Quality Control Techniques for Constructing Attractive Corporate Websites: Usability in Relation to the Popularity Ranking of Websites

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Abstract. Content and usability are important in the context of efforts to raise the attractiveness of a corporate website. Regarding the content, there must be information indispensable for a corporate website. Regarding the usability, it is necessary to establish a usability test method. This paper describes the results of an investigation of the Japanese-language corporate websites of Japanese companies in order to specify the content necessary for a corporate website. Furthermore, a scenario-based usability test technique was applied and the relationship between the popularity of a website and its usability was examined. Based on the results obtained, we propose a framework for constructing a corporate website by tailoring the WBS (Work Breakdown Structure) and checklist for static quality assurance, and usability and function test for dynamic quality assurance.

1 Introduction

In view of the widespread use of the Internet, it is important to raise the usability of websites. Also, websites have an increasingly important bearing on the ability of corporations to achieve their goals. Moreover, by building and updating a website quickly, opportunities for business can be increased. However, the methods for constructing websites are in their infancy and establishment of construction techniques for attractive websites is needed.
2 Problems in Constructing Corporate Websites

Websites have become important elements in corporate strategy. However, the following problems impede effective utilization of websites.

Problems of Content. It is unclear what information a corporate website should contain. For example, for an investor, financial information is required. Moreover, for a recruiter, jobs and careers information is indispensable. But, it is unclear what kind of information is required, or how detailed the information should be, for a corporate website to support the various types of users.

Therefore, the content of websites varies within the same industry, making it difficult for users to use corporate website efficiently.

Problems of Usability. The usability of websites is a significant element in the context of efforts to increase the number of users who repeatedly access websites. However, in many cases, usability is not considered from the viewpoint of users. For example, many websites have deficiencies in terms of font size or color scheme. Moreover, some websites are deficient in terms of operability, i.e., it is difficult for users to reach the content they want.

3 Indispensable Content and Usability Test Method

In order to solve the above-mentioned problems concerning content, we performed an analysis of many corporate websites in order to ascertain the content indispensable for a corporate website. It is useful to embody the results of this analysis in a checklist. Designers can use the checklist to build in quality at an early stage. Therefore, we investigated a usability test method and evaluated it. In this chapter, we explain the results of the investigation and the evaluation.

3.1 Actual Condition of Japanese-Language Corporate Websites of Japanese Companies

First, we conducted an investigation to identify key features of the composition of corporate homepages, in order to better understand the actual condition of Japanese-language corporate websites of Japanese companies. In September 2000, we investigated whether it would have the common information and function of 22 items obtained by the preliminary survey about the corporate homepages which were working. We selected ten companies for investigation from eight industries, and 80 companies in all, including notable companies from each industry. The types of information contained in the corporate homepages we investigated are listed in Table 1.