Guide to Heuristic Analysis for B2B Website Design

7 Steps to Boost Conversion Rates

clear. | B2B Digital Brand
Experience Agency

In today's digital climate, you need every available insight to understand your prospects and adapt your B2B firm's website to satisfy their needs. User testing and site analytics are two ways to explore if your design is functioning properly, but you need to dig deeper to determine whether your user experience connects with users.

Intro

Dating back to the earliest days of digital interactions, heuristic evaluations are typically associated with product and app development. However, by adapting the central principles (or heuristics) to your conversion funnel, you can see a real difference in how your B2B site's design is performing.

This white paper offers a look at how heuristic analysis enables you to secure a better UX design for your B2B website.

You'll learn:

- The 10 heuristics that deliver a better end product for any digital experience.
- Why heuristic evaluation alone can't produce an optimal UX design.
- How to apply core usability principles to optimize conversions for your B2B website.
- 7 needs that every B2B website must address for its prospects.
- The valuable website cues that build trust with your users.
- How to anticipate your prospects' needs and create the assurance they need to convert.

Your B2B firm's website is the most prominent touchpoint between your business and its customers. Not only can a well-designed site develop crucial connections with prospects, but it's also an opportunity to deliver a complete expression of your brand and the value behind the services you provide.

To deliver a consistently positive impression, your site's user experience should be viewed with the same care as a high-performance sports car. When your site is breaking down and not delivering the conversions your firm needs, you can't just keep moving and see if it fixes itself. By incorporating the tools of a heuristic evaluation, you can gain a clearer understanding of how well your site is responding to user expectations through every turn.

Heuristic evaluation enables UX researchers to evaluate the success of your website design. Though heuristic evaluation requires adjustment to suit the needs of B2B firms, a broader view of the practice offers vital insights into keeping your site in tune with customers.

The Roots of Heuristic Evaluation and User-Centered Design

Borrowed from the worlds of product and app development, heuristic analysis demonstrates to UX researchers what is and isn't working in a design.

The roots of the practices go back to 1990 when usability consultants Jacob Nielsen and Rolf Molich [determined a digital experience should satisfy 10 core principles](#) or heuristics):

1. Regularly keep users informed about a product's status
2. Communicate information in real-world terms in a way users understand.
3. Provide users control over the experience and allow them to undo mistakes.
4. Remain consistent with text and visual elements.
5. Deliver appropriate warnings to users before potentially risky actions to reduce errors.
6. Present options and instructions in a way that reminds users how the design works.
7. Allow flexibility for users to quickly satisfy their needs.
8. Eliminate clutter by displaying only relevant information.
9. Offer help when errors occur in language that's easy to understand.
10. Ensure documentation includes clear, concise instructions to resolve errors.

Dedicating multiple researchers to analyze these heuristics allows designers to build an understanding of how to deliver a more usable and ultimately more effective end product. That said, applying heuristic evaluation on its own doesn't guarantee a successful website.

Why Heuristic Evaluation Should Be Handled with Care

Heuristic analysis is a powerful tool for considering and improving the user experience. But any web design partner incorporating the process into your B2B site should use it in conjunction with additional sources such as user testing and surveys.

Even with 10 distinct heuristics to examine, any evaluator will face an uphill battle to locate every usability issue on your site. And for as many issues as a skilled UX evaluator may uncover, their results can be subjective and biased to reflect their own experience.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

VISUAL   MOTOR   HEARING   NEURAL SENSITIVITY   COGNITIVE

You need to consider a number of factors impacting your user such as their background, experience level, and physical capabilities with regard to accessibility to develop an inclusive user experience. However, by pairing heuristic evaluations with a robust user testing plan, you can uncover details that provide valuable direction for boosting results such as website conversions.

Applying Heuristic Evaluation Tools to B2B Websites

The heuristic analysis framework offers practical guidance for optimizing your B2B firm site's performance for prospects. Heuristics allow you and your web design partner to ask the right questions about each part of your site that works to transform site visitors into customers.

