

Site Title: Rand Corporation

Site: www.rand.org

Site Author/Webmaster: Rand Corporation

Evaluation Contact Person: Justin A Hood
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Goal(s) and Learning Outcomes of the Project

To better understand this project's purpose(s), it is essential to understand its parts. The purpose of this project serves many purposes. First, as an Instructional Design, Development, & Evaluation (IDD&E), student, there are twenty-two "Instructional Designer Competencies" outlined by the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI) that Instructional Designers are expected to demonstrate, to a prescribed level of expertise listed as Advanced, Essential, or Managerial. IPSTPI's competencies include Instructional Designers advanced competency to "Apply data collection and analysis skills in instructional design projects" at an "advanced" level of expertise (Professional Foundations, Competency 4), and to "select and use analysis techniques for determining instructional content" at an "essential" level of knowledge (Planning and Analysis (8)) (IPSTPI, 2012).

The second part of this project includes the student, me, selecting and submitting a website in the educational field that interests us to our professor for the professor's evaluation and subsequent approval or denial. The third part of this project includes a curriculum about evaluating websites and tools and resources to assist our assessment. The fourth part of this project includes our evaluation of our chosen website and two other evaluations completed by whomever we choose. The fifth part of this project includes compiling, analyzing, and synthesizing our website's evaluations and subsequently reporting the results in a manner to which I am doing in this report. Finally, after submitting this report, our professor and peers are presented our information to review and provide their comments and feedback to address in our words before final submission.

This report serves as the basis to report the results of my evaluation of the Rand Corporations Website. To prevent bias, this report includes my assessment and that of two other neutral and disinterested people. This report contains my evaluation analysis, the criteria, methods, and instruments used in the evaluation, and my recommendations and suggestions on improving www.rand.org.

Website Overview

Purpose

According to Rand's website, www.rand.org serves to "help policymakers make decisions based on the best available information" (Rand, 2021). Further, according to rand.org, their research is fueled by the best data, most robust methods, and brightest minds to provide high-quality research and analysis on www.rand.org (Rand, 2021). As such, www.rand.org provides unbiased, partisan-free, transparent, and open study to the public (Rand, 2021).

Intended Audience

Rand's website states to provide the results of their research and analysis to everyone worldwide, free of charge, and clearly understood.

Special and Unique Features

www.rand.org website contains an absorbent amount of information about almost any topic imaginable. www.rand.org includes and unique analysis and breakdown of the education level of their researchers, the biographies of their researchers, by research category, and by geographic location.

Evaluation

Criteria and Method's used

This report used two tools to evaluate www.rand.org: Arnone & Small (1999) Content Validity Scale and the Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional (v. 2.0). Together, these tools evaluated www.rand.org for its aesthetics, ease of use, and accessibility. The instrument(s) used for this evaluation included the Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE).

The content validity scale is a ten-question survey created by Ruth V. Small (Syracuse University) and Marilyn P. Arnone (Creative Media Solutions), which they published in their book titled "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Web Sites." According to Small & Arnone, the content validity scale addresses businesses concern about their Web sites and whether their Web site will: (1) attract both searchers and surfers, (2) interest them long enough to thoroughly explore the site, (3) motivate them to purchase their product or service, and (4) encourage them to return to rite and recommend the site to others (2000).

The Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional (v. 2.0) lists 32 items used by evaluators who rate each of the 32 items with a numerical rating of 0 to 3 or "Not Applicable" (NA). However, when using "NA" evaluators are further instructed to

re-evaluate the NA's and score each NA with a "0" if the evaluator felt the website would benefit from the item listed as NA, score the NA as "1" if the evaluator felt the website did not require that item, and score NAs with a "2" if the evaluator believed that the website was better off "not" including that item.

After rating each of the 32 items asked, evaluators then are instructed to transcribe their scores to four predetermined categories that list the item number (question asked) in one of the four categories and total eight (8) items in each category. The four types are Stimulating, Meaningful, Organized, and Easy-To-Use.

After transferring the 32 ratings to their appropriate category, evaluators are then instructed to plot their ratings on a graph using a vertical plane and three categories. The vertical plane has a numerical value of 0 to 24 and three categories of the vertical plane. A numerical value of 0 thru 8 is categorized as "Needs Much Improvement." A numerical value of 9 thru 16 is classified as "Needs Some Improvement." Finally, categories 17 thru 24 as "Highly Motivating."

After graphing the four categories, the instructions then direct the evaluator to combine the scores from the "Stimulating" and "Meaningful" categories that, when combined, provides the "V" score or Value dimension: How stimulating and meaningful the Web site is. The instructions then direct the evaluator to connect the "Organized" and "Easy-to-Use" scores, which provide the summary motivations score on the expectation for success dimension: How organized and easy to use the Web site is.

