

Company Name Business Solutions website evaluation

By Anne Weinbrenner of EAW Website Usability

Executive summary

Website evaluation

This analysis accomplishes several tasks: 1) it diagnoses existing problems; 2) it provides detail for a site upgrade and design style guide for developers; 3) it lays down a strategy for an action plan that follows site business goals and; 4) it establishes priorities for undertaking work. A successful outcome must be client centred. Company Name's business goals and how the website will serve them lead to the next step, an action plan.

The big picture

The Company Name (CN) website presents a robust offering of IT products and services for the small or medium business. It is a difficult site to make sense of because the content organisation is not intuitive. The information is so dense on each page that a first time visitor to the site may be overwhelmed.

The visitor does not relate their 'points of IT pain' with the information wall presented on this site. The missing link is between a client's current IT problems and the best solution for them. The expertise needed to solve the problem is what Company Name offers. The potential client is not in a position to form a neutral judgement. They are unlikely to know what IT solutions are current or ideal for them. CN must bridge this gap in an obvious way in order to present a more effective website.

- **The problem:** It is the job of Company Name to begin where each client is, help them envision the possibilities and choose the solution(s). This requires a leap of imagination on practical matters. The website visitor can identify by recognising his pain symptoms even on the home page.
- **The solution:** Company Name can initially take the lead by listening, then showing what the client's unique, corrected IT system could look like. The website can supply fit for purpose examples that support this presentation. Content of this nature is a draw for external visitors and blogs.
- **The options:** On the current site, the client must select a direction unaided when they may not yet have a diagnosis or know what their choices really are. The website can organise content according to different sets of criteria. Multiple criteria can be applicable and still provide clarity.
- **The decision:** The organisation that chooses Company Name has only to choose between solving an immediate issue and electing an appropriate ongoing service. Material on the website can communicate flexibility between current and future situations as they change and evolve. Cost comparisons sit well in this section.
- **The details:** Company Name has a broad range of products and services. The web platform is ideal for showcasing topics at a high level as well as at several levels of detail. The website user controls the level of information they are ready for. Background and transparency are provided with links to vendor sites, case studies and additional features.
- **The future:** An CN client wants to concentrate on their business, not their IT infrastructure. Once their systems are working well, there is training, maintenance and planning for long-term growth to consider. The website can address these topics with video and diagrams in addition to words and is useful for newsletters or hints and tips. This supports the ongoing

relationship.

Company Name has a range of clients, each with a different need or profile. These differences are not addressed on the current CN site. Each user (profile or persona) must recognise their situation beginning at the home page which leads them to intuitively navigate to the relevant area of interest. Once they arrive, they'll want a topic overview followed by a drill-down to the appropriate level of detail. This has the effect of pulling the user into the CN site on their own terms instead of pushing them where the site owner wants them to go. This way, the user will be engaged each time they visit the site.

The Home page

The homepage can set up the key elements necessary to generate an enquiry and eventually close a sale (depending on what the primary and secondary objectives are). The assumption in this report is that the primary objective for Company Name is to generate an enquiry from potential clients. The secondary objective is to provide services for existing clients as well as prompt them to re-evaluate their needs periodically.

If the Company Name website were focused on a single product/service, then a launch into the main sales copy from the home page would be appropriate. CN offers a number of products or services and the full array is showcased on the home page. The advantage of this approach is the user has an idea of range and complexity from the start. The disadvantage is that this could be overwhelming for a potential client, and confusing or distracting for an existing client to find exactly what they are looking for quickly and directly.

The User or Client focus

The purpose of the entire site is to focus on the user or client and to answer these unspoken questions to their satisfaction:

1. Do I trust you?
2. Do I believe you?
3. Do you understand my needs?
4. What's in it for me? (WIIFM)
5. What do you want from me?
6. Is it worth it?

User Profiles or Personas

Your users each have a story to tell and needs to fulfil. They may have urgent, longstanding, finite or ongoing needs. To get to a solution, each has a navigational path to travel with every site visit. In the current CN site, the user often needs luck or handholding to find the right destination. Make these paths obvious.

Consideration of each user profile would make the CN site more personal and relevant. A website is a touch point of the business relationship. It can alert your clients to content that is meaningful to them.

Relevant content on timely topics is valuable. For example, if you would like to prompt an existing client to re-assess their current IT setup, what triggers or signs they should look for? An article of this sort has additional benefits in that it may also attract visitors wanting information on this topic and can enhance your standing as an expert resource on the web even if they will never be clients.

Information architecture on the Company Name site

The findings of this website evaluation point to more sophisticated use of content organised around the scenarios of your client or user profiles. It is recommended that some of your current content be leveraged and/or repurposed and some new content added. The site would be easier to grasp quickly and the navigational paths more obvious. The information architecture would support progressive disclosure of detail and put the site user in control of their site experience.

The Company Name website already enjoys excellent search engine ranking but is a confusing and unsatisfying site to visit because the information architecture is unclear. The rich content both existing and implied offers a large quantity of raw material to repurpose in a redevelopment project.

Once the business goals are determined, the structure of the site can be built to support them and the meat put on the bones.

Company Name Business Solutions site evaluation report

By Anne Weinbrenner of EAW Website Usability

Initial review

This website evaluation is organised into sections: one section for each page and divisions for each section of each page on the Company Name Business solutions website (<http://www.fullcircle.co.nz>).

These comments were made for the Company Name business solutions (CN) website between June and December 2011. Please note the word "I" is used frequently and is meant to indicate "this user" or a person who has never seen the site before. User testing of all profiles/ scenarios is the most accurate validation of how users regard the site. The content of this report is not meant to be a substitute for user testing but does provide a direction. Proof of concept is determined by user test results. Proof of concept before redevelopment is recommended as a cost saving measure.

Home page

Logo

Nice logo. Elegant. It can be built upon to tell a story. The words "Company Name" indicate comprehensiveness and the two circles show both a beginning and end and an inside and outside circle. It may say that the needs and services of the viewer (site user) can start and end within the circle of ongoing business at different places and times. The classic circular shape speaks to deeper levels of the psyche and addresses each viewer personally on an unconscious level making it a good choice.

Primary catch phrase

Company Name, "your one-stop IT solution." Does give an effective description of what the CN business is about. Graphically, because this subtitle is all uppercase, the user may read it as "your one-stop **IT** solution." You need to give "IT" separate treatment from the rest of the phrase. There is no reason to put a full stop at the end. By itself, the phrase needs some qualification. In context on this website, it does not. It is short, catchy and to the point.

The second subtitle

The second subtitle, "hardware, software, networking consultancy and applications... IT simplified" is okay, but it's vague. It would be clearer to begin with "**IT simplified:** hardware, software, networking consultancy and applications." This way "IT simplified" will not get lost as it trails off at the end. The words would be "front-loaded" which is best practice for the web.

Company Name also offers a customised IT solution to small and medium businesses in addition to the solution being simplified for the client. Customisation is not mentioned at this point. Consider: "Custom **IT simplified:** hardware, software, networking consultancy and applications." Is this accurate for Company Name? The drawback is the implication that custom costs more. Does it?

The existing navigational buttons of the Company Name website

The top level menu items just below the subtitles are labelled: home, about us, products, services, hints and tips, testimonials, newsletter, contact us and downloads.

Home page – the introduction

It is not obvious we are on the home page since there is no way to identify this page except to note the URL. There are no titles, breadcrumbs or unique treatment indicating the current page.

It is customary to start with the home button first left as is done here. On this page, you give an overview of the range of products and services you offer. Your user will likely focus on the one they need at the present time.

The next menu items are not necessarily in the order that users might prefer them. “About Us” is next which changes the subject away from the user’s needs to Company Name. Answer their unspoken question about this site “What’s in it for me?” (WIIFM) right up front. The answer to this question should appear on the top half of the home page without the need to scroll down.

