

Usability “drives” FMCSA’s Web site redesign

Users are twice as successful at finding information

The mission of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large buses and trucks. The agency works closely with law enforcement and industry to improve bus and truck safety through regulation, education, and technology. While a Web site alone can’t guarantee safety on the roads, FMCSA recognizes the need to make its information and policies easy to find.

Challenge: hard to find information

The main FMCSA Web site contained several sub-sites, developed independently of each other on an “as needed” basis. These sub-sites had different designs, information architecture, and lacked consistency in how they operated. This made critical information hard to find, leading to poor user experience.

FMCSA engaged HFI on a Web site redesign to address:

1. Information Architecture: can users find information on the site?
2. Detailed Design: can users interact with information once they find it?
3. Future Growth: will the site architecture accommodate new content and functionality?

HFI’s approach: citizen-centric architecture

HFI guided the project with a user-centered design approach, including:

- review of user feedback (server logs, surveys, webmaster emails, etc.)
- user research and task analysis
- usability testing
- prototyping and design refinement

Benefits: users find information easily

The result was a new citizen-centric architecture and predictable navigation structure, based on users’ own vocabulary for category names and labels. By creating reusable page-design templates, ongoing site development and maintenance were also streamlined. Drivers, trucking companies, and safety experts all shared many positive

comments about the improved information density, categorization, and visual design. Frequently-used content is now easier to find:

- weight and load restrictions
- driver drug and alcohol testing
- licensing and insurance
- driving time limitations
- vehicle standards and inspections

Best of all, usability test participants were twice as successful at finding information with the new design (90%) compared to the old site (45%). FMCSA continues to inculcate usability principles as its Web site “motors” right along!



FMCSA home page before (top) and after