Evaluator Information

The Evaluators used to conduct this evaluation include:

Lead Evaluator and Originator:

Justin Hood, Graduate Student
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Additional Team-members:

Jason Hellstrom
Instructional Design, Development, & Evaluation (IDD&E)
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"Name Intentionally Withheld"

LCSW, El Paso Behavioral Health Systems
Master of Social Work & Master of Public Health
University of Southern California & American Military University

Analysis and Synthesis

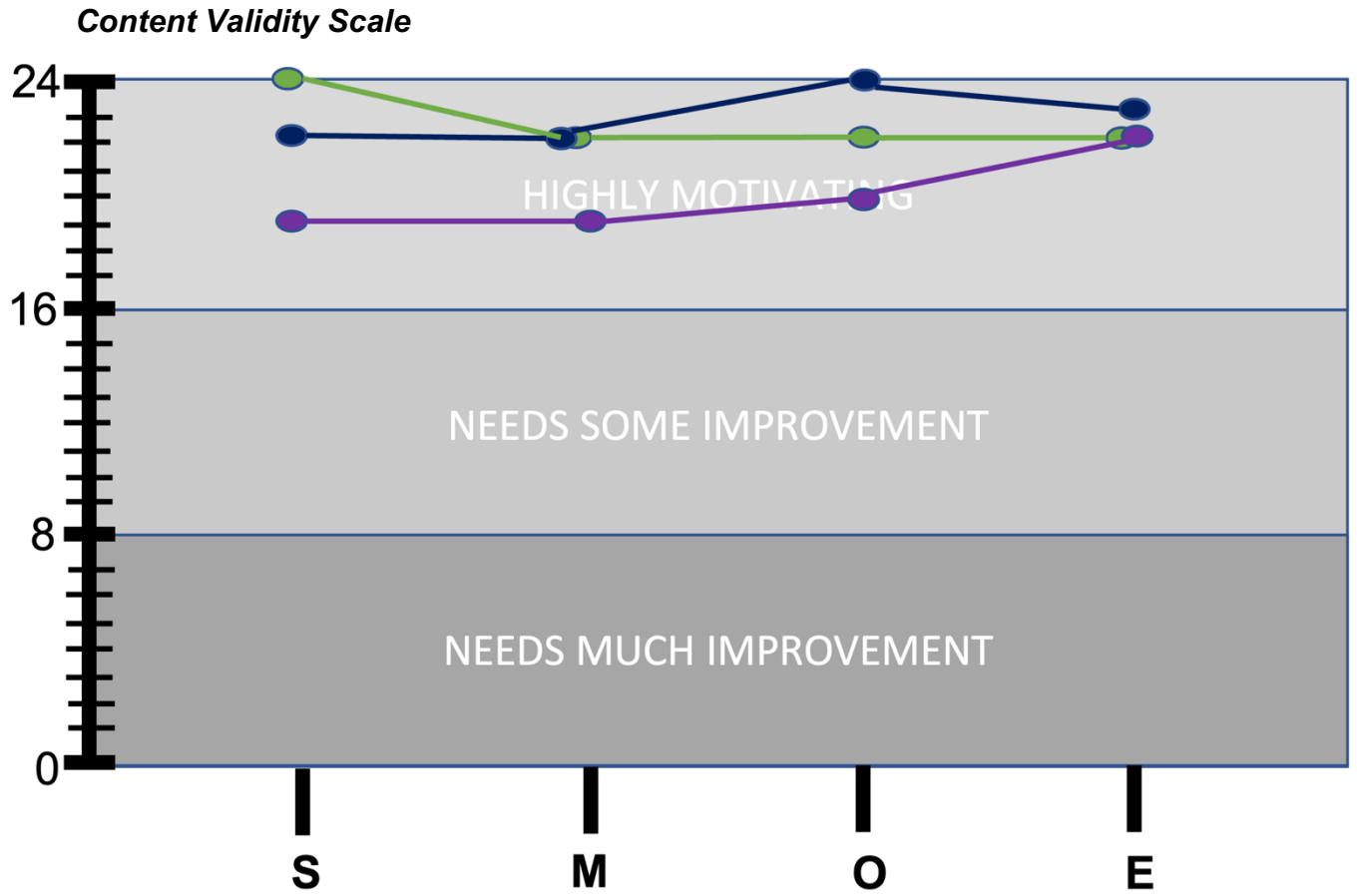
Analyze and synthesize the data as a result of each evaluation; the data was first input separately as described above. Next, the information was inputted using color coding to distinguish between the evaluator and the subsequent results; combining the data allowed easy analysis and synchronization.

