the 'About us' page.
- There is no actual **tagline** on the homepage, even though the Strategic Plan has a good one. A good tagline is the best way to help users understand the purpose and content of your site immediately.
- The window title alphabetises under 'N' for NZ, which is too generic - and there is no tagline-type description of what the site is for. This makes it hard for users scanning search engine results to know the site is worth visiting, and may result in lower-than-optimal search rankings.



Screenshot

Screenshot

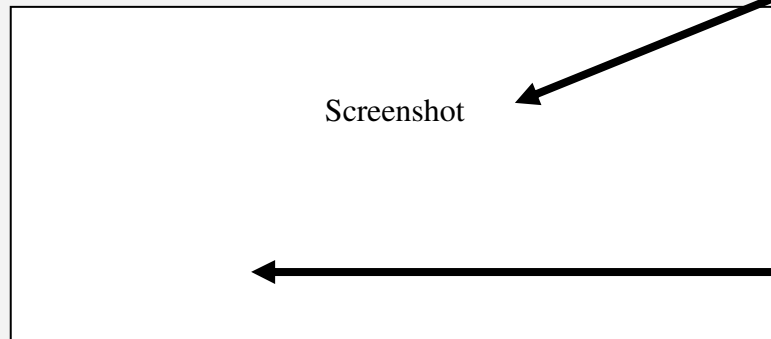
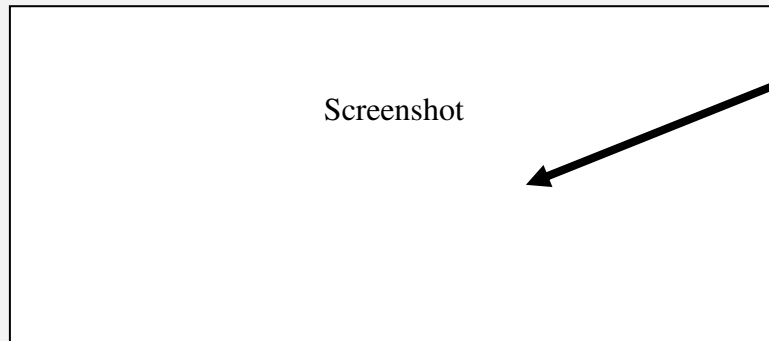
Screenshot



2. Help users find what they need - XX/25

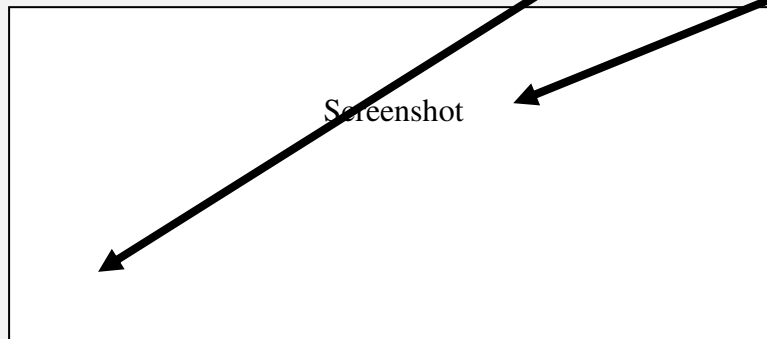
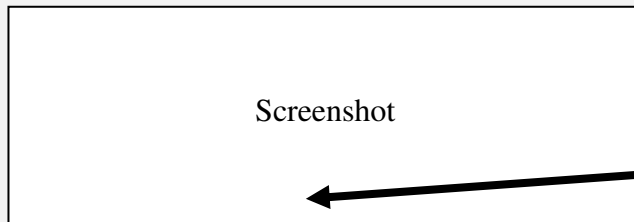
- The pop down banner covers all the main navigation. New site users could completely miss this navigation and become confused (see below under 4).
- When the navigation is visible, it is fairly clear, but the pop down menus can cover other homepage content. These menus should not exceed seven items, some are currently too long. There is also some chance users will not notice they can click on **top level page headings** as well as the headings in the pop downs.
- The use of **bottom page navigation** means these items may not be noticed and if they are, they will be thought to be of very low significance. Usually only 'compliance items' such as privacy policies, should be placed here.
- The use of red colour for some navigation headings is likely to confuse users. All headings at the same level should be visually similar.
- Unfortunately the navigation moves from the top to the left of the page when users move to lower level pages in the site - this creates confusion, which is added to because the headings in the side navigation do not match those in the top navigation.
- The contact information is not under the heading 'Contact Us', which users expect, it is under 'About Us'. It is complete, but not easy to find.
- Users expect the 'Search' box to appear on every page, they do not want to have to go to another page on the site to conduct a search. The Search box design is, however, good.
- When users move to another page, the navigation heading for where they have gone is 'lit' with a colour. This is good practice, but as the navigation has 'moved' to the side, it is not as clear as it should be.

