



Coro NY Usability Evaluation

November 3, 2009

Executive Summary

In late 2007 an expert review of the Coro NY site was performed based on commonly accepted usability heuristics (rules of thumb), the basis of which were developed by Jakob Nielsen with Rolf Molich in 1990 [Molich and Nielsen 1990; Nielsen and Molich 1990].

This re-examination of the Coro NY site focuses on:

- The 2007 review and what recommendations were implemented
- Compares remaining recommendations with the current site and its goals
- Re-reviews the site independently of the previous review.

Of the 22 specific recommendations made in the 2007 review 15 recommendations were implemented in part or in whole for an impressive 68% ratio. Statistically, 30% of usability recommendations are implemented immediately industry wide. An additional 30% are implemented in subsequent releases.

Highlights:

By refining the flow and design elements between pages it makes it easier for users to complete actions and Coro to meet the goals of the content.

- **External links and PDF's should open in a new window**
It is expected and preferable for the user to remain on the site unless they explicitly leave. Opening links and files in new windows achieves this goal.
- **Search Results change the content display**
It is unusual for the display to change by the context of how the user arrived at a particular place. Traversing the site via navigation and search should produce the same page.
- **Newsletter Navigation & Required fields**
When filling out forms only ask for the minimum information required and provide navigation back to the Coro site.
- **Video/fly-out compatibility**
Fly-out navigation and the technology used to display videos produce browser oddities where the fly-out, which is traditionally on top of the page, appears behind the video. This makes for an odd display and inaccessible navigation.

2007 Recommendation re-examination

Of the twenty-two specific recommendations made in the 2007 review fifteen recommendations were implemented in part of in whole and seven recommendations were not implemented for an impressive 68% ratio. Statistically, 30% of usability recommendations are implemented immediately industry wide. An additional 30% are implemented in subsequent releases.

Implemented recommendations that have the greatest benefits:

- Clarifying the local and global navigation options
- Refining program landing pages to be more pointed and concise.

Clarifying the navigation makes it easier for locations to focus their visitors and get across the specific location messaging, while refining the landing pages helps focus those visitors who are reviewing specific programs and both improve the overall communication process.

Additionally, text areas have been simplified and broken up into manageable chunks making the information easier to consume.

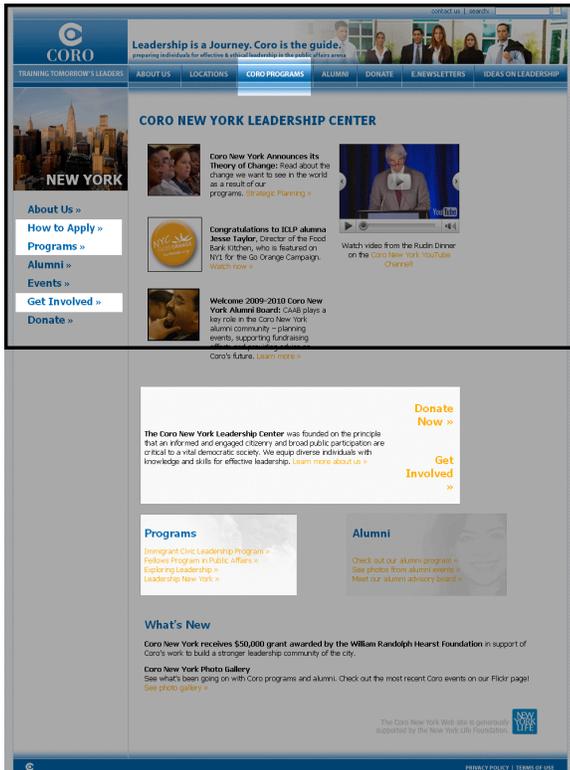
Unimplemented recommendations include:

- **Reduce space between fly-out and navigation items** *Severity: Medium*
motor skills necessary to reach sub navigation items is difficult because of the gap between the display link and sub-navigation.
- **Duplicate menu items on left and top that go to different locations** *Severity: Medium*
Having a duplication of menu items can be confusing especially in areas such as donations where the two links go to entirely different donation forms.
- **Adding a NY Home link to left navigation** *Severity: Low*
While not implemented, clarifying the navigation on the left to only include local links and adding locally identified breadcrumb navigation on all content pages lessens the need to add a specific NY Home link.
- **Implementing a more visible tell-a-friend program** *Severity: Low*
A call to action at the bottom of content increases the likelihood that Alumni and current participants might pass along the Coro message. This is free source of advertisements. Your best spokesmen are participants that are passionate about your program.
- **Making search in top right corner more visible** *Severity: Low*
The gradated bar containing the search makes it difficult to notice the search.
- **Adding Landing Pages for all sections** *Severity: Low*
Landing pages gives Coro the opportunity to highlight and present an overview of section content .

User Groups

The CoroNY site supports three major user groups relating directly to the lifecycle of people associated with the program. The Applicant, Participant, and Alumni are investigated individually in relation to how they interact with the website.

The highlighted areas in the images below are focus areas for target user groups.



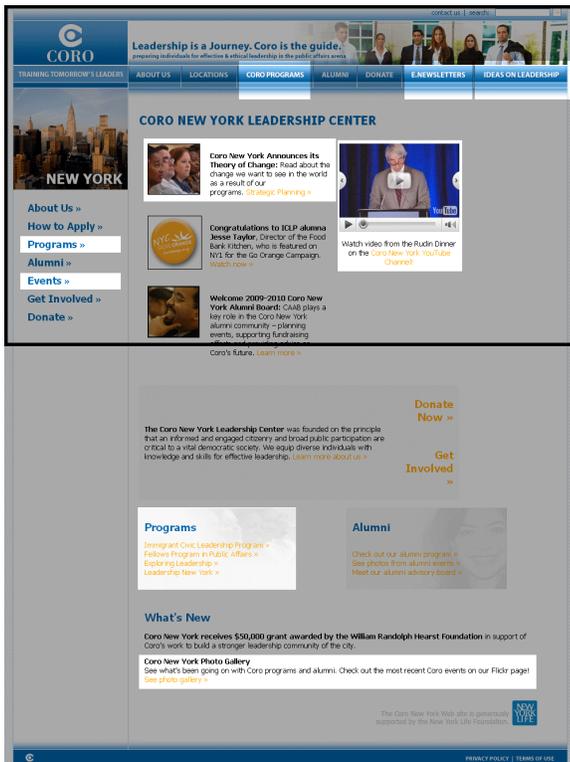
The Coro Applicant:

The applicant group is interested in finding out what Coro is, the programs offered, and how to participate. From this perspective, the Coro NY homepage could do a better job at servicing this user group.

Discounting the left navigation, information pertaining to the programs and basic Coro information are represented past the first screen full of information, forcing the user to scroll to see the information.

Coro user group goals:

- Participation in programs



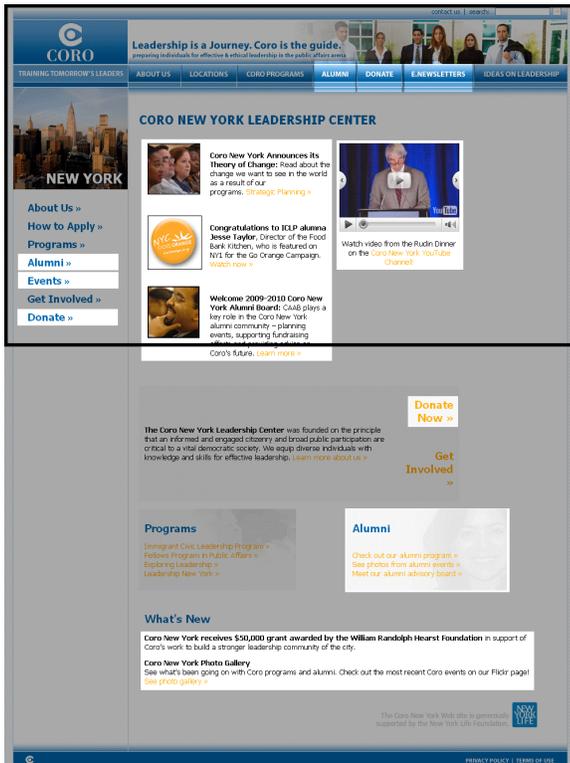
The Coro Participant:

Participants are focused on finding out what is going on at Coro and hopefully spreading the word about Coro and their experiences there.