Project Results

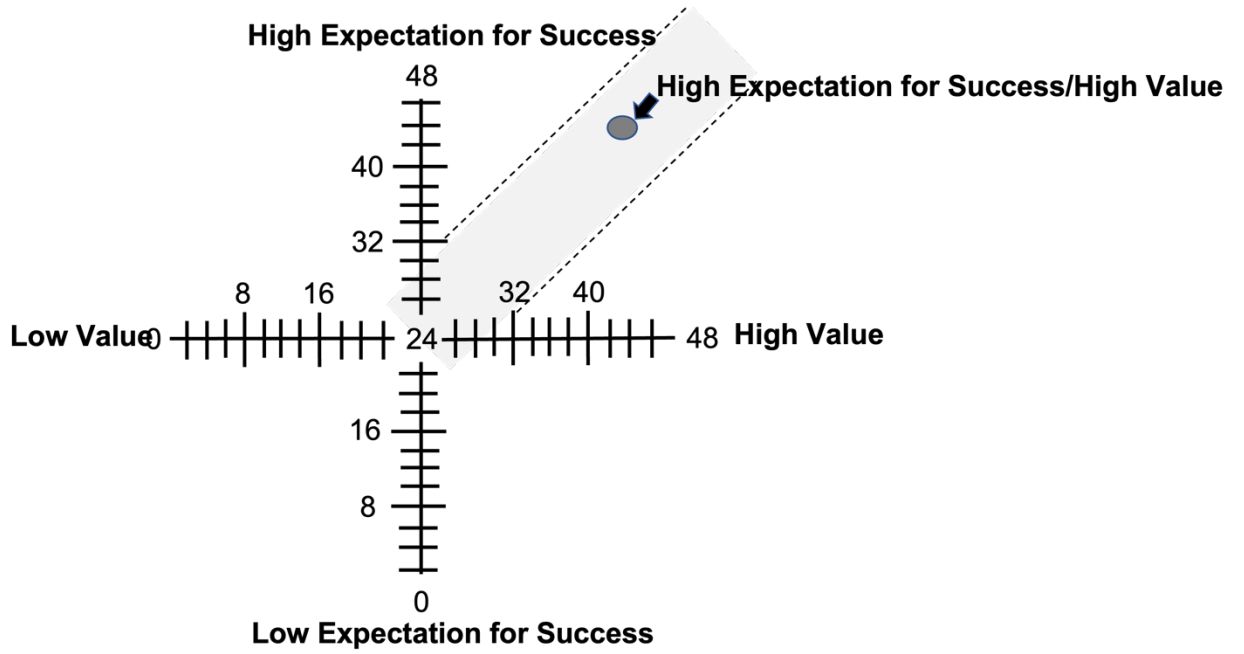
Evaluation Results

Content Validity Score:

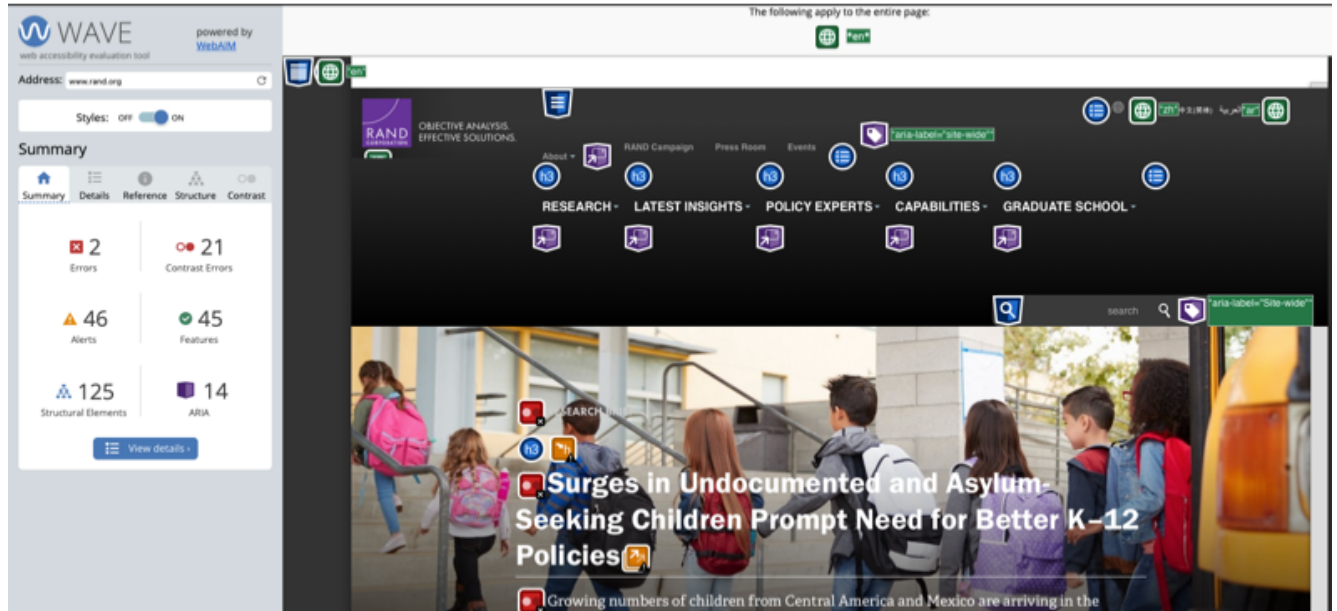
| Q. No | Description | Average Score (Scale: 1 to 5 Weight: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) |
|-------|---|---|
| 1. | The source of information for this Web site is credible. | 4.7 |
| 2. | There is a way to contact the author of this Web site, if necessary. | 5 |
| 3. | The factual information or content of the Web site seems accurate. | 4.7 |
| 4. | If the Web site presents concepts or principles in its domain (e.g. science, art), they are appropriately presented without confusing or missing information. | 5 |
| 5. | There are no typographical or spelling errors that could potentially cause the information at this Web site to be misunderstood. | 5 |
| 6. | The content is appropriate for the intended audience. | 5 |
| 7. | The links from this site appear to be credible. | 4.7 |
| 8. | The Web site appears to be free of bias. | 4.7 |
| 9. | The information at this Web site is current enough for the type of information it includes. | 5 |
| 10. | The links from this Web site appear current and unbiased. | 4.7 |