B2B firms should apply heuristic evaluation to the parts of their site most relevant to the customer journey. Your firm's homepage, its products or solutions pages, and any content that demonstrates your firm's expertise all contribute to building an effective customer journey.

User testing allows you to gather feedback on your site's functionality. Inspired by this guide to driving conversions in digital news, heuristic analysis allows you to examine how well your site satisfies the following 7 needs of B2B customers.

1. Credibility

From the beginning, your firm's site should build trust with each user, and your design plays a critical role in creating a credible first impression. One study found that [nearly 50% of users consider a website's design the strongest indicator of its credibility](#).

Along with a design that's intuitive and consistent, your website's content plays a key role in connecting with your audience. Case studies, testimonials, and clear, concise copy that aligns with audience expectations are all effective ways to build trust with users and demonstrate your firm's credibility.
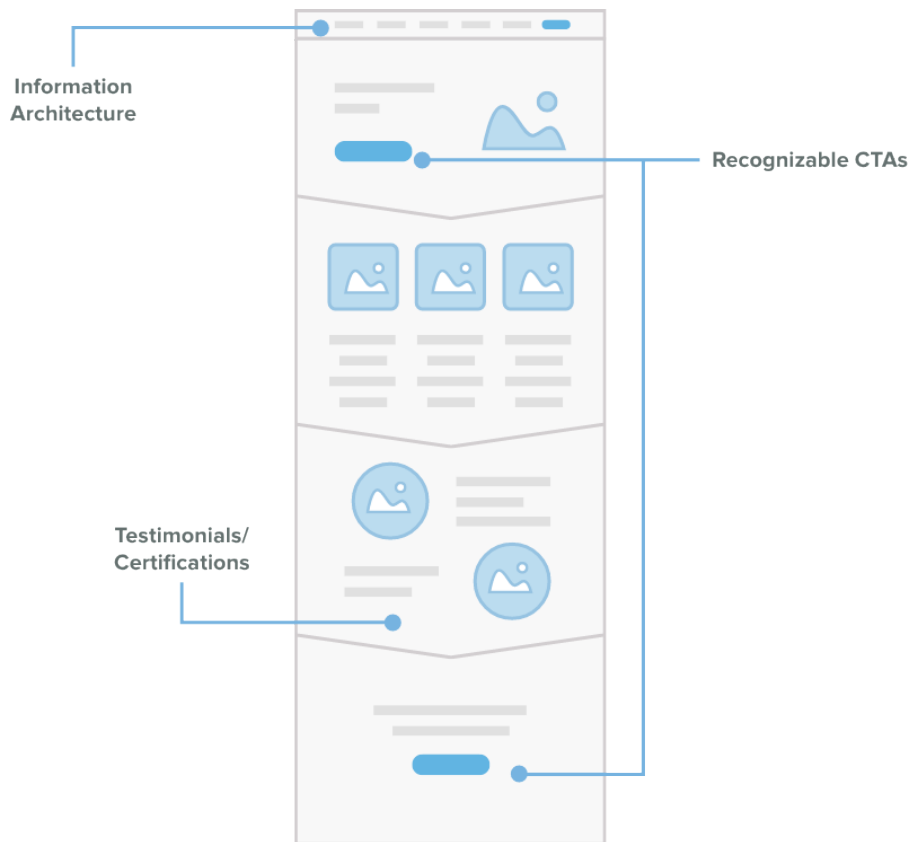
A heuristic evaluation should ask 3 questions to ensure your site builds trust with users:

- Does each page imply trustworthiness through a consistent brand identity and visual cues such as a grid layout and clear and recognizable CTAs?
- Is the information architecture clearly communicated and aligned with the norms of your firm's industry?
- Does a page's narrative offer prospects external validation through testimonials, certifications, or awards to provide social proof of your firm's capabilities?