The current Coro NY homepage does a decent job conveying the information about current events but less so giving this user group the ability to tell others about the Coro experience.

Coro user group goals:

- Educate participants
- Facilitate participants advocating Coro



The Coro Alumni:

The goals of the Coro Alumni are to find out what is going on with Coro and how to stay involved.

The Alumni group is the best served, providing newsworthy items and links to a specific Alumni section.

Coro user group goals:

- Facilitate participants advocating Coro
- Facilitate donation of time or money
- Provide calendar

CoroNY Usability Expert Review

Through the development since 2007 there has been a great improvement in the overall usability of the Coro NY site and many of the recommendations relate to content and flow modifications to assist the end user.

By refining the flow and design elements between pages it makes it easier for users to complete actions and Coro to meet the goals of the content. With that in mind the observations and recommendations are broken into 'Content', 'Design' and 'Usability' sections.

The review below is based on the Coro site (www.coro.org) as of October 2009.

Usability

- **External links should open in a new window**

This is general best practice across the web and a practical recommendation to keep users on your site without getting lost when completing 3rd party actions.

Instances of external links opening in the current window include the CoroNY homepage link 'NYC Goes Orange' which views a YouTube video, and the CoroNY newsletters; neither contains links back to CoroNY.

- **Adobe PDF's should open in a new window**

Much like external links, PDF files should open in a separate window. Additionally, PDF's should be indicated on the page as [PDF-3.2MB] or similar convention. This allows the user to make an educated decision on whether to open a large file, especially on a slower internet connection. Examples where this would be helpful is the 'Newsletters' page.

- **Search Results are viewed by date**

Search results listed by date instead of relevance provide results to the end user in a random order. The end user has no concept of the 'last published' content in relation to completing their tasks. If possible, search results should be organized by relevance to search terms being entered.

A search for 'Programs' returns 'Notable Alumni' as the first result and 'Coro Programs' as the ninth.

- **Search Results change the content display**

Clicking on a search result changes the breadcrumb to 'CORO Home > Content Search' and the title of the content to 'Content Search' which is not desirable.

Maintaining the intended display of the article title and breadcrumb regardless of how the user gets to the page is helpful to the user. The breadcrumb specifically gives the user a way to navigate. Forcing the navigation to default to a search path denies the user of navigating the information hierarchy as intended.

- **Newsletter Required Fields**

Currently there are a number of curious required fields including 'Prefix' and 'Zip Code'. As a general rule of thumb, the less information you request from the end user, the greater response rate you will receive. If there no purposes to requiring specific fields, they should be omitted.

- **Newsletter Navigation**

The 'Coloration' newsletter does not currently open in a separate window. When the user completes the desired action they are left with no option to return to the site.

The newsletter signup also does not have any of the branding of the Coro site, forcing the user to make a determination that they have arrived at the desired location. This will result in some users abandoning the signup. Adding Coro branding is suggested.

- **Programs are listed in differing order**

In the navigation programs are listed in alphabetical order. On the 'How to Apply' and 'Programs' pages they are listed differently on both pages. Consistency will make it easier for users to keep programs straight in their own minds as they review the site.

The specific order is not as important as the consistency between all the listings. What is first should remain first.

Content

- **Photos need to be sized correctly**

When placing photos on the website it is important to size photos 100% at 72dpi resolution. A photo sized correctly requires less processing time for the browser and less download time for the user. There were numerous instances where photos were excessively large. One such instance was the Alumni breakfast photo which was 3MB, and loaded very slowly (on a fast connection). Sized properly this photo is approximately 40k and would appear the same to user when viewed.

- **Coro Builder Benefits are not identified**

On the Donate section of the NY content Coro Builder Benefits are referenced but never explained. Explaining what constitutes the benefits may convince potential donors to donate. Additionally, the donor list is dated 6/08, a full 16 months ago. The latest listing should be referenced if available.

- **Coro Builder Sidebar works effectively**

The rotating Coro builder side bars are an effective use of testimonials. These are powerful examples that the user can identify with. Similar functionality should be considered for the 'Get Involved' and 'Programs' sections.

