

Content Analysis

USAJOBS.GOV



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Content Is Key to Usability	3
Results of Heuristic Content Analysis	3
Proposed Content Strategy Recommendations	4
Proposed Content Strategy	5
Forming a USAJOBS Content Strategy	5
Recommendations	5
Uniting Content & People: The Content Strategy Quad	9
Writing for the Web	10
Heuristic Content Analysis	15
1. Accessibility	16
2. Appropriate Structure	17
3. Audience Relevance	18
4. Bounded Horizons	19
5. Clarity & Accuracy	20
6. Collocation	21
7. Consistency	22
8. Completeness	23
9. Differentiation	24
10. Information Scent	25
11. Multiple Access Paths	26
12. Voice & Style	27



Executive Summary

Content Is Key to Usability

There is a strategic opportunity to harness good and better content to help USAJOBS become more of a career portal and less of a jobs list. While many usability issues are being addressed with the NextGen project, forming an official content strategy that is high-impact and sustainable is essential to fulfilling the mission of USAJOBS: To connect Americans with the right federal employment opportunities.

Content composes two of the six pillars of the USAJOBS NextGen design strategy: Pillar 4: Speak My Language and Pillar 5: One Stop Shop. Many of the site’s usability problems can be directly traced back to confusing verbiage or lack of clear, friendly language. But content also goes beyond words on a page—it is also about the website’s information architecture (IA), navigation, page structure, and voice. When all of these things are aligned usability is maximized and the website’s vision is more fully realized.

Results of Heuristic Content Analysis

A content analysis of USAJOBS.gov was conducted using 12 heuristics of good website content. The results of the analysis informed the proposed USAJOBS content strategy and recommendations with a focus on maximizing usability. For the analysis, a four-point Lickert scale was used with the following ratings: 1. Strongly deviates from the heuristic, 2. Deviates from the heuristic, 3. Conforms to the heuristic, or 4. Strongly conforms to the heuristic. Results show that nine of 12 heuristics either deviate or strongly deviate from each respective heuristic, indicating the website has core content and IA issues that are detrimental to the user experience. A summary of findings and ratings for each heuristic is below.

Heuristic	Finding	Rating
1. Accessibility Users should be able to access the content they want through the browsing hierarchy or by using search.	The website makes most content easily accessible through the current organization.	1 2 3 4
2. Appropriate Structure Organization of content should (1) match users’ mental models of the information space and (2) support the differences in users’ information-seeking behaviors.	The website has inconsistent content structures throughout the site, depending on the page or function being performed.	1 2 3 4
3. Audience Relevance Different user segments should be able to easily find relevant content.	This is a website about jobs and content is clearly geared toward job seekers.	1 2 3 4
4. Bounded Horizons Users should be able to easily understand the breadth of content they are viewing.	It is not immediately clear where the boundaries of content lie in some parts of the website.	1 2 3 4
5. Clarity & Accuracy Users should be able to understand content that is correct, coherent, and logically organized.	Website content is hit or miss when it comes to clarity and accuracy.	1 2 3 4



Heuristic	Finding	Rating
6. Collocation Items with similar content or items about the same topic should be grouped together in one area.	Collocation for top-level navigation is mostly OK, but other sections are lacking.	1 2 3 4
7. Consistency Content structures in similar content areas should be consistent.	One of the website's biggest failures is its lack of consistency for written and visual content.	1 2 3 4
8. Completeness All content mentioned or linked to should exist and be complete.	There are many instances across the website of the user experience being interrupted due to incomplete content.	1 2 3 4
9. Differentiation Dissimilar items or items about different subject areas should be placed in different content areas.	The website differentiates top-level content OK, but page and section content are confusing.	1 2 3 4
10. Information Scent Content labels should be appropriately descriptive of content so that users know they are on the proper path to finding the information they are looking for.	Most top-level information is intuitive and has good information scent, but once users arrive to certain site sections information scent becomes diluted.	1 2 3 4
11. Multiple Access Paths Because users think about content in different ways, they should be able to take multiple paths to get to specific content.	The website makes a good effort at providing multiple access paths to highly desirable content.	1 2 3 4
12. Voice & Style All content should have a consistent voice and style.	The website lacks a consistent voice and style in all of its copy and page formatting.	1 2 3 4

Proposed Content Strategy Recommendations

The following eight proposed recommendations, which will form the core of the USAJOBS content strategy, incorporate findings from the USAJOBS heuristic content analysis with best practices of web writing and content, the federal government's plain language initiative, and the expressed needs of the USAJOBS program management office.

Immediate Recommendations

1. Define USAJOBS content vision
2. Create content governance structure
3. Create USAJOBS style guides
4. Plan and prioritize content refreshes

Long-Term Recommendations

5. Incorporate user testing and analytics into all content work
6. Embed content work into all product design processes and releases
7. Review social media, email, and other channels
8. Evangelize OPM and other federal agencies about content strategy



Proposed Content Strategy

Forming a USAJOBS Content Strategy

It is advised that the USAJOBS PMO adopt all or most of the following eight high-level recommendations that, together, will form the core of the USAJOBS content strategy. Just as human-centered design and Agile have fundamental guiding principles that unify different work streams, so too does a content strategy. A good content strategy should articulate the vision of content, the standards by which content is created, and the human resources required to create and manage the content.

A content strategy is composed of two things: Content and people. Content includes a website's IA, navigation, page structure, and copy (the text on a page). And it is people who are required to create and manage this content. A good content strategy focuses on these two critical components—content and people—to provide a vision that guides all work.

The proposed USAJOBS content strategy incorporates findings from the USAJOBS heuristic content analysis with best practices of content strategy for the web. It also incorporates the federal government's plain language initiative and basic web writing standards, which together can make USAJOBS' content up-to-date and more relevant to site users.

To form a content strategy, the USAJOBS PMO should do the following:

1. Adopt all or most of the eight recommendations
2. Adopt The Content Strategy Quad to structure work
3. Adopt web writing and plain language best practices

Following formal adoption, the PMO should work toward building out and executing each of the recommendations' actions that will realize the content strategy vision. USAJOBS is not just about searching for a job. It is also about providing useful information and tools to help Americans search and apply for jobs that match their eligibility, qualifications, and aspirations. While much of this can be achieved through smart development, such as advanced search and slick UI features, content is a critical component to fully utilizing site features. By creating and adopting a content strategy, USAJOBS.gov can be a leading example for other federal agencies of how content can drive an exceptional user experience.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were informed by the findings of the USAJOBS.gov heuristic content analysis, best practices of web writing and content, the federal government's plain language initiative, and the expressed needs of the USAJOBS PMO. The eight recommendations are presented in order of importance, and also include immediate and long-term priority labels.