Users must be engaged immediately. They need a context for all the information on this website so they can understand quickly the overall logic and linear paths they can choose from. Make it obvious what you offer to both your potential and existing clients. After this, you can pace the user experience in a more leisurely way.

About Us – who we are

About us is the second button. At the start a client wants to know about Company Name’s products and services that can serve them “right now.” When they are convinced that Company Name has something they want, they’ll want to know who is behind it. If they feel Company Name measures up, they may do a bit more research (e.g. word of mouth, street credibility, testimonials, speak with some of your clients). At this point, they may be ready to meet you or engage your company. These are safe assumptions to operate from, even though faster sales conversions do occur.

Products and Services – the meat

The products and services you offer are now centre stage. On the home page, you have recognised some of their problems and inspired curiosity regarding possible solutions. Customers want to explore the solutions on their own terms. Their issues may be about saving time, money, data security or ‘no more IT hassles.’ Perhaps they have to comply with laws and regulations but they want to do it with minimal effort.

How they do peripheral tasks is not what clients care about. They care about doing what they are in business to do and doing it well. Company Name has already solved many of their problems and can offer short scenarios up front that would grab user attention and inspire their flow through the site.

Free Resources (Hints, Tips, Newsletters) – the dessert

Offer hints and tips and the newsletters after the products and services. This enhances your appeal as a resource and makes your site richer and your company credibility deeper.

Testimonials and About Us – What’s so great about you and who says so?

Testimonials should come first because you still want to show clients “WIIFM” and show them the value CN has added to other businesses. This addresses credibility as well as possible self identification for the site user. When potential clients recognise existing clients that are just like them, it’s easier to imagine themselves being a client.

About Us offers insight into the organisation behind a website and is established best practice.

Contact Us and Downloads

Now site users are ready for Contact Us and Downloads. You are wise to put them last and together. Both mean personal contact between the user and Company Name. The placement of Downloads in the upper right hand corner allows fast access for existing clients who just want a quick file from the site (meaning fast service exactly suited to their needs).

The existing client

The existing client might only need to go to downloads or to a particular product. You have made this fast and direct for them. They may be seduced by “What’s New” along the way, but only if they have time.

Clients may rediscover or now be ready for hints, tips and nuggets of wisdom from your newsletters. This could mean a recommitment to Company Name. It won’t be as strong as great service or face to face contact, but they can easily point CN out to colleagues and it’s easier than describing less tangible things (like your commitment to service) when they talk to others about Company Name.

The new client

The needs of a new client centre around seeing instantly “what’s in it for me” (WIIFM) in their present situation. For example, the current home page shows products and services in words but does not put the visitor into the picture by engaging them on an emotional level. Once this happens, they need an obvious path to the appropriate content.

The opening two sentences and most important text

Do you need:

- IT support
- business software,
- hardware,
- peripherals,
- networking service,
- maintenance, or just
- simple sound advice?

The above is presented on the current site as one very long sentence over two lines. It is easier to grasp quickly if presented as a bullet pointed list. High level remarks have been given in the beginning of the Home Page section of this report. The following comments address graphics and style.

The second line is the most important sentence on the homepage: *“We provide one-stop IT support that is tailored to your business needs.”* This line beautifully addresses “what’s in it for me” (WIIFM) because it allows a small business to run like a large business in these ways:

The SME (small-medium enterprise) can have:

- an IT department without the IT department spend
- expert and timely advice on selection of software/hardware
- hardware and software in working order and up-to-date
- immediate remote support
- automatic backup of data
- data protection
- a scalable system as the business grows

The second most important text

The next most important sentence is *“Contact us for a free no obligation review of your IT needs.”*

There is no special graphical treatment of this important text. Visually, the eye is drawn away from this sentence and more to the eight-nine boxes below that contain clip art and text. This call to action merits prominent placement on the home page.

Specialists in providing business solutions for:

The specially-treated boxed text is large but not as important as the two phrases discussed above. Why does it stand out more and compete with the phrases above and boxes below?

A note on the clip art icons. These are faceless images of people or hardware that typically exist in the public domain. Real people might not identify with the icon category and scenario they each represent. While they add visual stimulation, they also may change the subject or compete for attention. User testing is advisable with this treatment. How do your users respond?

The boxes on the home page

First box or link. Upper left corner.

Business applications:

- cashbook,
- general ledger,
- debtors,
- creditors,
- inventory control,
- order entry,
- job costs,
- budgeting and forecasting software.

This is one of the things that Company Name can do to help the small business. It's a long list as presented in paragraph format. To sum it up, it means software in the area of financial control or accounting. Progressive disclosure of detail is an option here.

Second box on the left. Payroll management: payroll and time and attendance systems. That's perfectly clear. It works well and is simple, short and easy to scan.

Third box. Left side.

Computer hardware:

- servers,
- desktops,
- laptops,
- monitors,
- display screens,
- projectors,
- printers,
- routers,
- modems etc

These could be grouped more logically. This is another area that might benefit from a summary or progressive disclosure of detail. Most viewers know what "hardware" means.

Fourth box on the left.

IT support, put it all together:

IT support:

- networking,
- internet connections,
- cabling,
- online backup,

- web hosting,
- deskbank,
- Microsoft office productivity tools.

Long lists need to be bullet pointed or summarised as is done already with “IT support that puts it all together”. It may not be obvious exactly what support is offered (because of the service range) so, in this case, a list is also recommended.

The phrase “put it all together” is a great summary of this section. It works well after reading the list but is not a substitute.

Fifth box at the top right hand side.

Consultancy services:

- training,
- implementation and
- advice to assist you in gaining productivity through your systems.

“Training” and “productivity gains through my systems” are specific but the rest sounds like jargon because there are no specific outcomes. The value of this service could be more strongly communicated.

Sixth box, second down on the right.

Industry-specific solutions:

- finance industry,
- funeral directors.

This is specific and clear. Is this list up to date or are other industries included? The list may cause potential clients assume Company Name only covers people in these two industries. This is possibly not true, so it needs to feel more open-ended.

Seventh box, third down on the right.

Software integration:

- e-commerce
- integration with specialist software (Point-of-Sale, Job Cost, Freight Management, etc.).

The “software integration” phrase might be confusing if the small business user does not know what that is and why it is important. How or why is this different than “IT support, put it all together”? The detail gives a hint but more clarity is recommended. Should these two topics be grouped together in order to illustrate the difference? Ask the user.

Eighth box, last on right.

Business software and marketing planning software

“Take the stress out of Marketing with this fantastic, easy to use business software.”

I hear jargon from the phrase above. It might imply that Company Name either wrote, sells, trains or services this software. I can’t tell. When I click on it, I see that Company Name seems to be a vendor for out-of-the-box software. Why did they choose it? What makes this software worth Company Name’s commitment?

When I read the paragraph on the Products page where I am taken when I click, I see the software is called Business Plan Pro and Marketing Plan Pro and I get some background. “Business software” is vague and could mean anything. Exactly what could this software do (for me)? How hard do I have to work to find out? (Note: Dec ‘11 – Plan Pro site is down for maintenance)

Ninth box at the bottom centre.

Microsoft small business specialist.

What does this mean? What qualifies Company Name? Is it a commendation given by

Microsoft to CN or is it that CN wants people to know that they specialize in Microsoft products and small businesses. I am not sure. I'd like to click the box to find out. It looks like the other clickable boxes but it doesn't act that way. There does not seem to be any detail anywhere on this site except in the biographies of two staff members. This is not where I expect to look and the connection is unlikely to be made by site users.