3. Reveal site content - XX/25



- The homepage does not clearly reveal all the types of information available in the site. In particular it refers to a **'members only'** area, but does not invite visitors to become members, or show how this is done. This 'exclusion' undercuts the public information ethos of the site as a whole. Can individuals join at the site? The term 'members' implies this to users, and if this is not the case, it needs to be made clear.
- The pop down menu under 'Members only' is confusing, since selecting any of these options leads only to the top-level log-in page. The lower level pages should be revealed after the log-in, not at the homepage. Homepage content should describe the advantages of membership, if this is an option for ordinary visitors.
- The homepage also does not clarify all the tasks users can carry out. Headings refer to purchasing and downloading, but these don't make clear the difference between 'resources' and the 'online store' - both actually give away resources. It is also not made clear if 'members only' can access information, or if every visitor can.
- While the homepage does a good job of featuring recent or new content, and also providing links to related resources, such as the avalanche warning information - it also confuses by providing **multiple links** to some of the same content - such as resources. This is confusing, as these don't seem to be the main kinds of content in the site, why have they been emphasised like this?
- The homepage does a good job of resizing to fit different size windows, and when maximised, most of the page is visible.

4. Use visual design to enhance interaction design - XX/25



- The usefulness main navigation is being undercut by several factors:
 - it is **completely obscured** by the drop-down banner, and the button to remove this is labelled 'Close' - many new visitors will not wish to click 'close' on a homepage they have just found, for fear of exiting the site altogether
 - the navigation shifts position on lower level pages
 - the headings also change on lower level pages, navigational consistency is essential to user experience.

These issues with the navigation amount to 'hidden surprises' and 'intrusive animation' - both of which are major problems in terms of user experience.

- The central placement of your logo with no other content at the same height means that **valuable space is wasted**. The logo alone occupies 15% of the total screen real estate. Even on lower level pages the left-sided logo is still on a level with no other graphics or content.
- While the pictures do communicate the general subject matter of the site, overall they undercut the effectiveness of the homepage as a means of communication. They take all the space (about 25% of the total screen real estate) where specific information about the company and its mission could be included.
- The ever-changing sequence of the pictures is also a problem. Because they change each time a visitor goes to another page and returns, they raise the risk that some users may become disoriented and not realise they are back at the same home page.
- The homepage does quite a good job of initiating user response, e.g. inviting users to obtain downloads, and view new content. However, more could be done; such as enhancing uptake of courses by providing a link to current courses from the homepage, including an enrolment option.

Appendix 1: Individual ratings across the twenty specific homepage usability characteristics

1. Make the site's purpose clear:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • site purpose obvious - <i>is it clear what the business does?</i> | x |
| • intended audience clear - <i>can we tell quickly who the site is meant for?</i> | x |
| • tagline - <i>is there an obvious, memorable and comprehensive tagline?</i> | x |
| • window title - <i>does the title alphabetise properly, and include a summary of site purpose?</i> | x |
| • corporate information accessible - <i>can you easily access details about the company - with one click from homepage?</i> | x |

Total for section **XX/25**

2. Help users find what they need:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • intuitive navigation - <i>is navigation clearly visible + is it clear what is under the headings given?</i> | x |
| • reveal heirarchy of pages - <i>does mousing over/clicking navigation reveal how many levels and pages are under main headings?</i> | x |
| • search - <i>is there a clearly marked search box?</i> | x |
| • contact options - <i>is there a full range of contact means visible at one click from the homepage?</i> | x |
| • breadcrumbs/clicked links change colour - <i>are there breadcrumbs - do these or other links change colour when clicked to show where users have been?</i> | x |

Total for section **XX/25**

All characteristics rated on scale from 1 (fails completely) to 5 (succeeds completely)

3. Reveal site content:

- clear tasks supported - *does the content of the homepage make clear what tasks can be completed in the site?* x
- main content areas defined - *does homepage content clarify major types of information in site?* x
- current content featured - *does the homepage show featured recent content?* x
- links to related online content - *does site link to other sites with related content eg. other useful tools or related companies?* x
- no scrolling/liquid page size - *is most of content visible without extensive scrolling - does content resize to fit window?* x

Total for section XX/25

4. Use visual design to enhance interaction design:

- obvious navigation - *can you tell at a glance where the navigation actually is?* x
- multi-media integration/no intrusive animation - *if there is use of animation and multi-media, is it for a clear purpose or does it hinder use of the site?* x
- no hidden surprises - *are site users free of unexpected obstacles to the use of the site?* x
- appropriate graphics - *do graphics clarify meaning and assist use of the site?* x
- initiates user response - *does the design of the homepage actively invite user response and interaction?* x

Total for section XX/25

All characteristics rated on scale from 1 (fails completely) to 5 (succeeds completely)