Under the leadership of the USAJOBS PMO, these recommendations should be discussed, further refined, and adopted in order to formulate an official USAJOBS content strategy. Once the strategy is in place, the



PMO should communicate the strategy to all stakeholders—the PMO staff, the OPM Innovation Lab team, the Macon development team, and any other relevant stakeholders of USAJOBS.gov. Like with any new way of doing things, it is essential that all program stakeholders “buy-in” and fully participate.

1. Define USAJOBS Content Vision

The content vision for USAJOBS needs to be defined and endorsed by all program stakeholders. The content vision needs to be in line with the product vision in order to be effective. Content areas should also be defined—what is considered content, and what is not—in order to structure work streams and ownership of site content and features.

Proposed Vision

All content on USAJOBS.gov should be...

- Clear
- Concise
- Complete
- Consistent

...with the goal of helping users find and apply for federal jobs.

The voice and tone of USAJOBS.gov should be friendly, accessible, and personal while also communicating authority. The written and visual style should be formal but friendly. Users should take the site seriously as a product of the federal government while also feeling comfortable interacting with it.

All content should adhere to plain language and web writing standards in order to make the website easy to understand. Content should help users quickly find what they need without having to leave the website.

Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE**hone the definition of the USAJOBS content vision
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Answer the Content Components of The Content Strategy Quad (p. 9)
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Use completed content inventory to determine content that works and doesn't work
 - Determine what is/is not considered content
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Practice writing new content that adheres to new definition

2. Create Content Governance Structure

Content workflow and governance are the human components of a content strategy. The PMO needs to establish who is involved in content work, which includes design, writing and editing, oversight, approval and sign-off, and hand-off to the developers. Creating a governance structure empowers people at each level and speeds up content work for each software release. Creating an editorial calendar is essential to making content a priority by establishing a set schedule that allows for proper planning for updating content. Appointing a site editor is also advisable for a full content refresh, so voice, tone, and style are consistent.



Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Create content governance structure
 - Identify who within the PMO should be involved in content creation and management
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Answer the People Components of The Content Strategy Quad (p. 9)
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Create editorial calendar for annual content review or refresh
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Appoint USAJOBS.gov site editor

3. Create USAJOBS Style Guides

The website currently lacks consistency in editorial style, visual style, and brand style. Creating style guides is a major upfront investment that pays dividends down the road. It is also a strategic method for uniting different work streams—design team, developers, and management. Most importantly, it creates consistency for users and helps to maximize the user experience. An editorial style guide establishes editorial rules for all content—which words are capitalized, which terms should be used, whether to use the Oxford comma. A visual style guide establishes rules for the visual hierarchy of content—headings, tables, lists. A brand style guide establishes the brand identity of a product such as how to properly use a logo, and can include components from editorial and visual style guides.

Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Adopt the Associated Press editorial style guide with USAJOBS customizations
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Work with Innovation Lab team to create visual style guide for NextGen release
 - Establish design rules for visual content parts like typefaces, headings, and tables to speed up subsequent design and development work
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Create a USAJOBS brand identity guide for multi-channel use, including updated and new brand assets

4. Plan & Prioritize Content Refreshes

While the NextGen project is focused on fixing many usability issues and creating new features, content needs to be prioritized and a full, site-wide content refresh should be executed. The NextGen release is a strategic opportunity to do a full refresh and, in tandem with new features and an updated design, will increase the usability of the site. In particular, a major area of focus needs to be a full review of the site's IA, navigation, and page structure. Many of the site's usability issues can be directly traced back to poor content organization and structure.

Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Review website's IA, navigation, page structure, and copy and propose changes for next releases
- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Prioritize high-impact content refreshes
 - Resource Center, Support, and JOAs are the most problematic
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Execute site-wide content refresh utilizing plain language and web writing standards
 - Incorporate findings from each heuristic analysis into content refresh



5. Incorporate User Testing & Analytics Into All Content Work

USAJOBS already has a robust user-testing program that focuses on the website's usability. Data collected from user testing is already informing the NextGen planning and development. Once the PMO formally adopts a content strategy, the user-testing team should begin incorporating testing of content into their program, particularly for major proposed changes like top-level navigation. Paraphrase testing, which tests for users' recall of information after reading site copy, would also be a valuable addition to the testing program.

Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Utilize current user testing data and site analytics to understand current content metrics and prioritize attention
 - Use data to inform all content work, including NextGen and site refreshes
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Execute user testing to validate IA, navigation, and page content reorganizations and refreshes
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Incorporate paraphrase testing into program to test new page copy with users

6. Embed Content Work Into All Product Design Processes & Releases

USAJOBS has a great human-centered design strategy in place for NextGen. Two of the six pillars of this strategy directly relate to content: Pillar 4: Speak My Language and Pillar 5: One Stop Shop. However, both the current website and the NextGen project are not fully considering or incorporating content into the design and iteration processes. Especially for NextGen, incorporating a content strategy and addressing the most pressing content issues sooner rather than later will save time and money, and help the design team tackle some of the most challenging usability problems and feature additions.

Actions

- ✓ **IMMEDIATE** Meet with NextGen design team to discuss importance of content and ways to incorporate strategy into the design schedule
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Embed content strategy into current website management processes and releases

7. Review Social Media, Email & Other Channels

Today's users are more than multi-device; they are also multi-channel. They interact with brands on different devices with different screen sizes, but they also interact through different channels. USAJOBS has a strategic opportunity to take better control over its various user channels and streamline, unify, and maximize usability. While the website is the core USAJOBS product, users may find their way to the site through Facebook or Twitter, and their experience should be great no matter where they start. USAJOBS also has control over the site's automatic, system-generated emails. The format and content of these emails should be reviewed and refreshed, as theirs is an important, user-facing piece of the job application process.

Actions

- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Review social media and email marketing touch points and update engagement strategy
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Create new social media templates to standardize posts and increase engagement



- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Create new email marketing templates with new copy
 - A/B test new emails
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Incorporate updated and new visual brand assets across user channels

8. Evangelize OPM & Other Federal Agencies About Content Strategy

USAJOBS has an opportunity to be an exemplar of plain language implementation and content strategy in the federal digital services space. There is a lot of excitement over how technology can transform—and is transforming—government to better serve the American people, and USAJOBS should be a leader in this conversation. USAJOBS.gov is one of the most public-facing website's of the federal government, along with healthcare.gov and whitehouse.gov, and it should embrace this unique position and be a leader in the user-centered product management space.