About Us page

The second navigational button across the top of the page menu and below the header is About Us. At first glance, I notice the font. "The company was established in the early 1990's..." This is a different font than has been established on the homepage. It is lighter weight and readable but could be easier to scan. User-testing would verify this.

The font used in the page title 'About Us' is the same size and level of importance as the two location names (Wellington, Auckland) on this page. The impact is that 'About Us' is not very obvious as the page title. If I landed on this page from another page or site, it could be unclear where I am. This problem is compounded when I meet it again on every page of this site.

When looking at the first paragraph in the context of the entire page I note it tells about the entire organisation. The rest of the page talks about individuals. For this reason, I might consider treating this paragraph different graphically and giving it the subtitle "About Company Name" or something similar.

The group photo

My attention immediately goes to a small picture of eight people. When I click on the photo, it does not enlarge. I would prefer to actually see these faces larger so I can get a visual impression of this company's staff. I prefer also to see names identifying each person. Individual photos would be easier to maintain. A group photo, if framed as "a moment in time" can convey camaraderie and teamwork and need not be totally up to date. It illustrates a bit of the culture of the organisation.

Staff profiles

It's useful that the principal staff have details on their backgrounds below the group photo. However, I have no way of putting a face to a name since the group photo does not have labels. Are other staff members profiled? It would be beneficial for me to actually see the eyes of each of the staff members in their photograph since the brain establishes an emotional connection with this level of facial recognition. This is part of establishing trust.

Company background

As mentioned above, this area of the page is not labelled at all but sits under the "About Us" title and to the right of the staff photo. Below the picture and text, we see "THE PRINCIPAL STAFF WITHIN THE COMPANY ARE:" The effect is that the 'company background' area separates the 'group photo' from the 'staff profiles'. It might be more logical to begin with the labelled company profile and then move into talking about the group and individuals who make up the organisation.

I see from the first sentence that the company has three branches. (Is this currently true? What about remote work? Why are Wellington and Auckland the only locations listed in the main content below and on the contact page?) In the second sentence in the same paragraph, the topic changes to what the company does. In the last sentence, I read that CN was established in the 1990's with the current owners acquiring the business in late 1998. A company that has been around for this length of time suggests credibility. Could you say a bit more? I'm looking for a brief but interesting story.

The call to action on the Free Review of IT Needs

I click "Contact us for a free, no obligation review of your IT needs." I expect this link to show a description of the assessment I have just been invited to try that contains a link to immediately make an appointment. What I'm ready for at this point is the free review and what it contains.

Instead, the link goes to the Contact Us page and a map on how to get to the Company Name Wellington office. This seems abrupt and changes the topic away from the promised review. I may not even be ready to commit to a review at this point and feel pushed rather than invited.

When I see the map, if I am ready to make contact, my thoughts move to: could you come to me for the review or can we do this remotely? What is the advantage of going to your office?

The “Contact Us for a free...” link opens in the same window. This sets up a precedent for how links act on this site. More on the link pattern topic throughout this report.

Once I have seen the “About Us” page mentioning the three locations and noted that most of the staff members are in Wellington with two in Auckland. I wonder why. For accuracy, it's important to say that the main office is in Wellington and that there's a service office in Auckland. What happened to Palmerston North?

If I look at the “Contact Us” page, I see there is no street address in Auckland. Is this because we come to you? What about servicing clients in other locations? Do you travel? When? What about working remotely? Are you really available to me? What if I am in another country?

Bottom of page

At the bottom of the About Us and Contact Us pages, I see the following six links:

IT Support emPOWER Business Accounting Software Business IT Support for Laptops
Business Software Auckland
IT Support Wellington
Computer Repairs Johnsonville

I wonder why they are laid out as they are. If there is a reason, I don't understand the significance because there are no hints about it. On some pages, only the top line is offered.

The words are in a small font at the bottom of the page and are seen only if the user scrolls down. These are important links. They are not critical to the About Us page, but it seems they are an integral part of the business since they appear often throughout the site. The layout is inconsistent. Is their location on the page important to the client? Why are they treated differently than any other link? Why are all of these not offered on every page on this site? I feel confused about what this company does. What am I not getting? I do not feel drawn to click on these links more than once.

When I click on the links, I am led to pages I have already seen on this site (two of the links go to the same page). If these links are as important to me (as a client) as their titles imply, why am I not rewarded with valuable content when I follow them? I would rather be taken to a specific section or paragraph on the topic I have been promised. This is what happens with the home page boxes.

If I am knowledgeable about Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), I realise that the links are there to help the ranking of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). There is business justification for their presence but no reason why they can't also deliver on the topic by pointing toward relevant content.

Products page

PRODUCT SUPPORT AND COMPUTER REPAIRS AND SUPPORT

The page title actually reads “Product Support and Computer Repairs and Support” so the user is unsure whether they are on the “products” or “support” page. The title needs to be the same as the corresponding menu item that was just clicked at the top of the page.

Below the title is a sub-paragraph saying “Company Name is a preferred agent for the following Business Software Products. These products will enhance your business and day to day operations and give you the confidence that your processes and systems are in a very sound state.”

It would be good to consider saying “Company Name is the preferred agent for the following business software products” and stop there. The rest of this paragraph sounds like a sales pitch that takes the focus away from the business and services you want readers to pay attention to. There is a risk users may become defensive with a sales pitch which could cause them to stop listening. If it is important and there is a way of saying what you want in plain English and shorter, best practice indicates choosing that method.

What is missing for me as a curious potential client is why CN is a “preferred agent” for these software companies. Even more interesting is why CN has chosen these particular software products. Have they been assessed against others and found superior? Why has CN selected each one? I expect to be told when I read the details on each software package below. The hidden question is can I trust CN to select the best software solution on behalf of my business?

Note there are comments included about the vendor websites CN links to. These links are part of the CN user experience and therefore are relevant to this report.

After reading about several software packages on this page, it becomes apparent that many are New Zealand based. Is this a CN criteria? It might be a selling point both from the ‘buy local’ aspect as well as the ‘support is available locally, quickly and personally’. It’s not mentioned.

There are a number of options that address security. It would be helpful to see at a glance what the difference is as well as why I may need different kinds of protection.

Entry One: Accounting and business software packages

This sentence describes InterSoft Systems Ltd as being a New Zealand written accounting and business software package. In the single sentence paragraph, the modules are presented but not as a list:

- full accounting suite,
- job costing,
- fixed assets,
- SMS texting and
- document management modules

When I click on the link, I am taken to the [InterSoft Systems Ltd](#) company home page in a new window. I expected to see more information from CN on what these software modules are, why they were selected and how each might help my business.

These modules are software written by InterSoft Systems Ltd yet I am taken to a page that says “Software Solutions for Loan and Deposit Management, Accounting and Funeral Directors.” Because of the words on the CN link, I am expecting accounting and business software. Does this relate to me? I see a button that says “Lending and Investment software.” I’m confused. The subject has changed.

Even when redirected to another site, I expect the page I land on to give me the promised

information about “full accounting suite, job costing, fixed assets, SMS texting and document management modules” that I was promised. Instead, I am left to guess on this new site where to find the software I was interested in.

The new window that has been opened establishes that there is a separate company, Intersoft Systems, behind this software. The linking rules established on the Home page of the Company Name website have been changed now to open a new window. I am confused.

What is the connection between InterSoft and Company Name? The only hint was in Mike Johnson’s biography. I am primarily interested in what the software does and how it might help serve my business needs.

Entry Two: General accounting software

This paragraph starts with a long sentence “emPOWER Windows based General Accounting Software which includes a full accounting suite, Cash Book, General Ledger and Advanced Accounts Payable/Receivable etc. More info about emPOWER business accounting software.”

