

This sample report represents a portion of a larger study.

I have inserted screenshots from a totally unrelated site to disguise the client's identity.

Sample Usability Research Report

Qualitative Research Findings

March 15, 200X



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1. Research Process

Background and Objectives

- XXXXXXXX is a new site aimed at facilitating the purchase of PCs by new and inexperienced PC buyers.
- This site is designed to help buyers in their purchase process and provide a variety of educational and “Purchase Enablement” resources.
- XXXXXXXX draws on articles from a wide range of 3rd party information sources, provides articles from site experts and give visitors the ability to ask and answer computer related questions.
- The XXXXXXXX team is interested in gaining early feedback on the site’s overall usability and develop a clear understanding of how the site adds value to the information needs and purchase experience of these unsophisticated buyers.

Methodology

- A series of 13 in-person interviews were conducted in Sacramento, California with members of the XXXXXXXX target.
- Each interview:
 - 50 minute one-on-one with the moderator
 - Conducted at a computer with a high speed connection to the site
- Respondents represented a range of:
 - Genders
 - Ages
 - Incomes
 - Computer sophistication

2. Key Findings

Site Strengths

- Overall Value
 - All the respondents saw the value of the site and believed XXXXXXXX would provide a good source of information to help them get more out of their computer and/or purchase the right computer.
- Content
 - Most respondents felt that the content was easy to understand and not too technical.
 - Featured articles were relevant and contained information that would enhance their use of the computer.
- XXXXXXXX Brand
 - Nearly all respondents felt that the XXXXXXXX name contributed to the sites reliability and trustworthiness.

Site Weaknesses

- A few issues consistently caused visitors to have problems navigating the site. Many of these problems are superficial, and can be corrected through new labels and minor design changes. Others, reflect deeper Information Architecture issues that may require modifications to some of the site's tools.
- Some of the primary issues included:
 - Overlapping information categories.
 - XXXX
 - XXXX
 - XXXXX
 - XXXX
 - Incomplete integration of XXXXXXXX community.
 - Respondents did not understand the role of the XXXXXXXX community or how they could participate in the community.
 - Many had difficulty understanding when content came from community members vs. "Experts".

Site Weaknesses (contd.)

- ❑ Too many separate content areas within the homepage.
 - The homepage contains at least 8 separate content sections.
 - This makes it very difficult for visitors to get a sense of the site's content or internalize its organizational structure.
- ❑ The shopping process is difficult to navigate.
 - Visitors consistently had trouble using the XXXX as well as the laptop/desktop shopping areas.

Recommendations

1. Simplify the information architecture.
 - Many respondents were confused by the overlap of the site's content. We suggest XXXXXXXX simplifies the visitor's choice of content areas. For example:
 - Videos
 - Articles
 - XXXXXXXX community
 - Shopping
2. Consolidate content titles to eliminate overlapping or re-name some areas to better communicate unique content.
 - For example, clarify the difference between *XXXX* and *XXXXXX*.
3. Clarify the role of the Experts and the XXXXXXXX community.
 - Visitors were confused by the roles of these two information resources – especially when exploring the “XXX” section of the site.

Recommendations (contd.)

4. Simplify the shopping interface

- ❑ Better integrate the filters on the PC and Laptop sites.
 - Many respondents simply overlooked the filters in the Left Column and did not understand how to operate the page.
- ❑ Clarify the XXXXXXXX display.
 - Most respondents did not understand the nature of the three “windows” or that there were multiple systems within each window.
- ❑ Better integrate the XXXXXXXX Sliders.
 - The sliders were difficult to understand and respondents did not see how adjusting the slider would alter a system’s configuration.

5. Simplify the homepage.

- ❑ Reduce the number of content and shopping sections on the page.
- ❑ Show article titles without summary paragraphs.

Recommendations (contd.)

6. Modify the top portion of the homepage.
 - ❑ Highlight the XXX menu.
 - ❑ Revise the XXX Guide banner so that it does not form a “false ceiling” at the page.
 - ❑ Eliminate the two-step entrance into XXXX.
 - ❑ Change the name of XXX to make it more clearly refer to inside a PC rather than what’s inside the XXXXXXXX site.

3. Detailed Findings

XXXXXX

- The important XXXXXXXX headings were often overlooked.