Actions

- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Create content strategy presentation and workshop and go on a roadshow
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Engage with OPM's Office of Communications, 18F, and other relevant organizations within the agency and federal government
- ✓ **LONG-TERM** Speak at local and national content strategy meet-ups and workshops

Uniting Content & People: The Content Strategy Quad

USAJOBS should adopt The Content Strategy Quad to help it visualize its content strategy and assign requisite resources to execute on that strategy. The Content Strategy Quad was developed by Brain Traffic, a multi-platform content strategy firm, as a visual representation of the critical components of a good content strategy.¹ The four quadrants help achieve a core content strategy by focusing on identifying a product's substance, structure, workflow, and governance—the content and the people.

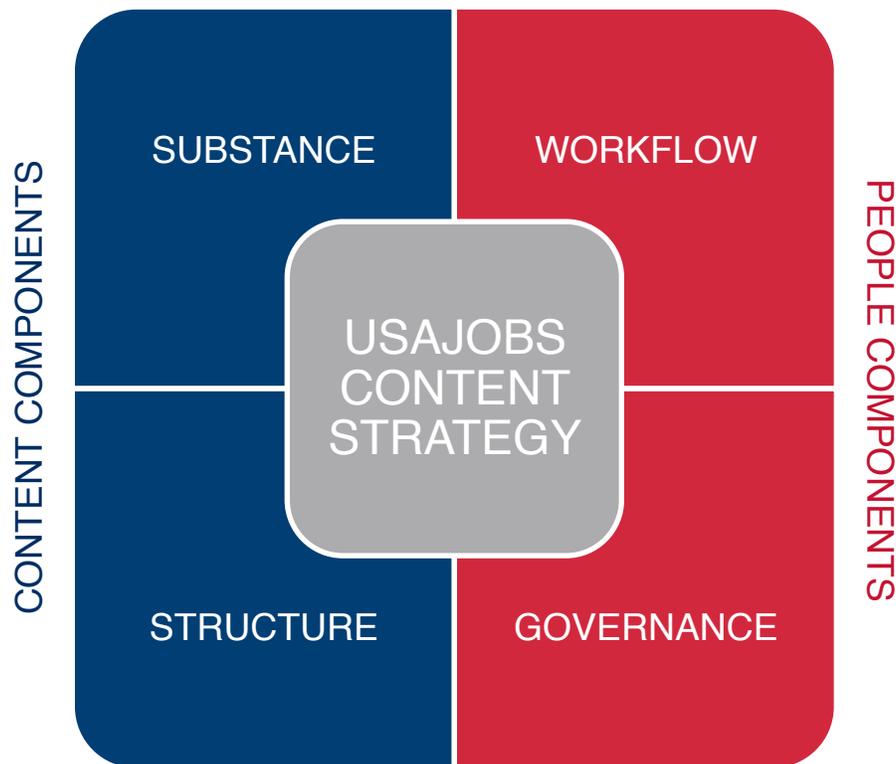
Content Components

- Substance: What kind of content do we need (topics, types, sources, etc.), and what messages do content need to communicate to our audience?
- Structure: How is content prioritized, organized, formatted, and displayed?

People Components

- Workflow: What processes, tools, and human resources are required for content initiatives to launch successfully and maintain ongoing quality?
- Governance: How are key decisions about content and content strategy made? How are changes initiated and communicated?

¹ "Brain Traffic Lands the Quad," Brain Traffic (2011), <http://blog.braintraffic.com/2012/07/from-the-archive-brain-traffic-lands-the-quad/>.



Writing for the Web

Writing for the web is about providing the most amount of information using the least amount of words. There are web-writing standards and best practices USAJOBS should adopt for all content that will help create a better user experience. Three core principles of web writing that the PMO should embrace include the use of active voice, the inverted pyramid style of writing, and the utilization of headings, bullets, lists, and tables to organize and present content.

“Content is king” is an oft-cited maxim of the web, but one that is rarely adhered to by product owners and usability practitioners. Content is often forgotten until the end, once design and development time and money have been spent. But good content is required for great websites that engage users and provide an exceptional user experience. After all, what’s the point of building a house if you aren’t going to furnish it?

Web writing is friendly and conversational. It focuses on shorter sentences and the “chunking” of information so users have smaller bites to digest. There is a heavy use of pronouns to personalize the user experience and make it feel like the site is appealing directly to the user. Visual formatting is also important. For example, when people read something in ALL CAPS in a page’s body they feel like they are being yelled at, which isn’t good. But headings in ALL CAPS communicate importance and immediately draw a user’s eye, which is good.

People don’t read these days. They skim the web quickly and efficiently, gathering the maximum amount of information in the least amount of time. As reported by the federal government’s Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), an average of just 18 percent of people read what’s on a given web



page. Another study by Morkes and Nielsen found that 79 percent of test users always scanned any new web page they came across, with just 16 percent reading word-for-word. Knowing this, it is crucial that the content and IA on websites help users quickly find what they need while also communicating the most important things.

Incorporating Plain Language Practices

The USAJOBS content strategy should incorporate all of the standards and recommendations made by PLAIN, the community of federal employees dedicated to the idea that citizens deserve clear communications from government.

The federal government's plain language initiative originated in the 1990s as a way to simplify dense legal texts and regulations. It has since grown to encompass all federal agency communications with an emphasis on public-facing websites and other digital content. In 2010, President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act into law, requiring that federal agencies use "clear government communication that the public can understand and use."

Federal agency content should be easy to read and understand, and websites and other digital products should adopt modern standards of writing for the web. According to PLAIN, users require three things when using a website:

1. A logical structure so they know where to look for information
2. An easy-to-use interface to get them to that information
3. Easily-understandable information

A website needs all these elements—IA, usability, and plain language—to be successful. USAJOBS does not currently excel in any of these areas, but with a good content strategy could be a federal exemplar of how plain language and an emphasis on usability can transform a product

Active Voice

Active voice makes it clear who is supposed to do what by eliminating ambiguity. In the federal space, it is perhaps the single most important tool for simplifying dense and confusing text for average Americans.

In an active sentence, the person or federal agency is the subject of the sentence. In a passive sentence, the person or item that is acted upon is the subject of the sentence. Passive voice often does not identify who is performing the action, which leads to frustration and confusion for readers and users (i.e. Does this apply to me?). An easy way to maintain an active voice is to construct sentences with the following order:





Passive Sentence Example

The following information must be included in the application for it to be considered complete.

