

**Heuristic Analysis Report
of
Verizon Central**

Kevin Cornwall

Verizon User Experience Design

Heuristic Analysis seeks to determine the baseline usability of an existing site or system according to established usability metrics. Opportunities for both immediate and long-range improvement are identified. Clearly presented site organization. Accessibility of navigation to information areas with logically categorized content. Consistency in page layout, location and appearance of navigation elements. Appropriate technical knowledge expectations of the user. Assistance to the user if they need help. Heuristics with a rating of Fair or lower are discussed below.

Summary: It is hard to understand the business goal for this site. The only genuine offering for the customer would seem to be web-based email and "My Account" - where there is nothing new. There is also a stereotypically designed, "me-too" Newsroom. Without clearly defined goals (is trying to appear hip a goal?), every area of the site from Surround to Community to Shop is disorienting: a little multimedia here, a little sales there, hey, you can join a forum, too. Information Architecture becomes a dice roll. Consistently confusing navigation, a frequent practice of linking the user away to other sites, experiments in Flash technology and video... produces a confusing pastiche of UI taxonomies, navigational conceits and page architectures.

First impression: "Nice, but eccentric graphic design" and "What is going on here?" No explanation or rationale for the site is offered.

Second impression: This site never went through QA or usability testing.

Final impression : "Won't be back except to manage my email" and "I wonder what Verizon is trying to do?"

HOME PAGE - Guest

The screenshot shows the Verizon Central homepage for a guest user. The top navigation bar includes links for Email, Shop, My Account, and Support. Below this, there's a search bar and a 'Welcome | Sign In' message. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- central**: A large logo on the left side.
- You are not signed in.**: A section with a 'sign in' button and a link to 'learn more' about Verizon Online DSL, FiOS, and other broadband offerings.
- NOT yet a customer?**: A section with a 'learn more' button.
- NOW PLAYING**: A section with four video thumbnails: 'Why Did I Get Married?', 'Needle Scare Hits Long Island', 'The Thrills - The Midnight Choir', and 'Bushes last act before he leaves office'. Each thumbnail has a 'GO' button.
- INTERNET TOOLS**: A section with three links: 'Verizon Online Backup & Sharing', 'Verizon Internet Security Suite', and 'My Web Space'. Each link has a 'Learn More' button and a 'Launch Service' button.
- FUN & ENTERTAINMENT**: A section with three links: 'MovieLink', 'Verizon Arcade', and 'Verizon Games on Demand'. Each link has a 'Learn More' button.
- ANNOUNCEMENTS**: A section with 'Important Announcements' and a 'SUPPORT' link.
- Top Help Questions**: A section with links to 'How do I change my password?', 'I forgot my username & password', and 'How does PC Cleanup work?'. Each link has a 'More Help Questions >>' link.
- Top Help Topics**: A section with links to 'Email', 'Billing', 'Troubleshooting', and 'Internet security'. Each link has a 'More Help Topics >>' link.
- Safety and Security**: A section with links to 'Protection from spam' and 'Protection from viruses'. Each link has a 'More Help Topics >>' link.

The bottom of the page features a banner for 'THE GENERAL' automobile insurance services, with a 'LEARN MORE' button. To the right of the banner is a 'PAINT RIMS DETAILS' section with a 'LEARN MORE' button.

This page doesn't offer context. This is ostensibly the home page of www.verizon.net even though the URL confusingly and automatically forwards to www.verizon.net/central. What is more disorienting is that the large "home page" type Verizon logo at top left is linked to www.verizon.com, which provides no way back to VZ central.