- The top menu does not stand-out very well above the bright red XXXXXXXX marquis.

“It kind of just looked like afterthoughts at the top. Seems like all the good stuff is down here.”

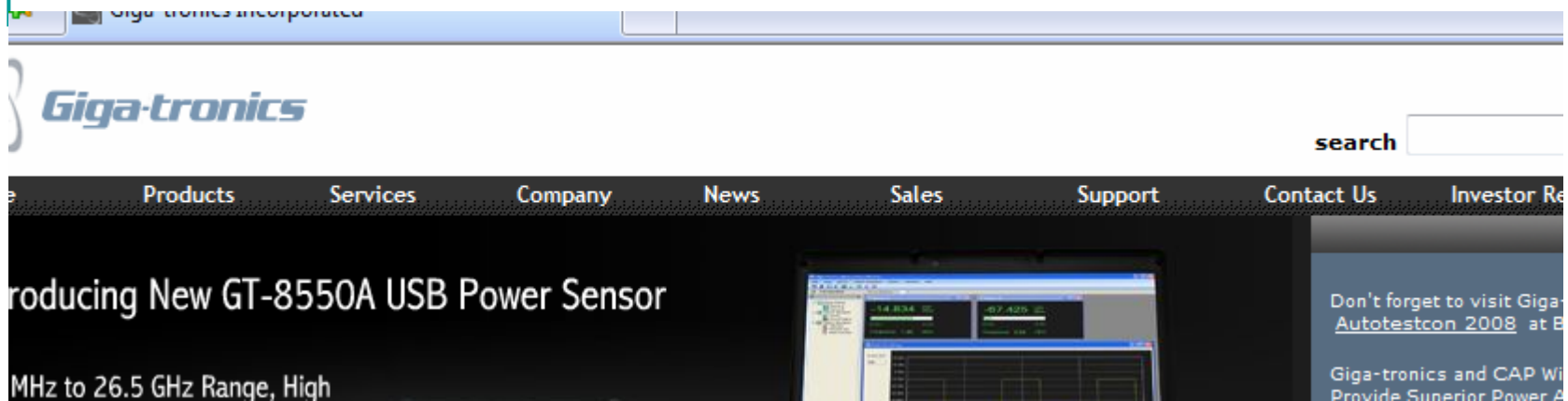
- Some visitors were unsure of the difference between XXXX.

“Those two are almost the same to me.”

- Most assumed that they would be asking questions to a site *Expert* rather than to members of a community.

“I would be looking for an expert’s response, not users opinions.”

Video Guide “Marquis”



- The bold XXX often served as a “false ceiling” for the page. Respondents would scroll up to this area and stop, thinking they’d reached the top of the page.
- Respondents consistently had trouble operating the XXX.
 - The need to click twice – first on the tab and then on the XXX was confusing.
 - *See the Shows* sounded more like entertainment/TV rather than instructional videos.
 - The term *What’s inside* sounded like what’s inside the site rather than inside a PC.

“What's Inside? That means what's inside each of these boxes.”

- There was some confusion over how the XXX worked. Most did not understand that XXX were sections within the XXX

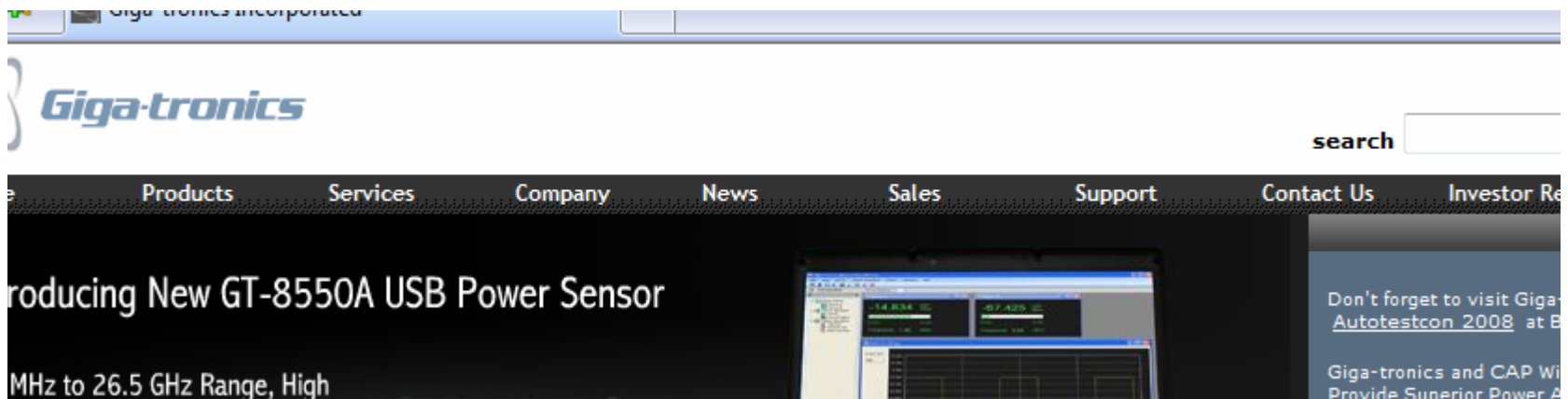
“I didn’t realize that those three links up there, the XXX, I didn’t know that those were XXXXXXXX. I didn’t put the two together. I thought they were regular guides, text guides.”