Active Sentence Example

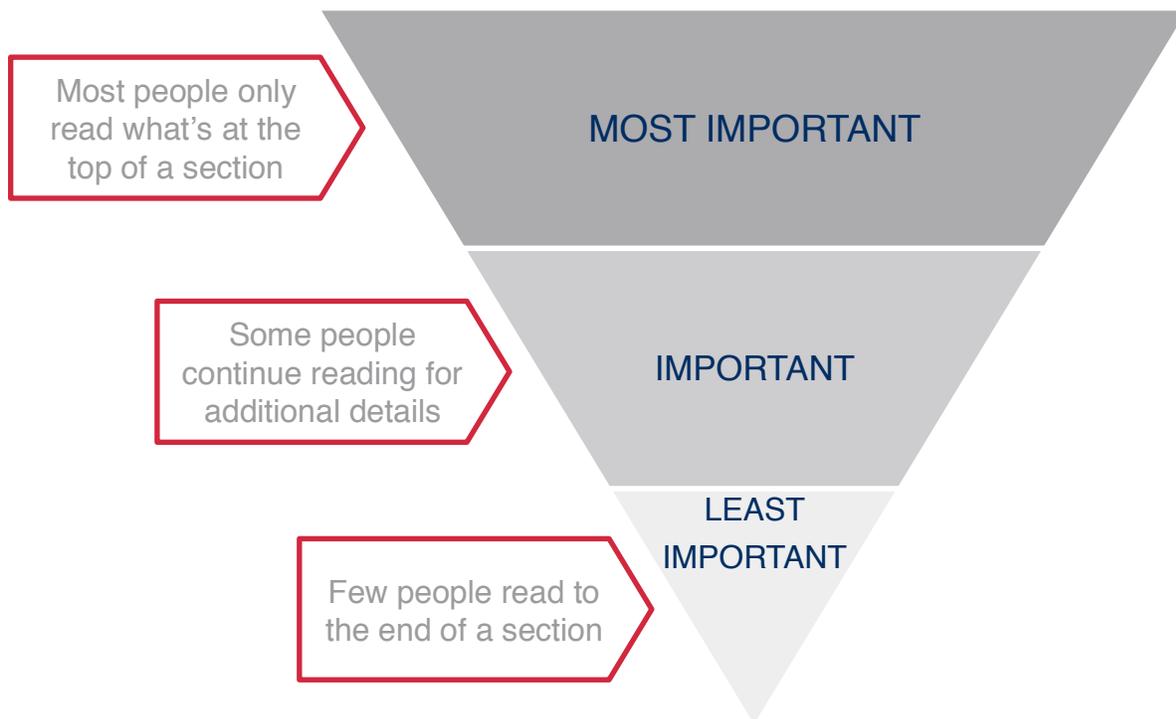
You must include the following information in your application.

Rewriting a website’s copy from passive to active voice is transformative. It establishes immediate consistency across content—from page copy to FAQ to embedded help—while also providing a high level of clarity that reduces user confusion.

The Inverted Pyramid Method of Writing

The inverted pyramid writing method has long been utilized by journalists to structure their newspaper articles. The method provides the most important information at the top—who, what, when, where, why—and then progresses into more detailed information. The benefit to readers is that in just a couple sentences they can quickly find out what they need to know. If readers are interested in learning more they can continue reading. If not, they can move on to another article or section.

The inverted pyramid method is suitable for web writing and has become a standard for web content creators. Using the method, each page or section should begin with a topic sentence that immediately tells readers what they need to know. The body contains more and more details that are useful to its intended audience, which readers will immediately recognize. Whatever’s left at the bottom is information that is not essential but good to know, such as contextual details or recommendations for next steps.





Headings, Bullets, Lists & Tables

Because people only skim web pages, it is essential that content is presented in easily digestible forms. Headings, bullets, lists, and tables are easy ways to standardize content across a website and present it in a visually pleasing way to users. These visual content containers help “chunk” content so that is easy to visually differentiate and digest. The ultimate benefit of using these techniques is that they scale wonderfully on mobile and responsive sites, because content easily stacks.

Headings

Headings and sub-headings should be standard across every single page of a website. Properly doing so quickly communicates to the user the hierarchy and importance of content on any given page, and creates visual standardization from page to page. Typeface, font style, color, and size all contribute to hierarchy.

HEADING 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

Heading 4

Heading 5

Bullets

Bullets turn long, complete sentences into shorter snippets that are easy to scan and read. The style of bullet also can communicate different meanings. For example, checkmarks can communicate action items for the user to review while regular bullets can simply break up a paragraph. Bullets help the user’s eye scan the page and quickly find what they need.

- Alphabetical snippets of information
- Benefit users who want to quickly scan a page
- Creating a better user experience

Did you complete all the steps in your job application?

- ✓ Fill out your profile information
- ✓ Upload your resume
- ✓ Upload your cover letter
- ✓ Review your application
- ✓ Submit your application

Lists

Like bullets, lists reduce the number of words needed to communicate information to the user. Numbered lists are especially good for step-by-step processes that must be completed in order.



1. Sign In to your account
2. Press the Edit Profile button
3. Make your changes
4. Press the Save button

Tables

Tables are a growing necessity for websites because they easily scale on mobile and responsive formats. They also naturally chunk information and visually separate each section, allowing users to quickly find what they need. Like headings, typeface, font style, color, and size all contribute to hierarchy.

JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT	
Job Title:	Associate Product Manager
Department:	U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Salary:	\$75,000 - \$95,000
Location:	Washington, D.C.
Description:	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, sea ea elit harum. Cu vis solum platonem concludaturque, malis velit detracto an mei. In qui epicurei fabellas reprimique, vero zril utroque mel id. Id meis illum ius, vis graece pertinacia adversarium ne. Case prima dolores at his. Cu qui unum errem gloriatur.



Heuristic Content Analysis

Summary

In June 2015, a content analysis of USAJOBS.gov was conducted using 12 heuristics of good website content and information architecture (IA).² A four-point Lickert scale was used, with the following ratings:

1. Strongly deviates from the heuristic
2. Deviates from the heuristic
3. Conforms to the heuristic
4. Strongly conforms to the heuristic

Overall findings from the analysis indicate USAJOBS.gov lacks fundamental components of good content. Results show that nine of 12 heuristics either deviate or strongly deviate from each respective heuristic, indicating the website has core content and IA issues that are detrimental to the user experience. Resource Center is the most problematic section of the website as it lacks proper structure and is a catchall for content, many of it unrelatable to one another and hidden from users.

This heuristic content analysis provides high-level analysis of the website's content, which includes the IA, site navigation, page structure and organization, and page copy (text). This analysis is *not* a content inventory or audit, which focuses on gathering content and logging outdated information and broken links. This analysis is also not exhaustive; rather, it is comprehensive of major content issues and high-level product parts. This analysis does not provide every possible example of any single heuristic, but focuses and presents findings on obvious and immediately impactful parts. Like a new user to the website, the person conducting the analysis is immediately drawn to certain pages and parts, so while the analysis is in many ways subjective it is still a meaningful reflection of how a new user would interact with and interpret the site. There may be overlap among some of the heuristics, and many of the examples provided could apply to multiple heuristics. One part of the website can excel in one heuristic while performing poorly in another heuristic, and many of the examples provided are illustrative and not definitive.