The word emPOWER is actually introducing a list:

Windows-based general accounting software which includes a

- full accounting suite,
- Cash Book,
- General Ledger and
- Advanced Accounts Payable/Receivable

“Accounting and business software packages” from Entry One and “General accounting software” with “full accounting suite” sound similar. The bullet pointed list establishes a point of difference.

Why is there two empower links to the same page in the same paragraph? When I click either emPOWER link, I see a fully populated page on the CN site called “emPOWER - Business Accounting Software” that opens in the same window. I did not expect that because the linking rules in Entry One were just changed to open a new window for Intersoft.

emPOWER - Business Accounting Software page

This page on the CN site looks so similar to the Products page that I barely notice the difference. However, I begin to see why CN has chosen these particular software products as spelled out by “combines the power of Branch and Department processing and analysis for multi profit centre reporting with ease of use.” I now have further information on the Intersoft company and detailed explanations of each of the modules referred to in the above paragraph. I had some insight from Mike Johnson’s biography, but most users aren’t likely to make the connection.

Entry Three: Finance Industry software

I’m back on the products page of the CN site and have moved to the next section called Finance Industry software. It says “finPOWER Windows based Finance Software including Variable, Fixed Interest and Revolving Credit Loans with PPSR G2B Interface, Depositors, finCalc, Collections Manager and Accounting Ledgers. Communicates with emPOWER for a full accounting suite”

Again, we see a long sentence that is actually a list and a sub-list. The sentence uses two acronyms that are not defined: PPSR (Personal Property Securities Register) and G2B (government to business).

This section also seems to use capitalisation randomly and there is sporadic use of full stops at the end of each paragraph down the entire page. Note continued use of clip art on the site.

When I press the finPOWER link in the Finance Industry software paragraph, I am taken to a specific page on the emPOWER site which opens in a separate window. This page also contains industry jargon, but if you've navigated to this place you are likely to know what the terms mean. Each bullet point is a link to more detailed information. This is satisfying and informative.

Entry Four: Funeral directors software

“fdPOWER Windows based Software for the Funeral Directors Industry with EDI Interface to the NZ BDM Office for On-line Death Notification Service. Links with emPOWER for a full accounting suite.” This lead sentence could benefit from front-loading its content for the audience.

I see the acronym NZ BDM Office and can guess it is births, deaths and marriages, but acronyms need to be defined. “EDI” interface is not defined. Again, the fdPOWER link takes me to an InterSoft Systems Ltd page in a new window. This page is simple, informative and has many useful links. I change windows to return to the Company Name site.

Entry Five: Payroll software

Existing text: “IMS (Information Management Services) Ltd New Zealand based Windows Payroll Package supporting Time Clock Import, IRD Form compliance, Bank and General Ledger export. It is KiwiSaver compliant and suitable for both small and large organisations. Links with emPOWER General Ledger for full accounting integration. Preferred payroll suppliers of the Employers' & Manufacturers' Association.”

Front-loaded text version: IMS windows payroll package has time clock import, IRD form and Kiwisaver compliance, bank and general ledger export (e.g. emPOWER). This New Zealand company IMS (Information Management Services) Ltd is a preferred payroll supplier of the Employers' & Manufacturers' Association.” The IMS payroll package suits the needs of both small and large organisations.

IMS Payroll Partner is a different company from emPOWER, but in the second to last sentence before on the Company Name site says it “links with the emPOWER general ledger for full accounting integration”. The last sentence says it's the “preferred payroll suppliers of the Employers & Manufactures Association.” Both of these sentences are important information to me. By the time I finish reading the five lines of the paragraph, this information on credibility is unlikely to register. Front-loading solves this problem.

I click on the “IMS...” link and get a new window and a totally different company website than I have seen thus far. It is unexpected. This site seems to be a home page, but it's not clear unless one looks at the URL (universal resource locator) at the top of the browser. Their menu buttons recede into the background.

The site is www.payrollpartner.co.nz. I need to notice that IMS seems to be the developer of Payroll Partner. I would like to know why Company Name selected this software i.e. pros and cons. Please make this easier for me by spelling it out when the software is initially presented.

Entry Six: Time clock attendance software

“Lauranka New Zealand Ltd Lauranka Time Clock Computerised Attendance System and associated hardware packages enables a leading edge Time & Attendance solution at an affordable price. Links to IMS Payroll (and others) for full time & attendance functionality.”

This text is very wordy. This confuses me and tries my patience. Please front-load this text and don't repeat phrases in the same paragraph. At the end of the last sentence, it says "Links to IMS payroll (and others) for full-time attendance functionality." That's important, yet is placed at the paragraph end.

When I click on the [Lauranka](#) link, a new window opens into another website I have never seen. I am now trained to expect this from a link that is a company name. As above, I need to research this company and get the Company Name view of the software. This could be made easier for the user.

The fact that the software interfaces with other software packages seems to me to be a strong selling point for Company Name, so could be placed in a stronger position within the content. As a potential client, it is inviting to discover I can still use CN's candidate with my legacy system. My employees are used to it and it works fine for us. Also, I don't have to use the entire suite so I can save money. These words have a testimonial sound to them and work well.

Entry Seven: Business planning and marketing plan software

Existing text: "[Business Plan Pro and Marketing Plan Pro United States](#) developed Business Planning Tools are easy-to-use, full featured planners for those who want to spend less time developing a plan and more time growing their business. No other software can match Palo Alto for navigational ease, customisability and superb integration. Business Plan Pro and Marketing Plan Pro are market leaders in the field of business planning tools with a multitude of examples, wizards and easy to follow help."

When I click on the Plan Pro link, it goes to a simply presented "Bizplan" page unlike any I have seen so far on the CN site. (Note: Dec '11 – Plan Pro site is down for maintenance) From experience, I have been led to expect a link such as this will take me to the home page of the developers of this software. Not in this case. Once I scroll down the page, I see that it's brought to you by "Company Name Business Solutions Ltd", but it says "copyright Bizplan 2001 to 2007". I know it is US software, but yet it gives Company Name contact details and an email address for Bizplan. I am confused.

What is "Bizplan" and who is behind it and why isn't this clear? I discover it is Palo Alto Software when I "click here for details" and stumble on FAQ and am taken to the appropriate product page of that company. This has been a very circuitous route. Who is Palo Alto Software in relation to CN?

In the Business Plan Pro section at the top of the simply presented page I am ready to see detail about what this package contains but instead the same sales pitch is repeated. When I hit the link "click here for details" I am taken to a product page for further detail. I would have preferred to see this in one step and a brief overview of both products on the same page.

"Click here for details" would have been a more accurate link had it said "Details of Business Plan Pro" and the second link "Details of Marketing Plan Pro."

At the "Order Now" point of the product page, I am asked for my name and email address. Why? This information requested at this point seems out of place and slightly invasive.

I enter into the navigational process for purchasing this software in order to look at the form. It was pretty straightforward until I got to the part where I was asked for my CREDIT CARD DETAILS ON A PAGE THAT WAS NOT SECURE (i.e. not "https://"). This was a shock to find on a business solution website.

The form used to order this product was easy to understand but could benefit by using a more recent model for online sales. This means there would be more information on one page, no repeated requests and if the required fields would be more obvious.

Entry Eight: COMPUTERS, ASSOCIATED HARDWARE, PRINTERS AND EVERYTHING ELSE YOU NEED FOR COMPUTER REPAIRS AND SUPPORT

Current text: "Any make or model you require for servers, desktops, laptops, printers, routers, network connectivity, internet connectivity, data projectors, display screens and/or monitors. We provide all manner of computer repairs and support as well as:

Arche Technologies NZ Ltd A New Zealand owned and operated computer hardware and software supplier. They supply the full range of accessories through to motherboards, printers, computers, networking hardware and software."

This category at the highest level seems to be about hardware. I am offered the detail before an overview, so I have to figure this out. It would work well to begin the overview with a picture or mental model of all that is encompassed in this category.

