

Goal

The goal of this project is to provide a review of the current implementation of the Deuce website. Primary focus is given to aspects of usability and website architecture that affect the user experience, although additional feedback is provided related to visual aesthetics and how to use a website presence to work toward achieving business goals. The feedback provided in these materials reflects UI design best practices, user expectations based on design conventions, and my personal opinions.

Heuristic Evaluation

The heuristic evaluation is a personal assessment of the state of the website. Various qualities are judged as being Poor, Good, or Excellent with comments provided when needed. These scores are provided based on usability best practices and conventions as well as my personal thoughts on how users will perform with the given user interface.

For the Deuce website, most of this evaluation deals with inconsistencies in the presentation of hyperlinks, the navigational paths for a number of tasks, and the organization of content. For the most part, the aesthetic presentation and the look of the website are quite good, except for a few items for which I provide comments in the evaluation checklist.

High-Level Flow

The High-Level Flow is a visual diagram of a website's information architecture. The diagram illustrates the tasks and goals that users will want to achieve through the website as well as the high-level organization of website content. The High-Level Flow reflects my recommendation for how to build the website so that the navigation and content make sense to users at the cognitive level.

For the Deuce website, the main concerns were:

1. How to handle Deuce Nation

Care should be taken in developing the Deuce Nation entity. You should be clear in whether you want it to be seen as a core part of the company website or if you want it to be an independent presence. I think it is dangerous to place it halfway. Additionally, it adds confusion if the user is not sure whether or not the Deuce Nation navigation is part of the company navigation. My recommendation is to strip down Deuce Nation to just the forum for immediate release and to present this as part of the company website. As membership and presence grow, you will

want to consider spinning off Deuce Nation into its own website with a completely different look and feel so that users perceive it as being independent of the company.

2. Creating a Products space that is scalable

3. Providing a clear way of providing media content

4. Making purchasing tasks more prominent and easier to get to

I added a Store page because it is a standard concept in commercial website construction and users are familiar with its presence. This provides a very clear path to purchase transactions, which is critical for your business goals.

5. Provide a means for building company credibility by adding a Testimonials page and an About Us Page

I feel these pages are critical at this stage for Deuce because you need to build company and product credibility. I recommend collecting as many quotations as possible from people who have seen or tried the Deuce. I understand there won't be too many at this point, but even a few carefully selected quotations will help immensely. For the About Us page, I think it's important to let users know more about the people behind the Deuce. Provide information that will help users believe in you so that they can in turn believe in the product. What is your background? Your credentials? Your experience? What was the inspiration for inventing the Deuce? What has been your process in developing the Deuce? Providing this information can make a big difference in generating sales.

Wireframes

The wireframes are a set of bare web pages that serve as a mock-up of the website architecture. The purpose of the wireframes is to illustrate how the navigation and content structure should be built. These wireframes are based on my recommended website structure as presented in the High-Level Flow document.

The wireframes are not meant to suggest aesthetic or layout design. Things to look for are:

1. Is content presented in places where those pieces of information make sense?
2. Do all links or actionable items appear where users would expect them?
3. Do all links lead users to where they expect to go?
4. Do all actionable items trigger the processes that users expect to happen?
5. Does clicking on a link or actionable item lead the user to become lost?
6. Does the website architecture allow users to easily find places that they know they want to find?
7. Does the website lend itself to open-ended browsing?

Conclusions

Many of the problems with the Deuce website that I found through my evaluation can be fixed easily. Many are quick HTML code fixes while some involve a redesign of web page layout or the reorganization of content. I believe that the majority of issues can be resolved quickly and economically.

There are a few aesthetic and visual design problems that I found. Some of these are not critical. The items I believe to be high-priority concerns are:

1. Changing the menu links so that the mouseover effect as well as the current page's link are more visually prominent.
2. Either remove or reduce the size of the image on the Contact page. If the image remains, change it so that it fits the aesthetics of the rest of the website.
3. Change the look of the Deuce Nation Forum page so that it matches the look of the rest of the website (or at least so that it doesn't clash).
4. Make the page title for each page appear in a consistent location.

There are serious navigation and architecture problems with the current website. Detailed comments on these issues are provided in the Heuristic Evaluation. I believe that the Wireframes present a solution that resolves most of the navigational and architecture problems.

The remaining major issue is how to handle the Deuce Nation presence. It is very difficult to build a website into another website and for most cases I don't think it is a good strategy. It leads to navigational problems while making it harder for the user to develop a conceptual map of the website(s). For now, I suggest reducing Deuce Nation to just the forum as described above. This makes it clear from the company website that there is a means for people to participate in discussions with other users while giving users the impression that the company cares and wants people to be discussing the Deuce. I think this is a strong strategy to start with as the company gains traction.

As Deuce Nation expands and matures, you should think about spinning it off of the company website into its own web entity. The company could still participate in its development, but you would want users to think that the company is not being manipulative in dictating the content or direction of Deuce Nation activities. In the future, you might want the company to be perceived as a sponsor of Deuce Nation, but not its facilitator or moderator. Future versions of Deuce Nation might include content such as latest news (both from the company as well as external to the company), user stories, user videos and photos.