About Heuristic Analysis

Heuristic analysis was developed in the 1990s by Jakob Nielsen and Rolf Molich, based off their seminal concept of “10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design.” Since then, heuristics have become an industry standard for designing and assessing websites and other digital products on their usability.

Heuristic analysis is a prudent way to connect disparate parts of a product into larger themes. It weaves together common threads of usability to compose the big picture of UX. A heuristic content analysis focuses on both content and usability. Rather than conduct a word-for-word content audit, which can only report on outdated content or broken links, heuristics group content into larger, high-level themes that help guide the strategy and work of the product team to focus singularly on the user experience through content.

² Adapted from: “Content Analysis Heuristics,” Leise, F. (2007), Boxes and Arrows, <http://boxesandarrows.com/content-analysis-heuristics/> and “Toward Content Quality,” Jones, C. (2009), UX Matters, <http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2009/04/toward-content-quality.php>.



1. Accessibility

Rating: 3

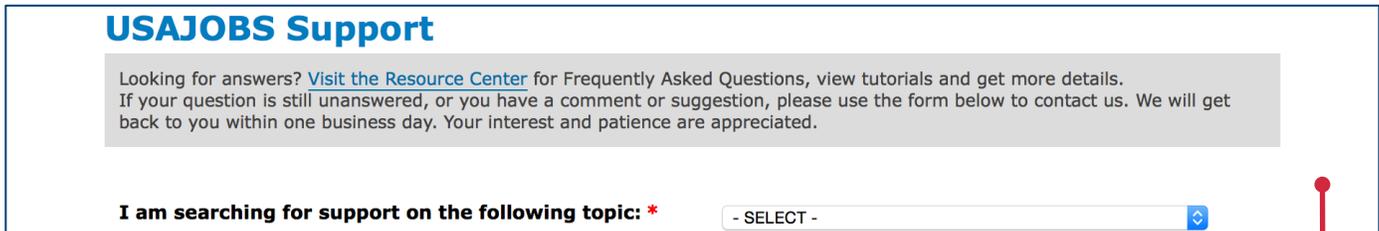
Users should be able to access the content they want through the browsing hierarchy or by using search.

Findings

The website makes most content easily accessible through the current organization. Most users should be able to find the content they need, and content is somewhat grouped together logically and intuitively. The website effectively makes use of three search functions: 1. Basic jobs search, 2. Advanced jobs search, and 3. Site search. However, site search is only found on the Resource Center page. The top-level navigation mostly communicates the core features of the site to users through its current organization. Information in the website footer is limited, which is problematic since many people go to the footer to quickly find the most-requested pages of any given website, and a robust footer is essential for good SEO. The website appears to be Section508 compliant for persons with disabilities.



Top-level navigation is organized appropriately.



Site search is on the Resource Center page but not on the Support page.



The website footer contains bare-minimum information, but should include more.



2. Appropriate Structure

Rating: 1

Organization of content should (1) match users' mental models of the information space and (2) support the differences in users' information-seeking behaviors.

Findings

The website has inconsistent content structures throughout the site, depending on the page or function being performed. The Advanced Search page uses expandable accordions to organize search filters while the Resource Center page uses bulleted lists to present information. The My Account page uses tabs to organize account information while the Support page uses a drop down menu to list help categories. The website does not effectively make use of headings, tables, and lists to consistently and logically present information and content to users. Tables and lists, in particular, are essential to modern web content and a strategic component for responsive web design since information can easily be scaled and stacked.

My Account

Dave Smith

Last Login:
06/24/2015 10:41 AM ET

Last Profile Update:
06/18/2015 10:49 AM ET

[Edit Profile](#)

Did You Know?

Welcome to your USAJOBS account!

Did you know about all the USAJOBS resources to help you find federal job opportunities easier, faster and smarter?

Here's just a few ways USAJOBS can help you:

Navigation

- Home
- Security And Privacy
- Privacy Policy
- Terms and Conditions of Use

Main Page

USAJOBS Resource Center

Seek Advice on the following topics

- About Federal Jobs
- Are you eligible?
- Employment Types
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Forms
- Glossary
- Pay and Benefits
- International Organization Careers
- Federal Occupations
- Federal Occupations by College Major
- SpotlightsAll
- Federal Careers Flyer
- USAJOBS Fact Sheet
- More about USAJOBS
- Protecting Yourself Online
- Tips - ***New items added***
- Tutorials
- What's New at USAJOBS

USAJOBS Support

Looking for answers? [Visit the Resource Center](#) for Frequently Asked Questions, view tutorials and get more details. If your question is still unanswered, or you have a comment or suggestion, please use the form below to contact us. We will get back to you within one business day. Your interest and patience are appreciated.

I am searching for support on the following topic: *

Content structures vary from page to page with little consistency. My Account uses tabs, Resource Center uses bulleted lists, and Support uses a dropdown menu.



3. Audience Relevance

Rating: 4

Different user segments should be able to easily find relevant content.

Findings

This is a website about jobs and content is clearly geared toward job seekers. Immediately on the homepage there is targeted information for four specific groups of job seekers: Individuals with disabilities, veterans, students and recent graduates, and senior executives. Required for both basic and advanced job searches are the US Citizen and Federal Employees modifiers. Since all federal employees are US citizens, but not all US citizens are federal employees, these modifiers should be further clarified with embedded text or a pop-up that does not take the user to a new page. Some discipline around some of the information provided in the Resource Center—who it is geared toward—would further clarify audience relevance.

All job searches require that one of these modifiers is selected, but their titles are confusing and explanatory information is not embedded.

Keyword: *Keywords, Job Title, Control #, Agency, Skills*

Location: *City, State, ZIP Code, or Country*

U.S. Citizens

Federal Employees

Search

[Advanced Search >](#)

[Individuals with Disabilities](#) | [Veterans](#) | [Students and Recent Graduates](#) | [Senior Executives](#)

Specific groups of job seekers are appropriately labeled and linked to pages with in-depth information.



4. Bounded Horizons

Rating: 2

Users should be able to easily understand the breadth of content they are viewing.

Findings

It is not immediately clear where the boundaries of content lie in some parts of the website. Advanced Search and search results have good bounded horizons, because users can clearly understand how many search field options they have and then see paginated search results. This creates definition for the user experience and allows for a high level of user confidence. On the other hand, the Resource Center is an egregious example of lack of bounded horizons. There is no master navigation with top-level pages nor is content organized or prioritized in any particular order. All of the website's help icons link to standalone pages within the Resource Center, and yet there is no inventory of this content for the user to access. The website footer currently provides bare-minimum information, but should also include a site page list and top-requested pages and links, such as password reset, for good SEO and a better user experience.