Guests are able to access all of the links that a signed in user can, except E-mail and My Account. The central module has a preview of 4 items in Surround:
 NEW in Surround | Top News | Top Videos | Community

HOME PAGE – Signed in

central

verizon central
Central | Newsroom | Verizon Surround | Community

Email | Shop | My Account | Support
Hello Jeanne | Signout

SEARCH THE WEB

EMAIL (5 new /5 total) See all mail >>

From	Subject	Date
verizon.update.2@ver...	Important Dial-Up In...	11/15/07
xhandcart7@auracom.c...	no subject	11/15/07
turnabout76@suntuf.c...	no subject	11/13/07
verizon.update.2@ver...	Notice of Changes to...	11/13/07
inflammation22@willi...	no subject	11/12/07

CHECK EMAIL COMPOSE TOOLS ADDRESSES MANAGE ACCOUNT

INTERNET TOOLS

- Verizon Online Backup & Sharing
Learn More | Launch Service
- Verizon Internet Security Suite
Learn More
- My Web Space
Learn More | Launch Service

FUN & ENTERTAINMENT

- MovieLink
Learn More
- Verizon Arcade
Learn More
- Verizon Games on Demand
Learn More

ANNOUNCEMENTS
Important Announcements

SUPPORT

Top Help Questions
How do I change my password?
I forgot my username & password
How does PC Checkup work?
More Help Questions >>

Top Help Topics
Email
Billing
Troubleshooting
Internet security
More Help Topics >>

Safety and Security
Protection from spam
Protection from viruses
More Help Topics >>

Quick Quote:
Sponsored by
Scotttrade
Enter Symbol GO

OUR PARTNERS
ESPN
Disney CONNECTION
SOAPNETIC

FIND OUT...

MYRIDE

After sign in, there is no further reference to NEW in Surround | Top News | Top Videos | Community except the latter. Instead the central module now shows an email preview pane. Below it is an area that uses I-frames, for 2 columns oddly categorized for what is in them. The use of the I-frames, with scrollbars, suggest that a user resolution above 1020 x 728 is predominant (which is highly arguable).

Around this central area, in two sidebars and upper right and upper left nav areas, the user is provided an odd assortment of links with little idea of what will happen after clicking them.

Sidebars: Links on both sidebars lead to netservices.verizon.com, an entirely different site? The prominent Announcements link at top of the right sidebar has no announcements except "Important Announcements". This is followed by a list of links to popular Help topics, like how to change your password (Oddly, these same links are available to a guest.) After signing in and checking "remember me," one can find no place where to tell it to not "remember me", sonow

after clicking any link to netservices.verizon.net, there is no way to explore what happens if a guest clicks these links. Contrary to the FRD, My Web Space link, leads to calendar.

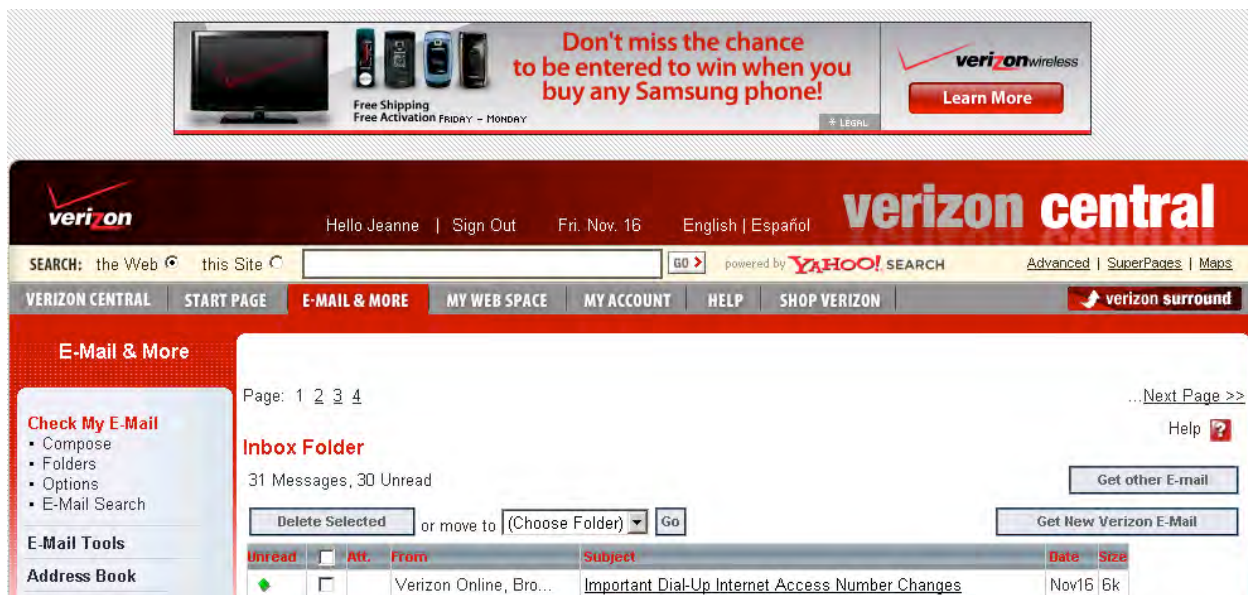
Top Nav: link grouping seems random.

