

User Research Key Findings

Colorado Uplift Website

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In coordination with the [Boulder/Longmont UX Research Meetup](#)

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Executive Summary

The following report provides basic data on the Colorado Uplift website, www.coloradoulift.com, as evaluated by a team of four user experience researchers of varying levels of experience. Therefore, the scope of the project was to delve into areas of improvement without aiming to be comprehensive. Findings suggest that Colorado Uplift should focus on the homepage, donation page, and consistent, accessible colors.

Project Overview

This project was provided as a pro bono opportunity for Colorado Uplift to find out how real users were approaching and experiencing the site, with the hopes that the Colorado Uplift team could use the data to inform improvements and thereby provide better experiences for all people wishing to engage with Colorado Uplift. The analysis of the site was conducted in Dec 2020 through February 2021 as a series of “giving back” sessions conducted by the professional networking groups [Boulder/Longmont UX Research Meetup](#) managed by Alaina Beaver, who had the idea to harness the holiday spirit by aiding and providing valuable digital expertise to organizations in the Colorado community who likewise “give back” to people through their services.

Methods

Heuristic Evaluation

A [heuristic evaluation](#) is a usability study where evaluators examine an interface and measure it against [usability principles](#). The four researchers working on this project all served as evaluators for the Colorado Uplift website. Each evaluator progressed through the website and noted areas that did not comply with the usability principles. The evaluations were then compiled and analyzed.

Usability Interview

The team of researchers worked together to compile a list of questions to ask nine volunteer participants who had no prior knowledge of Colorado Uplift. Each researcher conducted two to three interviews with one to two participants at a time. Each interview was approximately thirty minutes. The questions were centered around understanding initial impressions of the site, assessing a user’s understanding of Colorado Uplift’s purpose and the user journey to donate and to stay connected. Participants were observed in their user behaviors and were encouraged

to engage in think-aloud narration to explain to the researchers why they were doing what they were doing, what their thoughts were, etc. Researchers took notes during each interview and recorded some of the interviews as well. The notes from the interviews were then compared and refined to eliminate redundancies for the purposes of this report.

Survey

The team of researchers worked together to compile two surveys. One survey was reviewed and edited by the Colorado Uplift team before being sent to the Colorado Uplift mailing list. The second survey was sent to the Boulder/Longmont User Research Meetup email list. Both surveys focused on assessing a user's impression of the Colorado Uplift site. The survey for the Colorado Uplift mailing list included additional questions to better understand respondents and their relation to Colorado Uplift. Because most meetup recipients were unfamiliar with Colorado Uplift, the survey asked them to open the website and accomplish a task at the time.

Key Findings

Homepage Issues

1. Many users across methods noted that the homepage does not clearly articulate the function of Colorado Uplift.
 - a. **Recommendation:** The top of the home page should clearly articulate the function and purpose of Colorado Uplift.
2. Because the top image takes up the entire screen, many users didn't realize that they could scroll down the page.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Use a smaller image at the top.
3. The valuable top area on the page has little content, which requires that users scroll to get any information.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Make it clear that additional content is available if the user scrolls.

Donation Issues

1. The donation form has inconsistent spacing and sizing which affects user confidence.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Clean up the form to use the same spacing and sizing throughout.
2. The donation page does not clearly articulate where money is spent. The "Designation" field is unclear to many users.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Use the space at the top of the page to articulate where money is spent. Add more explanation to the "Designation" field.

3. Having a separate form behind a button for monthly donations was confusing to some users.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Combine the monthly and single donation forms into one donation form with additional options for a monthly donation.

Color Issues

1. Navigation colors often blend into the background.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Adjust navigating colors to contrast with backgrounds. Use fewer background colors to avoid blending issues.
2. Button colors are inconsistent. Grey buttons look disabled to some users.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Use a consistent button style across the site. Avoid the grey buttons.
3. Some text has low contrast with the background it is on, making it difficult to read.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Use the [WCAG color contrast checker \(Chrome extension\)](#) to ensure that text colors have a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5 with their backgrounds.