Navigation

- Home
- Security And Privacy
 - Privacy Policy
 - Terms and Conditions of Use

Main Page

USAJOBS Resource Center

Seek Advice on the following topics

- About Federal Jobs
- Are you eligible?
- Employment Types
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Forms
- Glossary
- Pay and Benefits
- International Organization Careers
- Federal Occupations
- Federal Occupations by College Major
- SpotlightsAll
- Federal Careers Flyer
- USAJOBS Fact Sheet
- More about USAJOBS
- Protecting Yourself Online
- Tips - ***New items added**
- Tutorials
- What's New at USAJOBS

The Resource Center lacks fundamental bounded horizons, such as top- and sub-level navigation and well-organized information. Most of the information is hidden from users.

Password Reset Tips

- At least 8 characters (20 maximum)
- At least one upper case letter
- At least one lower case letter
- At least one number
- At least one of the following symbols: ! @ # \$ % ^ & * ()

Still need help? [Submit a ticket to the USAJOBS Support Desk.](#)

The Support password reset page has good bounded horizons—users know when they've reached the end, and what to do if they still need help.

[Site Map](#) [Privacy Act and Public Burden Information](#) [FOIA](#) [About Us](#) [USA.gov](#)

This is a United States [Office of Personnel Management](#) website.

USAJOBS is the Federal Government's official one-stop source for federal jobs and employment information.

The website footer contains bare-minimum information, but should include more.



5. Clarity & Accuracy

Rating: 2

Users should be able to understand content that is correct, coherent, and logically organized.

Findings

Website content is hit or miss when it comes to clarity and accuracy. For a process as complicated as applying for a federal job, much of the site's verbiage and organization lacks the level of clarity that produces confidence in users. On the Advanced Search page, content is mostly clear and accurate. Users can immediately understand search filters and quickly get search results. On the My Account page, however, content is confusing—why is Account Information on the Profile tab and not the My Account tab? Job Opportunity Announcements (JOAs) is perhaps the most problematic as its structure and copy lack clarity and consistency. This may be a difficult part of the site to control, as individual agencies and hiring managers populate the information, but this is the core reason people come to USAJOBS: To find jobs. The site should present the information in a better way and create stricter guidelines for hiring managers so that JOAs are easy to read and understand.

My Account Contact Information Hiring Eligibility Other Demographic Account Information

Profile **Please Note:** Fields with an (*) are required fields.

Resumes

Saved Searches

Inbox

Username * Username must be between 8 and 20 alphanumeric characters, must contain at least one letter, at least one number and must not contain special characters except underscore(_), ampersand(&) and period(.).

Password * [Change Password](#)

The My Account page is confusing—what's the difference between My Account, Account Information, and Profile?

Overview Duties Qualifications & Evaluations Benefits & Other Info How to Apply

CIVILIAN CAREERS

REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES REAL-LIFE REWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Job Title: SUPERVISORY PROGRAM MANAGER
Department: Department of the Navy
Agency: Naval Sea Systems Command
Hiring Organization: Program Executive Office, Submarines (PEO SUB)
Job Announcement Number: NW50340-15-1437941K0122550

SALARY RANGE: \$126,245.00 to \$158,700.00 / Per Year
OPEN PERIOD: Monday, June 22, 2015 to Monday, June 29, 2015
SERIES & GRADE: GS-0340-15
POSITION INFORMATION: Full Time - Permanent
PROMOTION POTENTIAL: 15
DUTY LOCATIONS: 1 vacancy in the following location:
 Washington Navy Yard, DC [View Map](#)
WHO MAY APPLY: Current Perm USN & USMC Civilian Employee serving under career or career conditional appointments in competitive service., Reinstatement Eligibles, Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA), ICTAP eligible, and Schedule A, Appointment of People with Disabilities.
SECURITY CLEARANCE: Secret

JOAs are chaotic to look at and tedious to read through. Where should a user's eyes go? Content organization is poor and doesn't follow any best practices of web content. As the NextGen site will be responsive, it is critical JOAs are redesigned to be legible on smaller screens.



6. Collocation

Rating: 2

Items with similar content or items about the same topic should be grouped together in one area.

Findings

Collocation for top-level navigation is mostly OK, but other sections are lacking. Home takes you home, Search Jobs takes you to basic or advanced search, and My Account takes you to your account and profile page, which also includes resumes and documents, saved jobs, and application status. What is problematic is the Resource Center and Support pages, which do not collocate the right information for users. Right now the Resource Center has a confused identity. Is it about career resources or support issues? Is it about account creation or help icon definitions? This is also where FAQ live, yet most users will go to a website's help area to find these questions and answers. If USAJOBS aspires to be more than a jobs list, then the Resource Center should exclusively provide job resources and tools for applicants, including tips on writing a cover letter and information for specific groups such as veterans. All support and help issues should live on the Support page, which is more intuitive to users.

Home Search Jobs My Account Resource Center Support

USAJOBS
"WORKING FOR AMERICA"

RESOURCE CENTER

Navigation

- Home
- Security And Privacy
 - Privacy Policy
 - Terms and Conditions of Use

Main Page

USAJOBS Resource Center

Seek Advice on the following topics

- About Federal Jobs
- Are you eligible?
- Employment Types
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Forms
- Glossary
- Pay and Benefits
- International Organization Careers
- Federal Occupations
- Federal Occupations by College Major
- SpotlightsAll
- Federal Careers Flyer
- USAJOBS Fact Sheet
- More about USAJOBS
- Protecting Yourself Online
- Tips - *New items added
- Tutorials
- What's New at USAJOBS

USAJOBS FAQ

Chances are your questions are answered in our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Top Questions

- Simply click [Top Ten FAQ](#) to find our list of most frequently asked questions, or search for answers by a particular topic below.

Categories (Select one of the options below).

- Account Access
- Getting Started
- General Information
- How to Apply
- How to create your resume
- How do I delete my USAJOBS Account
- Job Search
- Mobile Apps
- More General Information

Use the USAJOBS Support link to send us an email

If your question is still unanswered, or you have a comment or suggestion, please click [USAJOBS Support](#) for assistance. We'll get back to you within 1 business day. Your interest and patience are appreciated.

All help and support issues should live on the Support page, but many support issues live in the Resource Center. Why?

Information on the Resource Center homepage is not effectively collocated. These lists of links are in no particular order, and yet they are at the top of the page.

FAQ should be at the top of the page, and should not link to another page.

These categories belong on the My Account and Search Jobs pages. They should be collocated with the right content areas on the site.



7. Consistency

Rating: 1

Content structures in similar content areas should be consistent.