When I read after Arche "A NZ owned and operated computer hardware and software supplier" I am now unsure if it's hardware and software. I find no other reference to Arche supplying software. I appreciate that Company Name is open about who their supplier is and that they are local in NZ.

The second paragraph beginning with "Arche..." isn't separated by a blank line or indented which would make it easier to separate the part of the paragraph about Company Name being supplied locally by Arche. I click on the link and it opens a new window to the Arche homepage. If I read between the lines, I see it is about hardware primarily. The Arche site does give some "contact details" at the bottom of the page so I can see the location.

On the Arche page, I see both "Contact Details" and "Contact Us" buttons that each do something different. There should be only one "Contact" page. This new page presents a form so the company can contact me. There is no promised time frame for contact. This does not inspire trust since form monitors are not always quick to respond. If I am contacted promptly (within 24 hours consistently), my opinion could change.

Entry Nine: SECURITY, SPAM AND ANTIVIRUS SOLUTIONS

This section has three paragraphs and products: SpamTitan, Mako Networks, and Trend Micro™. All three of these sections would benefit from front loading the essence of the message in the first few words. The message is the answer to the question: WIIFM? There is also detail overload at this point in the product introduction. What problem will it solve for me?

Entry Nine A: SpamTitan

Paragraph currently on the CN site: "The Antispam Solution for your Business provides the most comprehensive solution to email threats on the market today. Our spam-blocker (antispam software) allows you to create an email appliance, real or virtual server for your gateway offering protection from Viruses, Spam, Malware, Phishing and unwanted content. The solution uses best of breed technologies to provide an easily installed, easily managed and highly secure solution for your email. Block spam effectively!"

Suggestion: This information is too dense for one paragraph. WIIFM? I can block spam effectively. What is it? Software. How does it work? Creates an easily managed email appliance that's highly secure. That is enough for an introduction.

This link opens a new window with a website talking about both SpamTitan and WebTitan. I am expecting only SpamTitan. This home page gives adequate information regarding what's on offer and the navigation is obvious. Note: recently, I

have seen ads everywhere on the internet for WebTitan but how does it relate to me?

There is a “contact us” button for each product and this page offers a form. This is not reassuring since there is no time frame for response promised on the form.

Further down the page I see an address in Galway, Ireland and some email addresses. Then, I notice an international phone number (+1 201 984-3271) that looks like a US number. It doesn't make sense. Of course, Company Name has no responsibility for this site, only for how they introduce it to their customers.

Entry Nine B: Mako Networks

Paragraph currently on the CN site: “The Mako system brings optimal performance and comprehensive security and control to your broadband internet connection in one simple system. Combining hardware and software as well as a managed service, the Mako system provides features and functionality usually found in separate traditional internet security devices. The Mako system ensures you have the level of control and the information you need to proactively manage your broadband connection. That can mean getting the best from your communications, web, email and VoIP and making sure your business is protected from the dangers of internet connection.”

This is a long, dense paragraph. It would benefit from shorter bits of introductory information. WIIFM, what is it, how is it done and by whom? Then, progress to details including why this is my best choice.

I follow the link to Mako networks (yet another company) with a large home page image (i.e. splash page), but not much else. I must choose one of three sections labelled business, partners, PCI DSS (what is it?) or the customer log in. I choose business. I see a detailed left hand menu telling me what this topic is about. I would have preferred enough content on the home page to have made a purposeful choice initially.

Entry Nine C: Trend Micro™

Paragraph currently on the CN site: “Mid-sized businesses face the same challenges from Internet threats as large enterprises. Yet their small IT staffs and budgets won't support the capital cost or administrative overhead of enterprise security solutions. With enterprise-class security from Trend Micro™, medium businesses can meet these challenges without breaking the budget, and grow.”

Last, we go to Trend Micro where we are directed to the home page of another website in a separate window. I see this product works with home and home office, small business, medium business, enterprise, and service providers. I'm not exactly sure if this is the right destination since Company Name introduced this product as one for mid-sized businesses.

When I choose product comparison, the chart compares Antivirus+, Internet Security and Maximum Security products rather than what their product will do for each business size. I would have preferred CN to prepare me for this product by giving me more detail about why it could be of value to me. Back to the Company Name site and the last item on this page.

SEE OUR FULL RANGE OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

This title/link takes us to the next CN page “Services” and it's actually called ‘services’ so there is no ambiguity unlike the Products page title. This link does not open a separate window. When should I expect a new window? I'm starting to assume it's when the link is to a company external to CN.

General comments about the Products page

The last bit at the bottom of this of this page is security, spam and antivirus solutions. Because it does not say “software” I’m not sure if this is still the product page.

At the foot of this page, it has the same three small text options (*IT support | EmPOWER business accounting software | Business IT support for laptops*), but it doesn't have the additional options I saw on the About Us page (*Business software Auckland | IT Support Wellington | Computer Repairs Johnsonville, Wellington*) offering regional services.

I wonder why it was put on the About Us and Services page and not on the Products page where I would expect to find all options or on all pages consistently?

The title of this page is not actually “products,” but “products supporting computer repairs and support.” That's a bit confusing. The title of a page should reflect exactly what the menu label says.

As mentioned earlier, I'm not clear where I am on the site because the current page is not obvious nor are there breadcrumbs. Breadcrumbs, while not essential, are a common treatment for indicating the current location and are instantly understood by a majority of users.

The broad range of products on this page makes me think that everything Company Name sells is thrown into the ‘products’ category. How do they relate to each other and how /why could Company Name group them logically? Why has CN chosen them? What is the purpose of each? I would appreciate CN's viewpoint.

It's important for me to have faith in Company Name's ability to select good software that works together. Will it work with my existing software? This topic is treated on the services page in the next menu item, but it causes me some anxiety here on the products page now.

emPOWER - Business Accounting Software page

This page is hard to find because it has no menu link to it. It can only be navigated to from GENERAL ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE on the PRODUCTS (or “PRODUCT SUPPORT AND COMPUTER REPAIRS AND SUPPORT”) page or with this link: “More info about emPOWER business accounting software” in a small font near the footer on most pages. You would need to know what this phrase implies in order to choose it. It is not found either in the top level menu on the Home page nor as a dropdown submenu underneath.

- The emPOWER page looks very similar to the products page at first glance. The exception is the opening four paragraphs. The first tells me the product is fully-featured.
- The second tells emPOWER is a series of mid range software modules for the serious Business User in an e-commerce environment. It sounds powerful. I’m interested.
- The third paragraph combines the power of Branch and Department processing and analysis for multi profit centre reporting with ease of use. Then, a dense amount of information takes my mind off the product.
- The fourth paragraph tells me Company Name is a preferred agent for Intersoft’s emPOWER.

I need a bit more context than ‘business accounting software’ because this entire page is devoted to it. The third paragraph is mainly a sales pitch about EmPOWER and needs to be compressed, In the fourth paragraph, I see Company Name is the preferred agent for inter-soft EmPOWER. This is important.

Accounting and business software packages

Current text: “InterSoft Systems Ltd A New Zealand written Accounting and Business Software package which includes a full accounting suite, job costing, fixed assets, SMS texting and document management modules”

Accounting and business software packages is the first subtitle and the words are very similar to the previous Products page contributing to navigational confusion. There is a link to InterSoft Systems Ltd that opens up a new window to their homepage. Please stay on topic and relate this to me. Why are Intersoft’s products valued enough by Company Name to devote a whole page of the site to them? This is CN’s POWER page.

General Accounting Software

Current text: “emPOWER Windows based General Accounting Software which includes a full accounting suite, Cash Book, General Ledger and Advanced Accounts Payable/Receivable etc.”