At top left: *Central* | *Newsroom* | *Verizon Surround* | *Community*.

At top right: *Email* | *Shop* | *My Account* | *Support* | *Sign Out*

Top nav and page content links can lead anywhere ([netservices](http://netservices.verizon.net), [surround](http://surround.verizon.net), verizon.net) with no clear way back, unless the user happens to land at a Surround site with the same top nav. There is also an unlinked item in the top right group of links, *Welcome* that is replaced with an unlinked "Hi [username]" item after the user signs in.

Email links: Apparently, Web-based email seems to be the most important part of the site with a preview at top and center. Clicking an email *Subject* link unexpectedly brings up the old VZ Email site and is an overall view of the Inbox instead of the content of the email that one would expect. Contrary to the FRD, this and every other link and button in the Home page Email area (e.g. *Compose*, *View All*, *Address...*) lead to the exact same Inbox view of E-mail and More (<http://webmail.verizon.net/signin/SSOAuthorize.jsp>), in a completely different UI and IA.



Confusing sense of location as the navigational design is for the old VZ Central, the new VZ Central Top NavLinks are missing altogether, and suddenly a huge add at the top of the page where the navigation should be. Moreover, because SSO is being invoked behind the scenes, the browser back-button returns the user to the page they are on.

Newsroom

Newsroom link leads to the old VZ Central Newsroom.

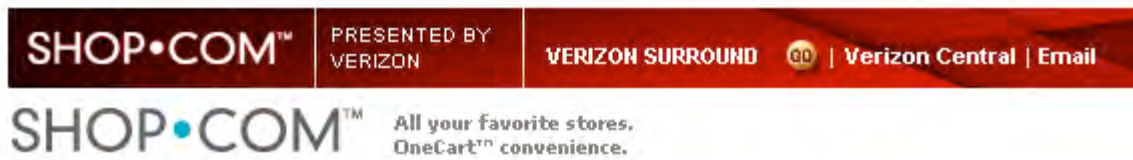
Shop

The screenshot shows the Verizon Shop website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'verizon central' and links to 'Central | Newsroom | Verizon Surround | Community | SHOP.COM'. Below this is a search bar and a 'powered by YAHOO! SEARCH' logo. The left sidebar has two main sections: 'UTILITIES' with links to 'Verizon Internet Security Suite', 'Verizon Online Backup & Sharing', 'GoToMyPC', and 'Home Networking'; and 'ENTERTAINMENT' with links to 'Rhapsody', 'MovieLink', 'TotalVid', 'Verizon Games On Demand', and 'Verizon Arcade'. The main content area features a 'Hit Movies' section with '2010' and '10.5' movie posters, a 'Showcase' for 'Go Wireless', and a 'SHOP.COM' section with 'STOP SPYWARE', 'Verizon Online Backup & Sharing', 'Verizon Premium Technical Support', and 'GoToMyPC'. At the bottom, there's a 'FEATURED BRANDS' section with images of Canon, iPod, Bose, Sony, and Belkin products.

The *Shop* link leads to <http://surround.verizon.net/Shop/>, a Surround site, but there is suddenly a new top nav link, *Shop.com*. Coming to Shop as a guest and then clicking the sign-in link unexpectedly leads back to the Verizon Central home page.