Findings

One of the website’s biggest failures is its lack of consistency for written and visual content. The ways in which content is organized, the visual styles of structures, and page copy differ wildly from page to page, section to section, with little to no consistency. This lack of consistency is detrimental to the user experience. There should be consistency across the site structures, which include headings, typeface style, font sizes, bulleted lists, call-outs, boxes, tabs, and tables. The user needs consistency to quickly understand what they are viewing and its level of importance.

Sign In

Username or Primary/Secondary Email

Password

Forgot your username or password?

Sign In

Don't have a USAJOBS account? [Create a new account](#)

Why can't I log-in to my account?

You must have your correct username or email address and password to access your account. Click [My Account](#). On the right hand side of the page below "Log In", click [Did You Forget Your Username or Password](#) and follow the prompts. If further assistance is needed after following the prompts, click [USAJOBS Support](#).

If you've only forgotten your username, you can use the email address associated with your account to log in. Simply enter your email address in the field provided for your username. If you have forgotten your username and/or password, click [My Account](#). On the right hand side of the page below "Log In", click [Did You Forget Your Username or Password](#) and follow the prompts. If further assistance is needed after following the prompts, click [USAJOBS Support](#).

Return to [Account Access](#)

Word choice for repeat references is inconsistent across the site. In the example above, is it “Sign In” or “Log-In”?

Headings and titles are inconsistent across the site. How can the user quickly assess which information is most important without standardization?

Additional Resources

Welcome Students and Recent Graduates

Top Ten FAQ

Job Title: SUPERVISORY PROGRAM MANAGER

Suggested help topics:

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Looking for a form? Start here.

Bulleted lists across the site are not organized in any particular way. In the example below, the list should at least be alphabetized and the second bullet should not be a question.

USAJOBS Resource Center

Seek Advice on the following topics

- About Federal Jobs
- Are you eligible?
- Employment Types
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Forms
- Glossary
- Pay and Benefits
- International Organization Careers



8. Completeness

Rating: 2

All content mentioned or linked to should exist and be complete.

Findings

There are many instances across the website of the user experience being interrupted due to incomplete content. While much of the information provided on main sections Basic Search, Advanced Search, and My Account is complete, contextual information, help information, and links to external sites is incomplete. A user should have all the information he or she needs when looking at an individual container of information or section, with clear indications on what to do or where to go next on the site. Contextual information should be embedded and help icon content, for example, should pop open within a section instead of opening a new page. Additionally, the Resource Center is missing the sub-navigation on the homepage that is part of the top-level navigation menu. This could not be more confusing to users.

Salary Range and Pay Grade

Salary Range The minimum and maximum amount of pay within a pay grade or pay band for that position. Agencies offers pay for a position depending on their pay setting rules and your qualifications. Each online job announcement notes the specific education and/or experience requirements that are reviewed to create a salary range for that position.

Pay Grade/General Schedule Announcements are also classified by the Federal Government's General Schedule (GS) pay scale. As a result, announcements usually provide the salary as well as their GS equivalents.

Show Only Senior Executive Postings Select this option to search for all Senior Executive Service opportunities that meet the search criteria.

For example: To search for positions that fall within the GS-9 and GS-12 levels, select 9 (as the low) and 12 (as the high) values. Search Results (Refine): To refine your search results by Pay Grade, select a grade level provided in the refine pop-up box.

To review current Federal pay, please click, [Locality Pay](#).

Salary Range

Salary Range

The salary range for a position is typically defined by the minimum and maximum salaries associated with the pay grade or pay band for that position. What an agency offers will depend on their pay setting rules and your qualifications. Please see the announcement for specific education and/or experience requirements for the position.

Pay Grade/General Schedule

Announcements are also classified by the Federal Government's General Schedule (GS) pay scale. As a result, announcements usually provide the salary as well as their GS equivalents.

Search: To search for positions by GS Grade Level, specify a low and high GS level using the provided drop-down lists.

For example: To search for positions that fall within the GS-9 and GS-12 levels, select 9 (as the low) and 12 (as the high) values.

Search Results (Refine): To refine your search results by Pay Grade, select a grade level provided in the refine pop-up box.

To review current Federal pay, visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>.

Top-level Resource Center sub-navigation appears as a drop-down menu, but those same pages are missing from the Resource Center homepage navigation. The user is given an incomplete, confusing navigation structure.

Resource Center	Support
Resource Center - Main Page	
Supplemental Forms	
Individuals with Disabilities	
Veterans	
Students and Recent Graduates	
Senior Executives	
Spotlights	
FAQs	

Pay Grade (GS)

Rate of basic pay associated with a specific level of work or range of difficulty, responsibility and qualification requirements. The GS pay schedule has 15 pay grades and 10 steps in each grade covering more than 400 occupations.

The experience of finding information about salary and pay grade is incomplete and frustrating. On the Advanced Search Salary or Pay Grade filter there are three separate help icons. On click, each of these icons interrupts the user's search by opening a new tab of an individual page in the Resource Center, each with different information. The Locality Pay link on the Salary Range and Pay Grade page opens a "Page not found" error, while the federal page link on the Salary Range page goes to the correct OPM page. The Pay Grade page doesn't even include a link to pay information.



9. Differentiation

Rating: 2

Dissimilar items or items about different subject areas should be placed in different content areas.

Findings

The website differentiates top-level content OK, but page and section content are confusing. Basic Search, Advanced Search, and My Account do a good job of collating similar information and separating dissimilar information. Resource Center and Support, on the other hand, are both amalgams of career resources, help topics, how-to guides, user support, and anything else that doesn't belong in the other three top-level categories. It's clear that Resource Center has become the catchall of content on USAJOBS. It has a confused identity and lacks fundamental structure and organization that would make it useful to users. Most of its content is "hidden," in that it is not easily accessible to users but rather linked to from other places across the site and hosted in the Resource Center. Resource Center should be renamed to something more appropriate, like "Career Center" or "Job Resources," and it should focus its purpose on helping people find a job by providing career resources and information for specific user groups like veterans. All help and site support issues should be moved to the Support page, including FAQ, which should be renamed Help because this is a web standard that users are accustomed to.

Home Search Jobs My Account Resource Center Support

USAJOBS "WORKING FOR AMERICA" RESOU

Resource Center - Main Page
Supplemental Forms
Individuals with Disabilities
Veterans
Students and Recent Graduates
Senior Executives
Spotlights
FAQs

Navigation
Home
Security And Privacy
Privacy Policy
Terms and Conditions of Use

Main Page

USAJOBS Resou

Seek Advice on the following topics

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- USAJOBS Fact Sheet
- More about USAJOBS
- Protecting Yourself Online
- Tips - *New items added
- Tutorials
- What's New at USAJOBS

USAJOBS FAQ

Chances are your questions are answered in our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Top Questions

- Simply click [Top Ten FAQ](#) to find our list of most frequently asked questions, or search for answers by a particular topic below.