2. Relevance

When a user comes to your site, you have seconds to illustrate that your firm has what they're looking for and they have come to the right place. Miss the opportunity to deliver a positive first impression, and your firm won't likely get a second chance.

In person-to-person communication, we develop a first impression of someone in seven seconds. Within that brief window, more than half of that impression is built by what we see and less than 7% is informed by what's actually said.

Your B2B website should be designed to accommodate these habits. The images, colors, layout, headlines, and infographics your firm uses combine to create a scannable first impression.

Each element on the page should immediately appear relevant to your prospect's needs by answering these questions:

- Does the display type and corresponding copy reflect your firm's positioning?
- How does the copy connect with user emotions?
- Are the page's visuals aligned with your brand's values and target customer personas?
- Does the layout and functionality of each page feel consistent with the rest of the site?

DESIGN ELEMENTS TO ACCOMODATE RELEVANCE
- Images
- Colors
- Layout
- Headlines
- Infographics

3. Direction

Assuming your website page has captured your prospect's attention, you need to ensure it clearly communicates where to go next. UX design isn't just about enabling users to recognize what they need; it ensures they're directed toward the outcome your firm needs as well.

Any page in your design should clearly indicate what your users should do first followed by where they can find more information. Along with informing your users where to go, you also need to ensure they always recognize how to use your site to find what they need.

A heuristic evaluation asks the following questions about providing direction for your prospects:

- Does the page guide users where to click?
- Whether you promote a contact form, demo download, or another conversion opportunity, is the CTA well-defined and easy to understand?
- How does a given page communicate the next step in the customer journey?
- Do your product pages clearly illustrate the distinction between each of your offerings?
- Does the page provide secondary CTAs such as email subscriptions or newsletter offers for prospects looking to make a lower-stakes first connection?

COMMUNICATE INTENT

REQUEST DEMO

- Inform users where to go
- Ensure users know how to use your site

4. Encouragement

Your prospects are always a click away from leaving your firm's site and taking their business elsewhere. To keep the attention of your users, your site's design and content should provide a clear argument for what sets your firm apart and why they should keep reading.

Providing encouragement to your users provides a way to demonstrate what sets your firm apart from the competition. However, your site's user experience should be consistent with what your firm has to offer. For example, if your software is easy to use and fast, your entire site should reflect that value. If your brand opts for a casual tone in customer interactions, each part of your site should as well.

The following questions evaluate whether your firm is effectively connecting with prospects:

- Is your firm's value proposition readily visible and clearly expressed?
- How does your site demonstrate your offerings are relevant to users?
- Does your site address pain points for each of your target audience personas?
- Does your site communicate why your firm is the best fit for your prospects in a way that stands out from competitors?

5. Reassurance

Any prospect coming to your site arrives looking to resolve a problem. But they will also have questions that need to be addressed in order to feel ready to become your customer.

As your site's UX design builds a connection with prospects, it should also aim to answer user concerns and bring the right answers to the surface. A user experience that acknowledges and addresses customer questions builds further trust in your firm's capabilities by demonstrating how well you anticipate their needs.

A heuristic evaluation of your site's ability to reassure prospects answers these questions:

- How does your site address common transactional questions connected with forms such as CTAs to request a demo, contact us, or any gated assets?
- Does your site offer an FAQ page related to your services and is it easy to find?
- Is a customer support function like a chatbot or call center available on the site? Users should be able to navigate to support pages and applicable contact information as needed.

6. Simplicity

UX analysis is built on A/B testing of website components and determining user preferences. In heuristic evaluation, the simplicity of your design is analyzed by considering how easy your website and its forms look.

For example, a long form with multiple fields looks time-consuming and can repel the users you're targeting.

By answering the following questions, you can evaluate how well your design is communicating that your site is easy and convenient:

- Are your forms brief and perceived as if they won't take long to complete?
- Is your design clear, uncluttered, and scannable? Scrolling is the norm in website browsing, but a well-designed page provides what users need at a glance.
- How does your site perform on all devices and browsers?
- Do pages offer usability tips or other help in areas that request user interaction?

