

Playstation-Europe Pitch

Review of European web site - <http://www.playstation-europe.com>

Introduction:

Sony originally launched their playstation back in 1994 into an arena more commonly populated by geeky games consoles and 'anoraks'. Sony —Europe's approach was to redefine gaming and make it more 'social acceptable' and 'cool'. The Playstation was linked with clubbing and 'new games culture' just about the same time multimedia was hitting the home. Rather than being linked with cheeky characters such as 'super mario' (Nintendo) or 'sonic the hedgehog' (Sega) Sony branded their machine with the assistance of 'The Designers Republic' (www.thedesignersrepublic.com) and Psygnosis (wipeout). Gaming was changed forever, Playstation consoles started to crop up in clubs and bars and the scene was reinvented.

Main Page:

There is no splash page, instead the site starts at the main menu. This page is dark, dull and uninviting and doesn't reflect Playstation Branding. The page is split into frames, a main area, a left-hand navigation and a top and bottom frame. The top and bottom frames appear to have no purpose.

The web page has a black background, white text and green links apart from the logo there is very little graphical content.. There is a Flash animation in the middle of the page, the Playstation logo at the top and top level navigation to the left hand side.

The site is very slow to download and casual surfers with small modems will soon get tired of waiting.

The left hand navigation:

At the bottom of the navigation is a reset button, this is a nice reference to the Playstation console but it only takes the user to the main page, exactly the same function as the Main Menu button at the top of the navigation. The names of the sections are a little ambiguous and some are abbreviated, the wording does not indicate the content of the section. On the PC a mouse rollover appears to give a clearer indication but this facility is not available when viewing the site on an Apple Macintosh.

There is a lack of consistency throughout the site, some sections open in the main frame, others in a new browser window and some in a java-pop up window. This clumsy navigation is confusing and untidy.

Main Pop-up window:

This section of the site appears after clicking on the Flash animation on the main page. The link does not always work because of an intermittent 'oracle error' which often prevents users from accessing this part of the site.

Once you enter the site you are baffled by an assortment of abstract icons such as a skeleton and a museum all around the screen. This site should be an extension of the Playstation console, in-fact it is abstract unrelated information. Because the site is launched into a tiny window there is no status bar and thus no feed back. You have no idea what you're rolling over and no idea what it does. There aren't even an text boxes to say what each button does.

If you then click on any topics the browser then creates ANOTHER client window. This means to do anything you've got three windows open and you soon become lost.

There is a mix of styles within the design 'concept' which may have been lost by updates. You only have to look at the 'hardware section to see the mess of 3D extruded text, and badly placed images that are supposed to sell the most popular games console in the world.

Conclusion:

Looking at the Sony Playstation site there is no evidence of this 'gaming revolution'. There is no reference to this 'new gaming' genre, and no reference in terms of style/look and feel to the designers republic or club culture.

The whole site looks like an assortment of objects thrown together with frustratingly little in the way of functionality or content. Little consideration to modem users, even on a 56k modem the site takes a long time to render.

In short the Playstation site needs not only a face lift and a re-launch but an entirely new concept and direction that reflects the brand values and conveys the marketing and advertising objectives.. There isn't a better time to rethink the site especially in light of the imminent launch of the Playstation 2 in early 2000.