Sidebar and in-page links lead the user to a bewildering array of different sites, including Surround Shop pages, Shop.com, Movielink, listen.com, totalvid.com, gamesondemand.verizon.net, arcade.verizon.net, www2.verizon.net/micro, gotomypc.com, essentialsandextras.verizon.com and www22.verizon.com/forhomedsl/ sites. All links but those that lead to essentialsandextras.verizon.com and Surround pages open new browser instances and take the user off to another site with no way back.

Shop.com



The link pops us a new window to a VZ co-branded shop.com site. The only top nav links are: *VERIZON SURROUND (GO)* | *Verizon Central* | *Email*. Only *VERIZON SURROUND* has a *Go* button that serves, as the link while the name, *VERIZON SURROUND*, itself, is unlinked. Clicking the Go button, the user now has two browser windows with the VZ central site!

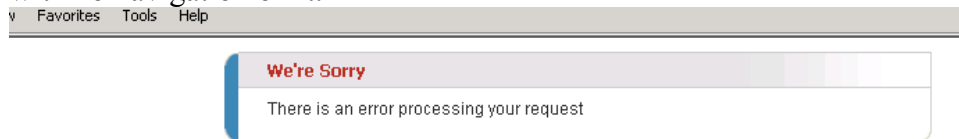
Community

Clicking *Community* link on the VZ Central Home page, takes the user to the Community home page.

Oddly, upon arriving at Community the test user is no longer signed in.



Clicking on the *Community Login* link leads to an error message and an otherwise blank screen, with no navigation on it.



Community Home Page



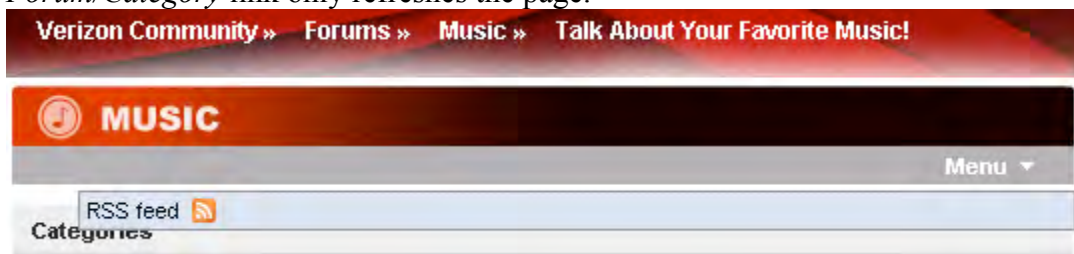
On the community home page there is a huge Flash menu, which, unfortunately, pushes the more useful dynamic content area, "Recent Topics", below the fold.

Community Categories:

No matter at what depth one is in the forums, the breadcrumb in the header for the current page is always an active link. It should be static text, instead, indicating the user's current location.



At the top of topics list, a *Menu* dropdown hides but a single *RS Feeds* link. Clicking the *Forum/Category* link only refreshes the page.



Example Forum: Community > Music > Favorite Music

verizon central
Central | Newsroom | Verizon Surround | Community

Email | Shop | My Account | Support

SEARCH THE SITE THE WEB

Verizon Community » Forums » Music » Talk About Your Favorite Music!

Welcome Guest
Community Log In

FORUMS

- News
- Movies
- Music
- TV
- Games
- Sports
- Family
- Videos

BLOGS

- Blogs Homepage
- Featured Blogger

POPULAR TOPICS

- Celebrity Gossip
- Fall Season TV
- Movies Now Playing
- Front Page News
- Tours + Concerts

ALL ABOUT ME

- My Preferences
- My Subscriptions

HELP CENTER

- Community FAQ
- Community Standards
- New Around Here?

Capital One
what's in your wallet?