- **Photos of Alumni**

Recommend adding photos of the Alumni to the 'Alumni Profiles' pages gives the user imagery to identify with.

- **Newsletters not found**

Some newsletters are missing. Missing newsletters include... January-September 2008; January-December 2007; November - December 2006.

- **Past Sign-up messaging**

There are instances throughout the year where sessions have ended their sign up process. This is the case currently, where only one program is available for January. Adding a catch-all blurb on the ‘How to Apply’ page relating to the potential applicant being contacted by Coro for next year’s session if deadlines have passed, or having them sign up for newsletter may draw in potential participants who visit Coro at inopportune times during the year.

- **Password Reset on the Job Bank Page**

The Job bank login page indicates to ‘click to register or forgotten password’. There is no help for forgotten passwords on the registration page. Text should be changed to simply ‘click to register’

- **Alumni Profiles Landing Page**

The ‘Alumni’ fly-out navigation included a link to the ‘Alumni profiles’. This link should be represented on the ‘Alumni’ landing page and not just in navigation to make it easier to find.

- **Placement of Alumni Directory**

The ‘Alumni Directory’ is listed on the ‘Volunteer Opportunity’ page. ‘Alumni Directory’ is not a Volunteer Opportunity, and its placement is confusing.

- **“Get Started” Link**

The link for “Get Started” on the Coro Builders and Our Giving Circle pages should take the user to the form. There should be a specific ‘Details’ link for additional information about the Giving Circle.

- In looking at both the national and NY centric forms for Donation, the NY form leading to ‘Network for Good’ is simpler and more effective and also lets Coro receive an uninterrupted supply of donations through the reoccurring gift option.

While the reoccurring gift option is available on the national form the options are complex, requiring the user to select a timeframe for the gift as well as the frequency. There is no option to select an un-ending period as can be done on the local form.

I would like to make a recurring gift.

Gift Amount*	# of Payments	Payment Frequency	Total Gift Amount
\$ 500	x 5	Monthly	= \$ 2500

NOTE: This transaction will count as the first payment toward your total gift amount.

From the fundraising perspective it is better to require the donor to take an action to cancel a re-occurring gift rather than requiring Coro to re-initiate the gift.

Design

• Homepage Design

The placement of the homepage elements can be visually optimized by enforcing a visual grid layout. Currently, the fixed width design leaves excess space to the right of the Coro video while many important items are pushed lower down the page, (see below),



forcing the user to scroll to important information. This makes the page harder to consume by the user.

Additionally, the way text blocks rest on the page gives the user the misconception that there is no additional information lower on the page, so the user will not scroll to get to the info below the fold.

The design presented (upper right) organizes the content items, adds structure to the page and applies a general grid layout. In addition the unique selling proposition is prominent below the page title, explaining and introducing the information in the section. Program and Alumni information is also raised visually on the page making it easier to find and to view.

- **Site Typeface**

The typeface and size used throughout the site is Tahoma 12px. Tahoma is best displayed at 11px. At 12px this typeface becomes harder to read. This is set through the site-wide style sheet. Additionally there is no line spacing (space between lines) indicated, forcing the lines of text to be displayed very close to each other. This makes it more difficult for the user to read the content.

On the 'Program' page the type size is specified at 10px. This type size is more visually pleasing but is inconsistent with the general styles of the site. As a general rule pages-specific type changes are discouraged because it makes it challenging to make site wide changes. When site wide changes are made, the site specific pages are not affected or affected in ways that were not intended.

- **Video/fly-out compatibility**

The video elements and fly-out navigation have compatibility issues when they intersect as can be seen in the screen shot to the right where the top navigation is obscured by the video console.

- **'Program' page is effectively designed**

The images and layout are nice for 'Programs' page. The concise, organized layout makes things very clear to direct the user. Consider continuing the photo concept to the 'How to Apply' page.

- **'Get Involved' page is visually confusing**

The 'Get Involved' page layout does not provide enough differentiation between options. The imagery, meant to enhance the page adds confusion because of the placement of the image. Mirroring the layout and organization of the 'Programs' page will improve consumption of the information presented. This is an important page and should be modified.