“I wouldn’t normally do a XXX thing.”

- Most expected the content under *Questions & Answers* to be written rather than video.

“Oh – it’s a video!”

Operating the Videos



- Many visitors had trouble locating the controls for the videos.
- They did not seem to understand that the small squares below represented different video content.
- This was consistent across the different *XXXXXXX* and the *Q&A* section.

Most XXX Topics

- Visitors' attention was often drawn to the *Most XXXX* section. However, some of the top names were confusing.



- Hobbies and Interests

"...maybe if your hobby is gardening, how you could put your gardening collection on your computer or something."

- TV and Video

- This sounded like it would be listings for local TV and movie programming

"I think it's like what's on TV and movies and stuff like that."

PC Community

- Nearly all the respondents overlooked the prompt for interacting with the XXXXXXXX community.

Lower Half of the Page

The screenshot shows the Giga-tronics website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Products, Services, Company, News, Sales, Support, Contact Us, and Investor. Below the menu is a search bar. The main content area features a large advertisement for the "Introducing New GT-8550A USB Power Sensor" with a list of features: "10 MHz to 26.5 GHz Range, High Accuracy, Fast Measurement Speed, Ruggedized Body and Easy-to-Use PC software". To the right of this ad is a sidebar with text: "Don't forget to visit Giga-tronics at Autotestcon 2008 at [location]. Giga-tronics and CAP [location] Provide Superior Power. Click [here](#) for detail in [location]."

Below the main ad is a "promotions." section with a banner for "Save up to 60% on Giga-tronics Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) equipment." To the right of this is a "customer service." section with a photo of a woman and the text "Questions? Comments? Need Assistance? Giga-tronics strives to provide you with the highest quality customer service possible. Please click [here](#) for all your customer service needs."

At the bottom of the page, there are three main promotional banners: "SWITCHING SOLUTIONS" with images of circuit boards, "SIGNAL GENERATION" with images of signal generators, and "MEASUREMENT" with images of measurement equipment. A footer contains the copyright notice: "Copyright © 2008 Giga-tronics Incorporated. All Rights Reserved. | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Contact Webmaster](#) |".

- There were generally too many information sources on the homepage.
 - There are three **separate** product shopping areas in this small section of the page alone (XXX).
 - By displaying article summaries along with titles the page becomes very crowded with information.
 - Some of the content areas overlapped, such as XXX.
 - When visitors clicked on one of the “XXX” they expected to see a variety of laptops rather than a single laptop.

“Its just one computer I expected to see more.”

Response to Article Summaries



- Less sophisticated respondents seemed to have trouble managing the article summaries.

- They had difficulty skimming through that much material and understanding the structure of the summaries.

- None of the respondents seemed to understand that each summary was categorized by source and category.