This sentence is a short list ending with ‘etc.’ Following this, there are four entries that begin with a hyphen. This means they’re subtopics of the general accounting software, but they are not indented so the graphic cues are confusing.

The emPOWER link in this instance goes to InterSoft’s product overview page for emPOWER and the” range of fully featured windows based General Accounting software.” Each of the four subtopics starts with a quote.

- Cash Book

Current text: “‘Cash flow is the life blood of business’ If you ask any owner of a small business what takes up most of their spare time, chances are they will reply ‘writing up my Cashbook, doing GST Returns, and Reconciling the Bank Account.’
[More Info](#)”

This excellent text immediately addresses WIIFM and that's what I want to know. As a business person, I'm already aware cash flow is the life blood of business.

Unexpectedly, the "more info" link opens up the InterSoft Cash Book page in the CN window, so the navigation rules have changed.

- **General ledger**

Current text: "If Cashflow is the life blood of a business, Profit is its heart.' You are in business to make a profit, for without profit you cannot offer yourself, nor your staff any security. The General Ledger is a very comprehensive, but easy to use application, providing powerful reporting to assist you in making the right decisions for your company.
More Info"

This text doesn't tell me WIIFM. Although I may know what general ledger does, why does using this software equal profit in this sentence?

Again, the "more info" link opens up the InterSoft General Ledger page in the CN window. I was expecting a vender's software to open up in a new window.

- **Accounting (Accounts Receivable, Payable and Inventory)**

Current text: "At the heart of any great software system must be solid accounting principles and structures.'
The emPOWER Base Accounting module is a fully integrated Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable and Stock Control Module that provides the essential foundations for the entire emPOWER distribution suite. It is designed with adherence to solid accounting concepts and can be enhanced by the addition of a number of optional Advanced versions and Add-Ons. It is one of a new generation of products that gives every Business the POWER to Perform.
More Info"

Buried in this wordy paragraph/list it says 'this module provides the essential foundations for the entire emPOWER distribution suite and can be enhanced by the addition of a number of optional advanced versions and add-ons.' I am proud to elicit some facts from within the jargon. As a foundation module, it seems I do need it. What exactly is meant by 'new generation'?

The "more info" link opens up the InterSoft Accounting page in the CN window. Because this is the third occurrence, I am now sure the navigation rules have changed.

- **Jobs**

Current text: "Businesses operating in service industries such as Electricians, Plumbers, Builders, Electronic Servicing and Automotive servicing, along with professional consultants, all require tight controls over Job profitability.'
More Info"

There is not enough information in this sentence to get an accurate overview of this module. I would like to know the scope of activities it covers and how much control is available over viewing and entering data.

Optional Features

"Advanced Accounts Receivable, Advanced Accounts Payable, Advanced Inventory Control, Branches / Multi Location, Direct Debits, Purchase Orders, Sales Orders, Special Pricing, Multi User, SQL Server.
More Info"

This description is a list but it does offer a good idea of these add-ons. The title does not start with a hyphen so I can't be completely certain it is relating to the General Accounting software only or all emPOWER software. Graphic clues should clarify this point.

Back to Products Page

This assumes the user knows they are on the emPOWER page which is navigable only from the Products page or the bottom of some (but not all) other pages. I now return to my original investigation of the CN site after my side trip to an emPOWER page.

Contact us for a free, no obligation review of your IT needs

This call to action seems old and stale. It is important and could benefit from a fresh approach on this page because it covers product from one major vendor only.

Will Company Name be pushing this software at me because it knows a lot about the product? Why this choice? We have gotten down to a detailed level and I am ready to engage directly with CN on this topic.

The fonts used for the last two items are each different and seem random. This diminishes their impact.

As mentioned on the Product page review, at the bottom of this emPOWER page we see the three small text options offering regional services (*IT support | EmPOWER business accounting software | Business IT support for laptops*), along with the additional options (*Business software Auckland | IT Support Wellington | Computer Repairs Johnsonville, Wellington*).

I wonder why the treatment is different on this page? It is enough to call my attention to this section. I prefer all pages to be treated consistently so I always know these links are present in this location. Don't make me think,

Services page

This page is entitled “services”, which matches the corresponding menu item. Here’s the current text:

“Company Name provides assistance to analyse your requirements and make recommendations. From those recommendations we can provide, install and support your software / hardware / networking / backup and recovery. We supply a variety of operating system software and hardware from a number of suppliers, including Arche, Acer, IBM, HP, Iomega and Seagate, to name but a few.”

The paragraph begins with a forgettable sentence then offers a long list itemising services Company Name provides, installs, supports, and what Company Name it works on and who some of its suppliers are. I forget the beginning by the end of this paragraph.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, if you want to tell me what your services are, a bullet pointed list is faster and easier to grasp. I also benefit from logical groupings in the list. This paragraph needs to be front-loaded with words that will grab my attention.

Company Name does service length agreements as well as one-off services. Neither of these are mentioned on this page so I am not getting a full story. If they were, I’d want to know what the pros and cons are of each type of agreement. I’d be imagining myself using one of the services. My mind could be focussed on which to choose.

Again, we see clipart. More accurately, the clipart is no longer seen. As an enhancement, my attention could be captured here with a photograph or some graphic I can relate to around my IT service needs or a relevant pull quote.

You get expert advice when Company Name help (not helps) with your computer solutions

This sub-heading contains bad grammar. The single-sentence paragraph underneath says “Our team of experienced professional computer consultants has a commitment to providing the fastest and most effective computer support for your company. “ No information here. It reads like sales talk even though CN delivers exactly what it says.

This section is a wasted opportunity since it is actually what CN provides and does well. At this point, I am ready to hear something fresh next like brief stories (testimonials) that feature CN’s great service and support the claim.

Your problems go away when Company Name tackles your computer challenges

The next sub-title sits above a two-sentence paragraph that says “Company Name focuses on making problems disappear forever. This allows you to concentrate on your business and improve the productivity of your team.” In this context, it sounds like sales jargon, especially “disappear forever”. Does this mean CN suggests long-term solutions for its clients? Is this a guarantee? I’d imagine myself as a CN client more easily if I’d studied a range of services at the top of this page and one of them caught my eye.

The benefits to you when choosing Company Name

This section offers four bullet points. Each one starts with “you” or “your business”. A user may not read beyond that. If the content were front-loaded, I would engage more fully. For example:

Front-loaded:

- Business as usual is assured with prompt, professional and guaranteed service
- Single point of contact for all IT requirements including advice
- Our full team of experienced staff is just a phone call away
- Remote access allows some problems to be resolved on the spot
- Stay up to date and informed with regular contact initiated by Company Name

All of these points give the same information (fast service) but each has a specific viewpoint. One of them should appeal to each user looking at this list.

Company Name can help your business, starting today!

“We would love to meet with you and discuss how we can help to improve your business systems and processes. We can start with one or all of the following;”

The first sentence above is inviting (“We would love...”) but doesn’t say anything new and uses words found often on this site. The second sentence does offer something new (consider any or all of the four following bullet points) but uses incorrect punctuation (a semi-colon rather than a colon) which weakens the message slightly.

The bullet points are the heart of the introduction to Company Name’s service offering and thus very valuable. However, they are not front-loaded and are located at the bottom of a page that needs scrolling to see them. This message is important and belongs at the top of the page.

Before:

- A complementary one hour consultation session to discuss your business and how Full Circle can make instant improvements to your current situation.
- An IT Audit giving you complete visibility of all of the systems in your business, any issues with those systems and an action plan to sort out the problems.
- A computer support plan to proactively look after your business’ computer systems and staff with our full team of experts.
- Assurance that you will never be faced with the hardware guy blaming the network guy, who blames the software guy, who blames the hardware guy, and so on.