Volunteering Page Issues

1. Information on volunteering is unclear.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Provide more information on what volunteers do, especially if there are different types of volunteering. Include the time commitments to give new users a better sense of what they might be signing up for.
2. Providing only an email to sign up for volunteer opportunities may discourage some people to sign up.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Create a volunteer sign up form on the site so users don't have to send an email to get more information.

Content Issues

1. There is a lot of content on the site, making it harder to find specific information quickly.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Reduce the amount of unnecessary copy and simplify the information into digestible bits.
2. Some information is vague and unclear.
 - a. **Recommendation:** Provide clear information on areas of importance.

Detailed Findings

Heuristic Evaluation

1. Button styles currently differ in color, size, capitalization, and font across the website. Having a consistent button will increase user recognition and confidence.
2. The navigation default and hover color is the same as some of the page section background colors. This makes it hard to tell where the navigation is or what page the user is currently on.
3. Right now clicking on a success story updates that image tile to have a blue overlay but there is no indication that a story for that student has appeared further down on the page. This interaction is likely to cause confusion with users.
4. The current donation form has inconsistent spacing and vertical alignment of placeholder text in input fields. Additionally, the “make it monthly” button is separated from the rest of the field and does not indicate that it will take you to a new page. Having a clean form will build confidence with users.
5. Currently, there is no information on how the donated money will be used. Additionally, there is no information on who Dr. Kent Hutcheson and why you can make a donation in his honor.

Usability Interview

Initial Impressions

1. After looking at the homepage, most participants identified Colorado Uplift was a non-profit, but were unsure about the purpose of the organization.
2. Three participants mentioned the hero image being large but lacking informative information. These participants also did not realize that the page had additional content below the hero image.

Understanding Colorado Uplift’s purpose

1. Majority of users went to the “About Us” page first when asked to figure out the purpose of Colorado Uplift. However, many users did not find the information sufficient to describe the purpose and navigated to additional pages before answering.
2. Some participants went through multiple pages to find information, and mentioned that there is a lot of information on the pages and that some of the information and wording are vague and unclear. Some participants even mentioned they would not take the time to read the website and would abandon it. However, participants found stats and graphics useful and some mentioned wishing there were more present.

Donating and Volunteering

1. Donation set up was confusing for most participants. Some thought only monthly donations were allowed and other participants thought only one time donations were accepted.
2. Some users mentioned they liked knowing how their money would be used to help the organization. This information exists on the monthly donation page but it is frustrating to users to navigate to that page to get this information.
3. Some participants felt that there could be a better way for volunteers to sign up without having to send an email.

Staying Connected

1. Five participants looked for the mailing list subscription somewhere on the page they were on, but were not able to find it.

Survey

With regards to questions directly pertaining to the Colorado Uplift website, the quantitative results were more positive and the qualitative results more limited from the member survey than the results from the survey that was sent to the meetup mailing list. This was likely due to two factors:

- First, the member survey recipients may not have used the Colorado Uplift website recently, while the meetup survey recipients were asked to accomplish a task using the website and thus had very recent experience using it.
- Second, most of the meetup survey recipients had experience with web design and/or usability in a professional capacity.

Quantitative findings included the following:

- Colorado Uplift member survey recipients gave an ease of use score of 8.88 on a 10 point scale.
- UX meetup survey recipients gave an ease of use score of 8.17 on a 10 point scale.
- In terms of keywords from the meetup recipients, the most common positive word was modern (10) followed by clean (6).
- The most common negative word from the meetup recipients was cluttered (3), followed by confusing, empty, and busy (1).
- The Colorado Uplift mailing list recipients did not have a keyword question.

The most common qualitative feedback included the following:

- On the member list, many members said the site was easy to navigate and read (11 users).
- The page required a large amount of scrolling to get the necessary information (5 users).

- The top image on the home page takes up too much space and it isn't clear that users can scroll (3 users).
- The home page lacks a clear, concise statement that defines what Colorado Uplift does (3 users).

Appendix

[Usability Study compiled results](#)

[Heuristic Evaluation compiled results](#)

[Survey \(Existing Customers\)](#)

[Survey \(External\)](#)

[WCAG Accessibility Guidelines](#)