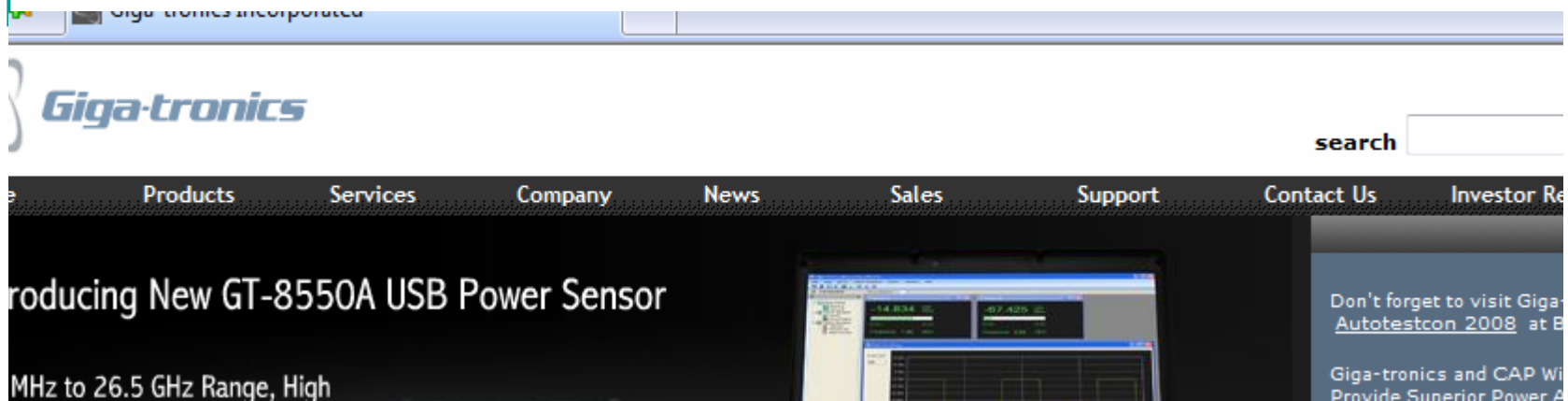
- Some were unclear if this was the full article, and had to search for the *Read More* link.

Items in the Right Channel



- Respondents generally focused on the XXXft Channel.
- Items in the XXX Channel received less attention.
- Only a very few respondents noticed the XXX through the XXX Channel.
- None of the respondents commented on or clicked on the XXX in the XX Channel.
 - They did not connect these categories to the categories on the articles.
 - It may be confusing to have both XXX.

Asking a Question



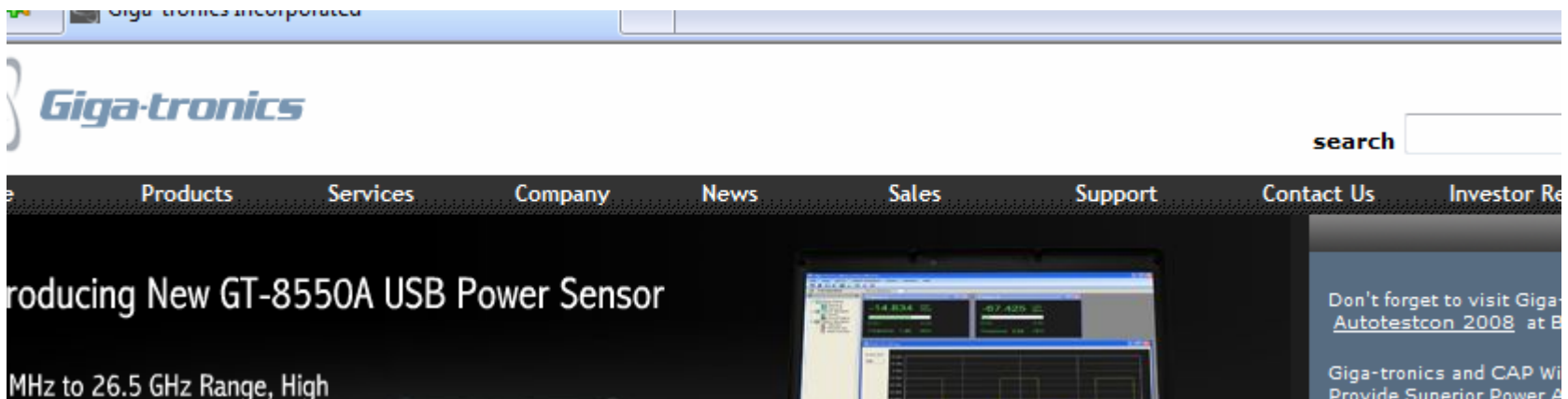
- When visitors clicked on *Ask* they were presented with a page dominated by *XXX* rather than a means of asking their own question.