Introducing Capital One Card Lab

BUILD YOUR OWN CARD NOW»

MUSIC

Menu

Forum/Category	Topics	Posts	Last Post
Music Awards	26	155	
Alternative	14	39	12/03/06 by GrooveAndMotion
Blues	2	20	03/12/07 by jmanus
Country	27	432	11/08/07 by joyus33
Dance Electronica	2	11	11/14/07 by Khan
Hardcore + Punk	5	13	03/07/07 by PixelArtist
Hip Hop + Rap	9	34	11/07/07 by VWireMeUP
Heavy Metal	3	18	03/04/07 by Night Star
Jazz	2	8	03/11/07 by Juanjoe
New Age + World	3	4	11/27/06 by rebusue
R&B / Soul	5	104	06/22/07 by Claudia
Reggae	3	8	06/26/07 by TootToot
Reggaeton	2	4	10/23/06 by babydoll508
Rock + Pop	40	102	11/02/07 by canadian.rocker
The Lounge - General Discussion	32	2,138	11/15/07 by MistyBlue

RECENT TOPICS

Pages: 12 - [1 2 3 4 5 ... 12 | Next]

Topic	Topic Starter	Forum	Views	Replies	Last Post
The Song & Artist Game	SherryA	The Lounge - General Discussion	47,987	1831	11/15/07 by MistyBlue

EXPLORE PLAY POST CONNECT
don't forget to sleep

CHECKITOUT
Music Talk
What is the Saddest Song Ever?

SAD SONGS

CONNECT

NOW PLAYING ON
verizon

What's on Your Mind?
Discuss Games on the Boards.

TALK NOW >

POPULAR TAGS

Sidebar "Ads": As in other forums, sub-category pages and topic pages display a huge graphic link at right "*Explore Play Post Connect*" (looks like an ad) that inexplicably leads back to the Community home page. Under that, another huge link, "What's On Your Mind" leads back to Music.

Dynamic Links: At some distance below these two links, far below the fold are the potentially useful section of links assembled under the headings, "Popular Tags", "Forums" and "Last Posts". Recent topics is also hidden below the "fold", and scrolls endlessly down the page because of the insertion of user avatar graphics in the row.



BUILD YOUR OWN CARD NOW»

Capital One Card Lab

Restrictions Apply

by canadian.rock

The Lounge - General Discussion 32 2,138 11/15/07 by MistyBlue

RECENT TOPICS Pages: 12 - [1 2 3 4 5 ... 12 | Next]

Topic	Topic Starter	Forum	Views	Replies	Last Post
The Song & Artist Game	SherryA	The Lounge - General Discussion	47,987	1831	11/15/07 by MistyBlue
What's your favorite dance song?	joyus33	Dance Electronica	277	5	11/14/07 by Khan
All-time favorite Christmas song	pennylane	The Lounge - General Discussion	3,155	24	11/14/07 by Claudia
New here	sagepowder	The Lounge - General Discussion	889	8	11/10/07 by Khan
What are YOU listening to these days?	Hero	The Lounge - General Discussion	984	4	11/10/07 by reno99
Faith Hill Or Carrie Underwood	fulltimebum	Country	3,299	6	11/08/07 by joyus33
Who Is Your Favorite Country Singer Of All Times	fulltimebum	Country	4,569	56	11/08/07 by joyus33
Favorite Holiday Song?	PixelArtist	The Lounge - General Discussion	2,392	15	11/08/07 by joyus33

What's on Your Mind?

Discuss Games on the Boards.

TALK NOW >

POPULAR TAGS

1972 2007 49th 70 70's 80s ACBs Acadame Alan Album Alternative America Andy Annual Arranging Artist Awards BMI Barkley Beatles Bee Best Beth Bluegrass Blues Country George Grammys Jackson Jazz Music My Paul Pop Rock Song The a all and art auction award band billy blige blow grammy mccartney vma

LAST POST

Re: The Song & Artist Game

by MistyBlue at: Nov 15, 2007 11:47 AM

POPULAR FORUM

- The Lounge - General Discussion
- Country
- R&B / Soul
- Rock + Pop
- 49th Annual Grammy Awards