WebMAC Professional (v. 2.0)



Wave Evaluation



Evaluation Findings, Interpretation, and Synthesis

The Rand Corporation's Web site (www.rand.org) scored tremendously on all scales. At first glance, the Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool, WAVE, appears to show significant concerns. After further evaluation of the results and comparing these results to those of similar Web sites, rand.org again scored above average.

In terms of Stimulating, Motivating, Organization, and Easy-To-Use, rand.org scored in the middle to high-end maximum allowable score. Rand.org has appealing features and color schemes, and after first entering the Web site, users are drawn into the area and often want to learn more about the Rand Corporation and its purpose.

Rand.org presents transparency and openness about their research, the methods used to conduct it, and its purpose openly on their website.

Recommendations/Suggestions for Improvement

www.rand.org does offer ways for users to connect with them, Embedded Twitter, etc. Rand.org also has links to the webmaster and other prominent people in the corporation. However, Rand.org could benefit from incorporating a way for interested parties to contact authors or experts to seek clarification about the research published. In doing so, this will allow users to cite Rand's research effectively and serve as a means of peer-review. Rand failing to include a way to contact them about their published research could present arrogance, pompousness, or their unwillingness to receive or accept feedback about the research they conducted.

Rand expressly states that their research aims to aid policymakers in making educated and thoughtful policy decisions. However, Rand.org does not clarify what policy, area, or policy recommendation(s) derived from their research. The research published on Rand.org discusses policy and recommendations about policy changes, but rand.org would serve to benefit from remaining transparent when including their policy recommendations as part of the article description/abstract listing on rand.org.

Reflection on this Experience

When reflecting on this experience, a few thoughts come to my mind. My first thought is about an expression that I heard long ago. Numbers do not lie, but people who use numbers do. That expression served as a reminder throughout this project to remain unbiased and prevent those reading this article from perceiving a bias in the data presented. Research is a time-consuming process that one should not rush. It is equally valid that research needs peer-reviewed to determine it is credible and unbiased. Without a peer-review, published research should be considered as credible as articles found on Facebook.

References and Resources

- Arnone, M., & Small, R. (2021a, September 17). *Assignment 1: Website evaluation: Content validity scale*. Retrieved from Blackboard. Syracuse.edu:
https://blackboard.syracuse.edu/ultra/courses/_458168_1/cl/outline
- Arnone, M., & Small, R. (2021b, September 17). *Assignment 1: Website evaluation: Website Motivational Analysis Checklist (WebMAC) Professional*. Retrieved from Blackboard.Syracuse.edu:
https://blackboard.syracuse.edu/ultra/courses/_458168_1/cl/outline
- RAND Corporation provides objective research services and public policy analysis.*
(n.d.). <https://www.rand.org>
- Small, R. V., & Arnone, M. P. (1970, January 1). *Evaluating the effectiveness of web sites*. IGI Global. Retrieved September 27, 2021, from <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/evaluating-effectiveness-web-sites/22195>