“Oh – I thought I was going to get to type my question.”

“That wasn’t very helpful to me.”

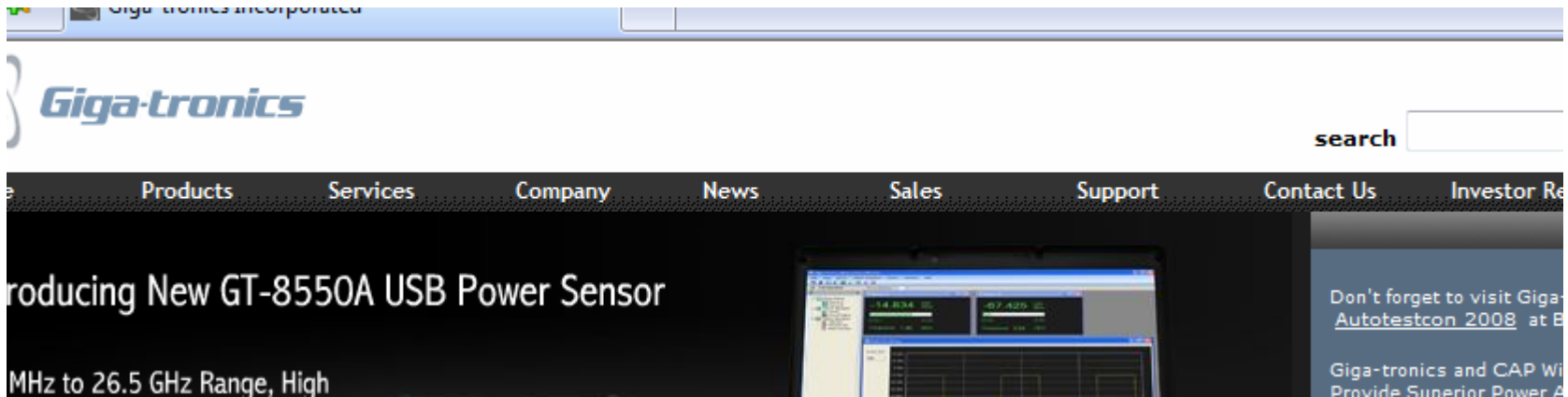
- The vehicle for asking their own question was hidden below the fold – few initially noticed the *Get Started* arrow at the left.

“I never saw that – I don’t know why.”



- When they clicked on a question in the top half of the page they were confused to find the answer to their question mixed in with other questions.
- Since most still expected that the questions were being answered by “Experts” they did not understand the number of answers listed on the right.
- Still unclear on the community concept, these respondents then had trouble understanding why the site was offering them the opportunity to “*Answer the question*”.

The XXXXXXXX



- Respondents were often confused by the results of the XXXXXXXX.
 - Until they were encouraged to look closely, most simply thought the three windows showed the three best matches for their criteria. Most failed to notice the window's title or the designations of "1 of 10" below each PC.

"No, it's not the only three. It looks like it at first, though."

"I actually can't figure that out. "

Search Criteria XXX



- Nearly all the respondents had difficulty operating these controls.
 - The controls were below the fold so most didn't see them.

"I didn't even see these."
 - The sliders didn't clearly communicate that the controls could be adjusted.

"I'm not sure what the little ball is for."
 - The large amount of text imbedded within each tool discouraged investigation.
 - The meaning/impact of the "XXX" and "XXX" control was unclear.

Value of the XXXXXXXX Brand

- Even after surfing the site for 10 or 15 minutes, most respondents were not aware of a relationship between XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXX .

“My initial response would be thinking it was just someone that was selling computers like the local brick and mortar.”

- Once informed of XXXXXXXX ’s sponsorship, nearly all of the respondents felt that XXXXXXXX enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the site’s content.

“I think XXXXXXXX is a pretty large and trusted brand.”

“XXXXXXX would probably mean it’s more reliable – it’s a reputable name”

- Respondents saw XXXXXXXX as a very positive brand:
 - Innovative
 - Strong
 - Clearly tied to PCs
- While they value the XXXXXXXX brand, it is not clear that the site would significantly benefit from tying the XXXXXXXX name more closely to the XXXXXXXX name (e.g., XXXXXXXX from XXXXXXXX).