### SHORTER FORMS WITH PROGRESSIVE PROFILING
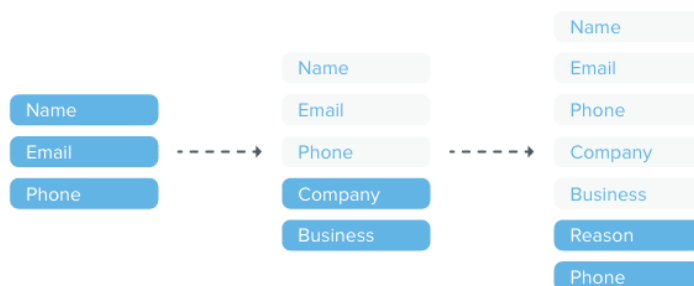
7. Validation

Your B2B firm's website needs to serve at least two distinct audiences. One is the eventual users of your services who are researching your offerings to deliver a recommendation to decision-makers. The others are the decision-makers at the executive level.

Both audiences will most likely assess and reassess their decisions before staking their reputations on recommending your firm. At times like these, your site should reaffirm the sound logic behind partnering with your firm.

Whether the benefits include greater security, a better ROI than competitors, or faster performance, your site should clearly confirm your prospect's decision to get in touch with your firm by answering the following:

- Does your site display rational justifications for working with your B2B firm?
- Have you incorporated micro-feedback into site interactions that validate each input such as form completions?
- After conversion, does your site provide clearly defined next steps with relevant resources that communicate to prospects what to expect?
- Does the first contact between your firm and its new prospect include engaging or interactive elements in its design to further enhance the experience?

DISTINCT AUDIENCES

USERS

DECISION MAKERS
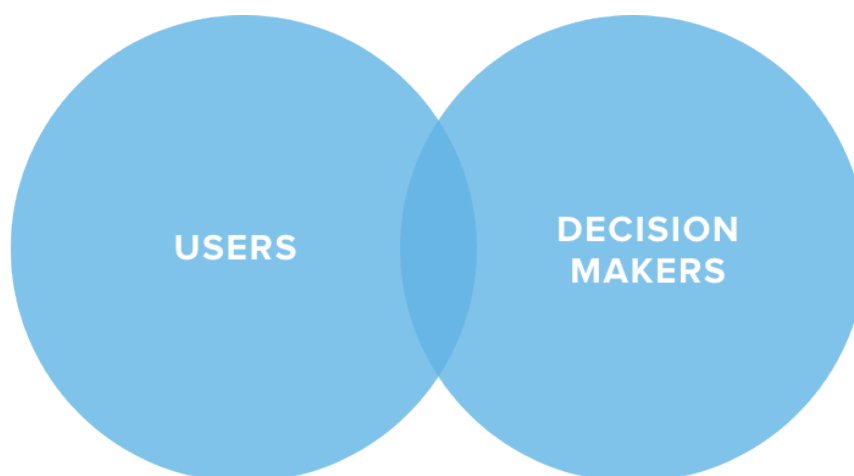
Website Optimization for Conversions Is an Ongoing Process

Used in tandem with user testing and site analytics, heuristic analysis provides another window into how well your design is serving both your users and your firm. However, regardless of whether you're analyzing a site that was recently redesigned or launched three years ago, you can't view conversion optimization as a one-and-done process.

The digital marketplace is in constant motion — as are your competitors, your customers, and even your business. To make sure your website keeps pace, you should deploy heuristic evaluation methods to verify it represents your firm accurately while continuing to offer a clear connection with customers. Otherwise, you and your business are in danger of being left behind.

Clear Digital is a full-service Silicon Valley digital agency with offices in San Jose and San Francisco. With a 20+ years experience in delivering award-winning results for its clients, Clear Digital specializes in building strategic digital brand and web experiences for B2B technology companies. Clients include Cisco Systems, Intel, McAfee, and Riverbed.

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