Categories (Select one of the options below).

- Account Access
- Getting Started
- General Information
- How to Apply
- How to create your resume
- How do I delete my USAJOBS Account
- Job Search
- Mobile Apps
- More General Information

Use the USAJOBS Support link to send us an email

If your question is still unanswered, or you have a comment or suggestion, please click [USAJOBS Support](#) for assistance. We'll get back to you within 1 business day. Your interest and patience are appreciated.

What is the purpose of Resource Center? Right now, it is trying to be all things to all users, but it doesn't excel at any single function it serves.



10. Information Scent

Rating: 2

Content labels should be appropriately descriptive of content so that users know they are on the proper path to finding the information they are looking for.

Findings

Most top-level information is intuitive and has good information scent (i.e. Basic Search goes to a search page), but once users arrive to certain site sections information scent becomes diluted. The site lacks consistency, collocation, and differentiation in areas with poor information scent, such as the job search buttons on pages for specific user groups, Resource Center, and Support. Resource Center provides little indication of the breadth of content it houses, and confuses users by combining career resources with help issues. Lock icons next to linked words throughout the site are problematic, as they indicate to the user that the content may be off-limits to them. Links on the homepage for specific user groups such as veterans have poor information scent, because it's not clear if the links go to corresponding search pages (no) or to informational pages (yes).

Now that you have a good grasp of the Federal employment process, It's time to begin your search. Be sure to visit the [USAJOBS Resource Center](#). There you will find:

- Tutorials
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Resume Builder
- And Much More...

Click below to return to the USAJOBS home page to begin your Federal job search:

[Search Jobs](#)

On the Veterans page, the Search Jobs button indicates to users that it will search jobs only veterans are eligible for, yet it just goes to the USAJOBS homepage. This is poor information scent.

Under President Obama's leadership, the Federal Government has taken steps to help students and recent graduates join the Federal service. New opportunities will appear on USAJOBS as agencies post them. We encourage you to visit this site periodically, or set up a [saved search](#).

[Find Internships](#)

[Find Recent Graduate Jobs](#)

On the Students and Recent Graduate page, the Find Internships button goes to a search results page for internships and the Find Recent Graduate Jobs goes to a search results page for entry-level positions. This is good information scent.



11. Multiple Access Paths

Rating: 3

Because users think about content in different ways, they should be able to take multiple paths to get to specific content.

Findings

The website makes a good effort at providing multiple access paths to highly desirable content. Users come to USAJOBS to search jobs, and the site provides a basic search bar at the top of most pages (Resource Center is an exception, since its search bar is for contained Resource Center search). The site should create a more robust footer with links to the most requested information and pages users seek. For example, if password reset is the most requested help issue, it should be linked everywhere: The footer, the header, the sign in screen, the My Account page, and the Support page. Different users think to look in different places for the same content, so it is the job of the website to anticipate these different ways of thinking and provide multiple access paths where and when appropriate.

Home Search Jobs My Account Resource Center Support

Welcome Dave! | Sign out

USAJOBS
"WORKING FOR AMERICA"

Keyword: Location:

Keywords, Job Title, Control #, Agency City, State, ZIP Code, or Country

Search

[Advanced Search >](#)

Resource Center Support

- Resource Center - Main Page
- Supplemental Forms
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Veterans
- Students and Recent Graduates
- Senior Executives
- Spotlights
- FAQs

Basic Search is available to users on most pages, offering multiple access paths to the site's core feature: Jobs search.

Multiple access paths, such as on the homepage or in the top-level navigation, to information for specific user groups allow different ways for users to access important information.

Keyword: Location:

Keywords, Job Title, Control #, Agency, Skills City, State, ZIP Code, or Country

U.S. Citizens

Federal Employees

Search

[Advanced Search >](#)

[Individuals with Disabilities](#) | [Veterans](#) | [Students and Recent Graduates](#) | [Senior Executives](#)



12. Voice & Style

Rating: 1

All content should have a consistent voice and style.

Findings

The website lacks a consistent voice and style in all of its copy and page formatting. Page content seems to be a combination of developer-populated terms, pasted text from other federal agency documentation, and original verbiage created by different people through the years. If there were one word to describe the current voice of USAJOBS it would be “bureaucratic.” It’s the embodiment of what people think when they think of the federal government: Formal, stodgy, confusing, contradictory, dead-ended, labyrinthine, and useless. Voice, style, and taxonomy are so important for any website, particularly one that deals with people’s careers and livelihoods. The site should introduce a new, friendly voice that is in-line with contemporary web writing and reading standards. It also needs basic consistency for the taxonomy of content—how content is named, classified, organized, and visually presented to users. Is it “Federal Government” or “federal government,” are page sub-headings capitalized or not, are support issues presented as questions or statements?

How do I delete my USAJOBS Account

To delete your USAJOBS account:

- 1. Sign into your USAJOBS account.
- 2. Click on **Edit Profile** from the **My Account page**.
- 3. Click on **5. Account Information**.
- 4. Scroll down near the bottom of the page and click on **Delete My Account**.
- 5. Read the message and click on **Confirm Deletion** in the pop-up box.
- 6. Read the message and click **OK**.
- 7. You will receive an email stating when your account will be deleted. If you wish to rescind this delete request, you will need to log into your account prior to the completed deletion date.

Issues with voice and style:

1. The heading is not consistently capitalized and is missing a question mark
2. Some words are bolded but some are not
3. The list utilizes both bullets and numbers, but should only utilize one or the other
4. Step 7 is not an action item for the user, so should not be numbered/bulleted

Jobs for Federal Employees

Federal employees who have worked for a federal agency for 3 years or more are allowed to apply for federal opportunities open to status candidates.

Status applicants refers to those individuals who are current or former Federal civilian employees who hold or held non-temporary appointments in the competitive service, not the excepted service. Individuals with status are eligible for noncompetitive movement within the competitive service because they are now or previously were serving under career-type appointments in the competitive service.

Status applicants may be eligible for the following under merit promotion procedures:

- Restoration Rights
- CTAP/ICTAP
- Transfer
- Reinstatement
- Interchange Agreements

(http://www.opm.gov/hr_practitioners/lawsregulations/appointingauthorities/index.asp#InterchangeAg)

NOTE: Certain veterans eligible under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) may also apply and be considered under vacancy announcements limited to status candidates. For information and eligibility, click [VEOA](#).

Issues with voice and style:

1. “Status candidates” and “Status applicants” are used interchangeably
2. “Federal” is inconsistently capitalized and not capitalized
3. “Status applicants” is bolded
4. One external link is a full URL and the other is a hot-linked word
5. The bulleted list is not organized in any particular way, so should be alphabetized