The computer support plan might be considered a product that Company Name sells rather than just a service. The fourth bullet point almost makes it a giveaway. A client could look at it as a product, a functional IT culture and a benefit of (especially the initial) days and weeks of working with Company Name. The influence is calming and eases any pain or confusion.

After:

- Free one hour consultation looks at instant IT improvements you can make.
- IT Audit includes an overview with complete visibility of all your systems, alerts on any issues, and a plan of action to resolve them.
- Ongoing computer update and maintenance programme uses our experts to proactively support your business as usual.
- Assurance that our team of experts consult together on your network, hardware and software setup before diagnosing and fixing your problems. Hear suggestions not blame with Full Circle’s one-stop IT service.

SEE OUR FULL RANGE OF PRODUCTS (in all caps) is a broken link

REMOTE SUPPORT wants me to open an executable file when I click this link

Danger warnings go off when I click “Remote Support” since I am invited to save an executable file called “fullcircle.exe.” Not every person who clicks this link would know not to download and run an executable file from a source they don’t know or trust.

Company Name, as experts, need to take responsibility for warning the user they will be asked to download an .exe file and what the purpose of this download is. The purpose is for allowing remote support, but, in irresponsible hands, this action might be a security compromise for a person who executes this file on their computer.

Hints & Tips page

This page has five useful hints and tips. It has not been added to in a while. This is acceptable in that the hints and tips have not gone out of date. The conversational style of writing is appealing to a novice and is educational and respectful because the user is given the reasons why each point benefits them.

In terms of being a content-rich page and a resource for clients who want to do their part in maintaining an efficient computer, it feels dead. The more alive Newsletter page is the area that has been added to periodically by Company Name, but nothing contained in the newsletters is mentioned here nor are any links provided to the newsletter articles. It is a wasted opportunity not to leverage on what CN is already providing elsewhere.

A few suggestions:

- Grouping the tips into relevant categories and showing only the title of the tip would lead users to topics that are current to them.
- It is not necessary to give the details of the Tips and Hints right after the title. An interested user will click on the title to get to the detail. This would keep the top of the page simple and allow for an overview of the range of tips. Detail could even be located on the lower part of the page and still provide speedy access to the user.
- Value could be added to this page by pointing out 'new' or 'updated' additions and possibly dating entries where a date is relevant. To leverage it further, a reference to new information could be posted on the home page of this site. This keeps the site current and alive. It is also possible to post new articles to RSS feeds as well as to other sites that are hungry for links to new or concisely presented content.
- The conversational style of writing is very effective here, but there is still opportunity to front-load important information, use lists and shorter paragraphs when appropriate and delete unnecessary words.
- Illustrations or graphs could enhance some of this material.

Taking care of your laptop page

There are two things that stand out about this page. The first is that the video starts playing upon opening the page and the speaker's voice is fairly loud. This could be embarrassing or disruptive in an open office situation. Give the control to the user for this video.

The second thing is that a user needs to stumble on this topic from the bottom of the Hints & Tips page in order to navigate to it. It could be a drop-down sub menu off the Hints and Tips page and be found from any location on the CN site.

The content of the video's voice-over is exactly the same as the text on the page. Value could be added by making them different. Perhaps the text could be a printable quick reference list or it could have a few additional points.

Use of the video media occurs only once on the Company Name site. The length of the video is fine at 3'38". The voice of the speaker is pleasant, but we see no team members or human faces. The visuals could more directly support the content of the text.

Showing more how-to information on this site in general using a video format would add value. One advantage is it may get more links to the site and establish your authority on the topics covered. The video content could be leveraged as well and written so it does not need updating. This suggestion would only be valid if your business plan supported this task.

Instruction by video works well on the web. Are there topics on this site that could benefit from this media? If so, research would need to be done to see if someone else has already covered a topic adequately before making an investment in video.

This page has five tips. After the user reads the tips the viewer is to undertake, the text says that the "number one tip is get a professional to do it for you. They're better at it than you, and they'll do it faster and more effectively..."

This seems to be a contradiction. Are there some tasks that are the responsibility of the laptop user to perform or do regularly? It seems reasonable that some of these tips qualify.

Free IT and laptop health check

This is an important offer for Company Name to convey, but it's hidden at the bottom of the page where one would have to scroll to it. What is the average price or per hour charge for cleaning the laptop and performing other tasks if necessary? Of course the answer depends on what is wrong, but it prepares potential clients for some costs.

There is no mention here of syncing information on your laptop with an external hard drive or desktop unit. This topic is relevant to most users and might benefit from coverage here. Business laptop users have some obligation to handle regular syncing of their content and clarity on this task is a valuable topic.

The paragraphs on this page (and only on this page) are justified on both sides. This makes the spacing of the words erratic and difficult to read. Left justify it to match the rest of the site.

See our full range of services

We return to the bottom of the Hints and Tips page where we see the phrase "see our full range of services". When I click on that link, I return to the high level Services page on the Company Name site. I would be less confused if the link said something like "See our Services page for a full range." That way, I would expect to be taken there.

Testimonials page

“At Company Name, we value client feedback. Here are just a few testimonials that we've received from our clients.”

Below this are two excellent testimonials in an italicized font. They are not easy to read. More space between the lines would be helpful.

- In the first testimonial, Deeco Services the website URL is given, so some information about this company is available. However, the content of the testimonial is already conveyed clearly and in some detail so the URL gives added validation to the words.
- The second testimonial for the Armed Forces Canteen Council is also written well and in some detail. There is not as much contact detail here, but that would be logical for the armed forces. As a potential Company Name client, I may be able to verify this testimonial if I needed to by requesting contact details from CN.

I would like to see more than two testimonials. They need not be dated, but it might be beneficial to add subtitles so I can clearly see what topic(s) a particular testimonial addresses. I will be drawn to the one most relevant to my current needs.

Testimonials have two great advantages. First, they can convey a lot of information in a few words and are easily assimilated. Second, they assist the brain to chunk information effectively so better understanding results.

Newsletter page

Free newsletter (from top of the page left) and **Enrolment** (top of page right)

“Sign up for our Free Newsletter and receive regular ideas, tips and latest products and services Company Name offers.” This is the text across top of the entire page underneath “Free Newsletter.”

Free Newsletter (on the left) has three bullet points that make their point well:

- Latest products and services for efficient and seamless business solutions.
- Ideas and examples for stunning results for your Business.
- Tips for getting the best bang for your buck from your IT investments.

Opposite the bullet points on the right hand side we see “It’s free to join, just fill in your e-mail address below. “ If I fill in my email address and hit send, I am taken to another page that repeats my email address and asks if I would like HTML or text format. After this, I see that both my first and last names are required in order to subscribe. Why? You have my email. How does this relate to the privacy policy? This is not explained satisfactorily in the newsletter privacy policy.

This page is where I see safe unsubscribe is what CN uses. I assume I will get this option each time I receive a newsletter. It seems quite standard.

“Privacy Statement: We respect your privacy - your name and email address will be kept strictly private and will never be sold.” Is the text across the entire width of the page below these two sections and above the Newsletter content list.

Previous Newsletters

September 2011 WebTitan Internet Filtering » Read Newsletter
July 2011 Remote Monitoting of your system (yes, a misspelled word) » Read Newsletter
May 2011 Tips for selecting the best software and systems for your business » Read Article - Choosing SME Business Software
March 2011 Many clients have experienced the benefit of our remote support » Read Newsletter

There are two newsletters each for years 2009 and 2010. For 2011, there are four.

March 2011 begins with the “benefit of our remote support” in March. I’d like to hear a little bit more on this even if just a teaser. What kind of benefits? A teaser will do.

The Company Name Gift Shop

This item appears in almost all of the newsletters. It is much more than a gift shop. It is a chance to have a donation made to one of three charities or to buy three other business-gift appropriate items through the Company Name website. What are the benefits to doing this for the user?

