

George Washington University Hospital: The Area's Healthiest Hospital Website

VIENNA, VA - March 13, 2001 - By 2005, 88.5 million people will use the Internet for health information.¹ For residents in the DC metropolitan area looking for an online environment in which to seek healthcare related information, which local hospital has the "healthiest" website?

BCSwebservices.net analyzed six hospitals' websites in the DC metropolitan area focusing on website fitness, which contributes to a positive user experience. George Washington University Hospital's website ranked first, when compared to other local hospitals' websites. The other hospitals included in the analysis were Georgetown University Hospital, Inova Fairfax Hospital, Children's National Medical Center, Suburban Hospital, and Washington Hospital Center.

And what makes a site healthy, and therefore poised for success?

"While the site's real efficacy comes from its ability to meet its intended objective, which may vary across business units, there are several fundamental key elements that are critical to a successful site," explains Maggie Fisher, Director of the Project Management Group at BCSwebservices.net.

In this analysis, hospitals' websites were compared based on the following key elements that affect user experience:

1. Navigation
2. Cross Linking
3. Load Time
4. Search Engine Friendly

Navigation

Net users are very much goal oriented and they usually skim over the site in order to reach their intended goal. Users don't have the patience to "drill down" a page if the information is hidden deep within the site.

Through a random poll conducted on 250 sites, 79% of net surfers polled agreed that navigation is the most important characteristic of a website, and only 66% were satisfied.²

"When analyzing the navigation structure of a site," says Aida Arar, a web analyst at BCSwebservices.net, "there are two basic things we look at: the ease of navigating around the site, which is measured by the number of clicks it takes a user to get to a specific page, and how far a user must scroll down a page to get the information they need."

In the analysis, BCSwebservices.net found that users can reach 98% or more of the George Washington University Hospital and Children's National Medical Center's web pages within three clicks or less from the home page. This click rate is considered the industry standard for easy navigation. See table below for results of all other hospitals included in the analysis.

¹ "CyberCitizen Health", Cyber Dialogue

² "Navigation: An E-Commerce Must", by David Lake, TheStandard.com, April 17, 2000

Cross Linking

Another important aspect of a site is the cross linking between pages. Almost 84% of net users polled by Jupiter Research leave the site due to broken links and slow load time.³ While every website may contain imperfections that affect the user experience, some imperfections are technical or structural deficiencies that often initiate greater user dissatisfaction than others. But overall, any imperfections may be looked at as landmines that website proprietors don't want users to come across.

Children's National Medical Center's website had 234 broken links and 28 missing pages/images at the time of the analysis. With the exception of the George Washington University Hospital website, all of the other websites contained broken links or missing pages.

What are the chances that users who stumble over these broken links will return to the site? "If users can't achieve their set objective when surfing your website, they soon lose patience and look for more well maintained online environments," says Marian Wasem, Senior Manager, BCSwebservices.net Testing and Quality Assurance Unit.

Load Time

According to Nielson NetRatings, almost 88% of Net users travel the Internet at a connection speed of 56Kbps or less. Graphically intensive websites, animation files, large document files, and other heavy website content, which increase the page sizes and load time, can easily discourage users with modestly powered modems.

"Pages of 65k or more will negatively affect the download time on slower modems and, therefore, the user experience," says Michelle Nelson, Director of the Creative Group at BCSwebservices.net. The analysis found that Children's National Medical Center's website had an average page size of 70.6k, with 60% of the site pages weighing in at more than 100k. That is a large page size for average modem connectivity, especially if the bulk of users are using residential Internet connections.

Search Engine Friendly

Effective usage of meta tags, titles, and keywords will help promote the site and make information accessible to users. A survey by Roper Starch found that one third of net users spend more than two hours every week searching the Net and a NEC Research found that 80% of users fulfill their search expectations when searching.⁴

None of Georgetown University Hospital's website pages contain meta tags, and while other hospitals' sites in our analysis use them, still many pages within the site are not tagged at all. George Washington University Hospital made the most effective use of metadata by including meta tags on all index pages and documents in their website.

Maximizing on Website Investment

³ "Quick and Easy", by David Lake, TheStandard.com, February 26, 2001

⁴ "Engines Idling Roughly", by David Lake, TheStandard.com, February 09, 2001

Rami Abuhamdeh, CEO of BCSwebservices.net, explains, "Companies with large or content heavy websites may spend significant capital on developing their web assets, but fail to consider that implementing a *continued care and evaluation program* is a must have in order to safeguard return on investment from the millions of dollars invested."

In order to develop a fact-based foundation for making further investment decisions, all web assets must be placed in an environment of continual assessment and maintenance. A Gartner Group study shows that through 2004, 70% of enterprises that consider their website a failure will do so because of under-investing, rather than over-investing in their sites.⁵ But companies must have a way of measuring their web assets in order to better manage further investment on it.

Scott Castleman, Director of Strategic Development at BCSwebservices.net suggests, "Gathering, analyzing, and measuring web asset performance data and infrastructure problems on a regular basis is the only way to develop a fact-based foundation that business decision-makers need to help them determine what further capital expenditures on their web assets are a good idea, and which may be a waste of resources."

BCSwebservices.net helps companies by providing the ability to outsource the work of continual assessment and evaluation of their web assets. Scott Castleman continues, "we bring to the decision-maker the facts from monthly assessment of their web asset and work with them to determine why that web asset is not achieving the business needs attached to it, and what to do about it."

BCSwebservices.net is located in VIENNA, VA. The company strives to deliver high quality web development and web asset care that will ensure Net users' satisfaction and the clients' best returns on their web investments. For more information about BCSwebservices.net or to learn more about the products and services we offer, please visit our website at www.bcswebservices.net or you can call 703 790 8081 x114.

Members of the media seeking additional information about this press release please contact us at 703-790-8081 x155.

⁵ "Does the Internet Really Change Everything", by Scott Nelson, Gartner.com, January 25, 2001

The following table contains the results for all websites included in this analysis. All results are based on analyses performed during the last week February 2001.

Hospital	Navigation (3 clicks or less from the start page)	Broken Links	Missing Pages/Images	Average Page Size	Meta Tags
Suburban Hospital (www.suburbanhospital.org)	39%	75	35 missing pages/images.	Average page size: 34k	43% of the total pages contain meta tags.
Children's National Medical Center (www.cnmc.org)	98%	234	28 missing pages/images.	Average page size: 70.6k with 60% of the pages greater than 100K	1.8% of the total pages contain meta tags.
Georgetown University Hospital (www.georgetownuniversityhospital.org)	94%	4	2 missing pages and 2 missing images.	Average page size: 34.0k	None of the pages use meta tags.
Washington Hospital Center (www.whcenter.org)	75%	83	59 missing pages/images.	Average page size: 24.5k	12% of the total pages contain meta tags.
Inova Fairfax Hospital (www.inova.org)	33%	3	2 missing pages.	Average page size: 15.9k	17% of the total pages contain meta tags.
George Washington University Hospital (www.gwhospital.com)	100%	None	None	Average page size: 14.7k with 90% are between 10 and 20k.	All index and main pages use meta tags.

Source: BCSwebservices.net