

Steve Krug



**DON'T
MAKE
ME
THINK**

revisited

and Mobile
A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability

Don't Make Me Think, Revisited

A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO WEB USABILITY

STEVE KRUG



And now for something completely different

In these first few chapters, I've been trying to convey some guiding principles that I think are good to have in mind when you're building a Web site.

Now we're heading into two chapters that look at how these principles apply to two of the biggest and most important challenges in Web design: navigation and the Home page.

You might want to pack a lunch. They're very long chapters.

CHAPTER

6

Street signs and Breadcrumbs

DESIGNING NAVIGATION

*And you may find yourself | in a beautiful house | with a beautiful wife
And you may ask yourself | Well... | How did I get here?!*

—TALKING HEADS, “ONCE IN A LIFETIME”

It's a fact:

People won't use your Web site if they can't find their way around it.

You know this from your own experience as a Web user. If you go to a site and can't find what you're looking for or figure out how the site is organized, you're not likely to stay long—or come back. So how do you create the proverbial “clear, simple, and consistent” navigation?

Scene from a mall

Picture this: It's Saturday afternoon and you're headed for the mall to buy a chainsaw.

As you walk through the door at Sears, you're thinking, “Hmmm. Where do they keep chainsaws?” As soon as you're inside, you start looking at the department names, high up on the walls. (They're big enough that you can read them from all the way across the store.)



TOOLS

HOUSEWARES

LAWN AND GARDEN

“Hmmm,” you think, “Tools? Or Lawn and Garden?” It could be either one, but you've got to start somewhere so you head in the direction of Tools.

When you reach the Tools department, you start looking at the signs at the end of each aisle.

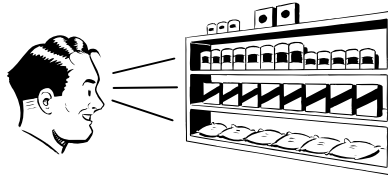


POWER TOOLS

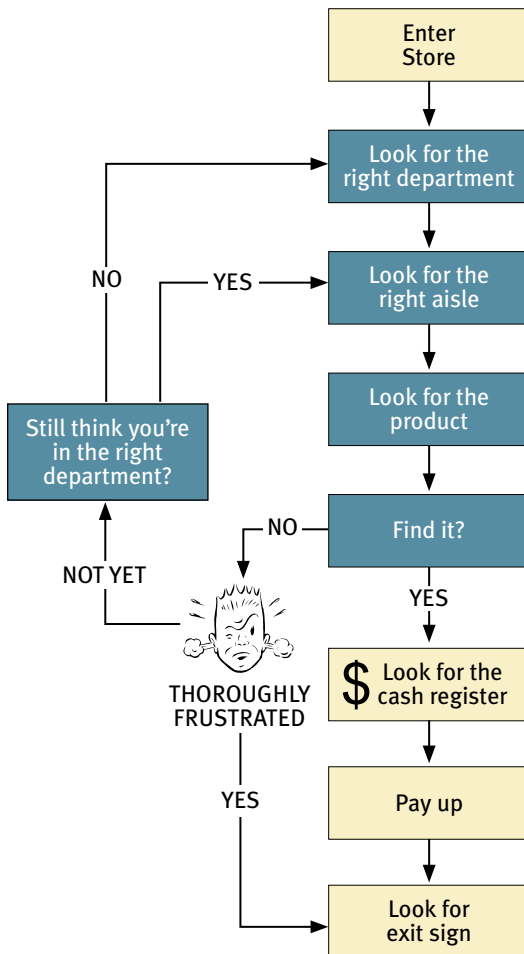
HAND TOOLS

SANDING AND GRINDING

When you think you've got the right aisle, you start looking at the individual products.



If it turns out you've guessed wrong, you try another aisle, or you may back up and start over again in the Lawn and Garden department. By the time you're done, the process looks something like this:

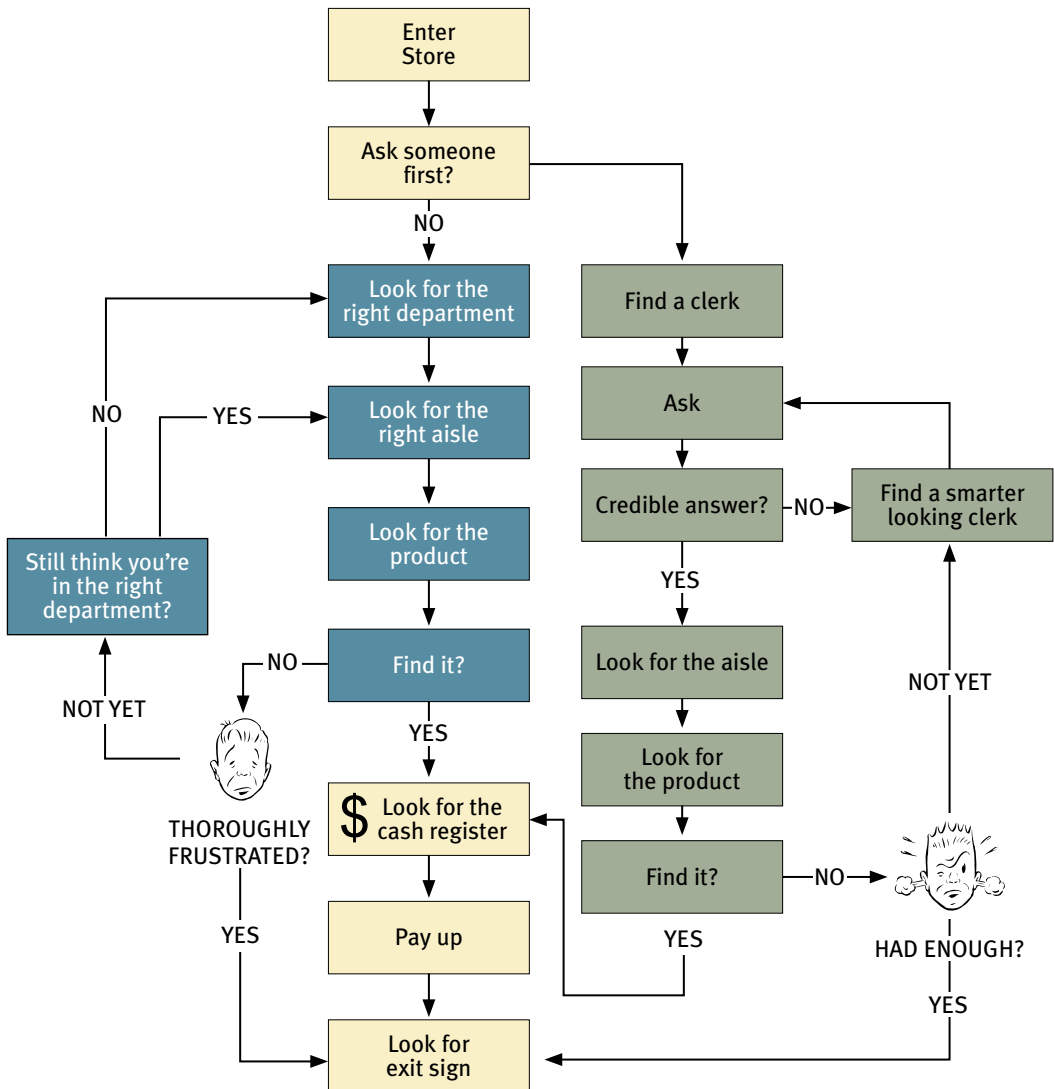


Basically, you use the store's navigation systems (the signs and the organizing hierarchy that the signs embody) and your ability to scan shelves full of products to find what you're looking for.

Of course, the actual process is a little more complex. For one thing, as you walk in the door you usually devote a few microseconds to a crucial decision: Are you going to start by looking for chainsaws on your own or are you going to ask someone where they are?

It's a decision based on a number of variables—how familiar you are with the store, how much you trust their ability to organize things sensibly, how much of a hurry you're in, and even how sociable you are.

When we factor this decision in, the process looks something like this:

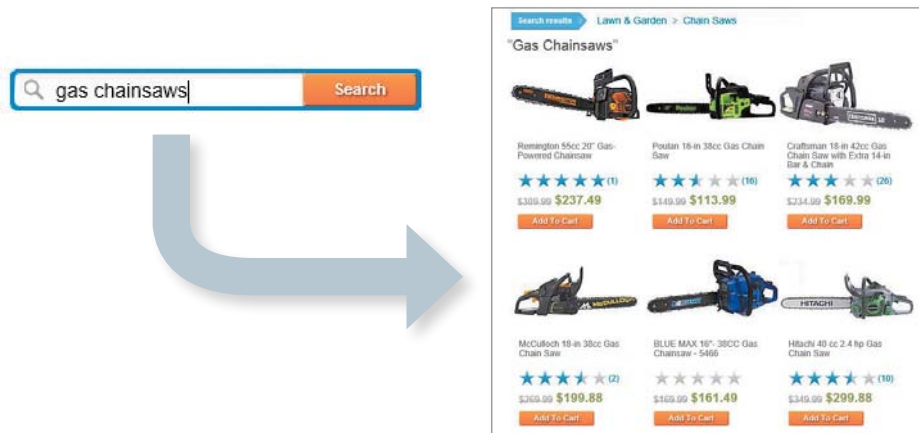


Note that even if you start looking on your own, if things don't pan out there's a good chance that eventually you'll end up asking someone for directions anyway.

Web Navigation 101

In many ways, you go through the same process when you enter a Web site.

- **You're usually trying to find something.** In the “real” world it might be the emergency room or a family-size bottle of ketchup. On the Web, it might be a pair of headphones or the name of the actor in *Casablanca* who played the headwaiter at Rick's.¹
- **You decide whether to ask first or browse first.** The difference is that on a Web site there's no one standing around who can tell you where things are. The Web equivalent of asking directions is searching—typing a description of what you're looking for in a search box and getting back a list of links to places where it *might* be.



Some people (Jakob Nielsen calls them “search-dominant” users) will almost always look for a search box as soon as they enter a site. (These may be the same people who look for the nearest clerk as soon as they enter a store.)

¹ S. Z. “Cuddles” Sakall, born Eugene Sakall in Budapest in 1884. Ironically, most of the character actors who played the Nazi-hating denizens of Rick’s Café were actually famous European stage and screen actors who landed in Hollywood after fleeing the Nazis.