May 2011: "Tips for selecting the best software and systems for your business. Choosing SME Business Software." There is enough detail here to be drawn in as long as the acronym SME is universally understood among CN clients.

July 2011: "Remote Monitoring of your system" (yes, a misspelled word) "Read Newsletter." Read newsletter is not detail. Links are widely appreciated by search engines when they are specific, e.g. "Remote Monitoring of your IT system"

September 2011: "WebTitan Internet Filtering. Read Newsletter." What does WebTitan filter, who needs it and why? Text with this information would make this link superb.

A satisfying, quick content overview of earlier newsletters allows me to read or download a topic that is not time-sensitive:

December 2010

Out Of Office messages are a handy feature....

» [Read Newsletter](#)

August 2010

Shortcuts to quickly move around the screen in Microsoft and Intersoft Applications

» [Read Newsletter](#)

December 2009

Hints and tips: Allow pictures to open automatically

» [Read Newsletter](#)

September 2009

Save time with automated time sheet entry for payroll

Do you need to protect your business data?

» [Read Newsletter](#)

December 2010: Topic - Out of office messages are a handy feature. Why? How does it compare to Microsoft Outlook's version (which I may already know)?

August 2010: Shortcuts to quickly move around the screen in Microsoft and Intersoft applications.

Everyone knows Microsoft, but who is InterSoft? Please qualify. I'd like to have a shortcut card or printout for both that I can have at my desk for as long as it takes to train me. (i.e. WIIFM?) Company Name could provide a quick reference list of the shortcuts. If I am an existing client or even plan not to become a client, I would still appreciate a list that sits uncluttered on my desk, teaches something and saves me time. This level of service and goodwill is what Company Name is about.

December 2009: Hints and tips that allow pictures to open automatically. Enough said.

In fact, I may or may not want pictures to open automatically. I prefer to be prompted in some circumstances. I'd like to know the advantages and disadvantages of this choice.

"emPOWER & finPOWER Training Courses for 2010" is not mentioned. This timely information that should be linked to from the CN site and not just buried in a newsletter.

September 2009: Save time with automated timesheet entry for payroll.
Do you need to protect your business data?

Is this two topics? Please make this clear. A third topic, password security, is not even mentioned.

General comments about the Newsletter page

The meat of this page is the list of topics contained in each newsletter. The reward is direct linking to each topic. The condition is that the viewer has to sign up for it in order to receive it.

A small but prominent box at the top right side of the page where the site visitor can enter an email address and hit subscribe should be enough. Fill the rest of the top with the list of topics. A small highlight, pull-quote or graphic is also acceptable.

As mentioned earlier, these topics can be leveraged by linking to them from the Hints & Tips page and vice versa.

Contact us page

The Contact Us top of page says "Contact us for free, no obligation review of your IT needs."

Wellington Office

That's good: free and no obligation. It's encouraging also in that it gives me the phone numbers and address of the Wellington office, plus a map.

It does not give me an e-mail address which is needed to send an e-mail and start communicating. Emails allow me to work to my own schedule so they are efficient and possibly preferred by me.

Auckland Office

Below this, I see details for the Auckland office. I see a phone, fax and PO Box. This makes me wonder why they don't have an address. Maybe it's a base from which Company Name service people are based. Who at Company Name works remotely? Where are they based? What is their cell phone number? Can I get service in Auckland if remote is not indicated? A word on these topics would be service friendly.

Contact Form below the Wellington office map

At the top of this unlabelled form, I am asked to give name and e-mail immediately as well as my phone number. I assume this is the message because the first 2 fields are bold and the phone field is not, but all 3 have yellow ground text boxes. The commonly understood practice is to put an asterisk by the fields that are required.

At the top of the form, I see the current New Zealand time and date. Very handy if you are in a different time zone as some of Company Name's clients are.

As a client or potential client, I realize I might not get a reply to your email if it's, say, after midnight. This is good in that it causes me not to expect an immediate reply. However, this is where I would like some assurance that someone will reply to me within 24 hours or some other time frame.

I think having an e-mail address and a form makes support and readiness seem impersonal. It puts distance between the client and Company Name. It's important to make sure the 24 hour response promise is met. That is to say, you are contacted by a human being.

Free review of your IT needs

As mentioned earlier, with this link, I would like details on what I will receive with this review.

Downloads page

The Downloads page is divided into two sections: “Company Name Forms and Guides” and “Company Name Remote Support.” There are five items under Forms and Guides. Remote Support is divided into two sections. One part is above the clipart image and the other section is below it. The contents of this page are centre-justified and not bullet-pointed and left-justified which is best practice for a list on a web page.

Forms and Guides

Under Forms and Guides, there are two guides, both PDF, but they are not labelled “PDF” nor do they have the byte size or number of pages that I expect from best practice on the web.

There is a link to an outdated fact sheet about the Financial Service Providers Register (FSPR). It is entitled The Financial Services Providers Register so I expected to go right to this register. In fact, there is a link on this page a Frequently Asked Questions page on the register. Conveniently, one can use the register from this URL but it does feel indirect.

Finally this section of the Downloads page has two forms which are labelled correctly as “Application for credit” and “Direct debit authority” but not labelled as the PDFs they actually are nor that also contain Terms and Conditions. The forms can be saved onto the client’s computer and be filled in by hand.

There is no objection to not being able to type directly into a PDF form since, if one has a long answer, the font shrinks to an unreadable size. It would not be appropriate to post a Word or RTF document because of the legal obligation that the Terms and Conditions not be changed.

Remote Support

The first line under Remote Support is “We use TeamViewer to remotely support our users.” Directly below that is a link “To download Quick Support Click Here.” I wonder if TeamViewer and Quick Support are the same since they have two different names? I feel the need to ring Company Name to ask but don’t see a phone number on this page.

When I do click on this link, I see I am being asked to download an executable file (fullcircle.exe) directly onto my computer and know this is not a safe and secure thing to do unless from a trusted source. I’d like some reassurance here.

Below this is some clipart. I am surprised that when I click the clipart, the same download of an executable file is available.

Below this is a link to “Intersoft Support Utility” with no further explanation about what this is. When I click this link, I get the following error:

“Not Found: The requested URL /download\ISSupport.exe was not found on this server. Apache/2.2.3 (CentOS) Server at www.fullcircle.co.nz Port 80”

Previously, a few months ago when I clicked this link, I got a 404 error.

Below this is an Adobe Reader graphic that takes me to the Adobe website download reader page. It takes me to the latest version of Adobe Acrobat reader, which is exactly what I want and expect.

I note I am confused again about why some links open in the same window and others in a separate window. Am I missing a signal? Is there a difference to me?

Conclusion

The purpose of the Company Name website is determined by the business goals. This requires a review by the directors and relevant persons. What has changed since the site was first developed? What is the same? What part can the website play?

Is there to be a mobile audience? Is there a need for social interaction or is this a buzzword in the market and not applicable for Company Name? If you start something, do you want to maintain it? Do you need to consider competition?

The users of this site must be profiled in order to create a value-driven navigable path to rate efforts against. The site is created to serve the users. Exactly what is it they want?

User testing has many flavours depending on the outcome you are looking for. It need not be invasive or even involve many current clients. Participants with a profile similar to that of your clients will also work well.

Feedback on concepts, information architecture, missing elements and treatment of content is benefitted greatly by having this information validated by the actual user. A staff member cannot respond naively nor look at content for the first time. Proof of concept with accuracy does save money and development time.

The way forward with website redesign is through planning, preparation and efficient workflow. This is the part of the iceberg that is underwater. Make sure you are right by testing for a positive user experience. Finally, develop the tip of the iceberg.