POPULAR ITEMS

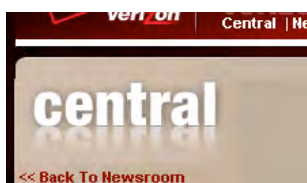
- The Song & Artist Game

ACTIVE MEMBERS

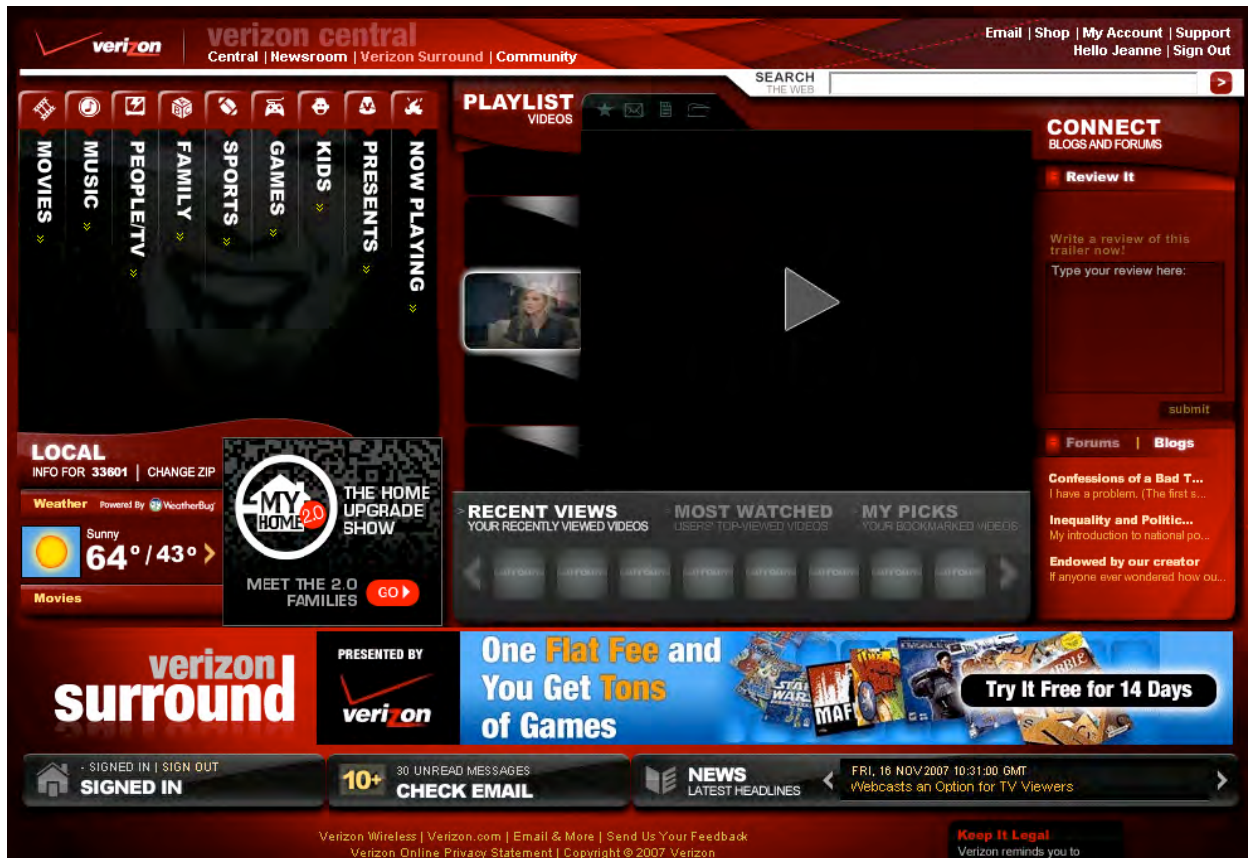
- juanjoe
- fulltimebum
- grapevine19
- MistyBlue
- RainyDaze

Available Categories: In Favorite Music, the actual music categories are limited to a handful (compare with the dozens of categories on XM radio). To work around this, a scan of topics under any one of the music genres finds participants mixing sub-categories and specific artists as topics. Same with sports. Very limited. What if a user wants to talk about Fencing or Bocci ball? They'd go to a site dedicated to it. This is a truism even for football and baseball fans. The success of social networking on the Internet is that it brings together people with extremely focused or fringe interests, not general interests.

Clicking *Central* in the top nav of Community, one arrives back at the VZ Central Home page, but now in the sidebar is a prominent, new and inexplicable link, *Back to Newsroom*, whether the user has recently been to Newsroom or not.



Surround



The main content of the Surround site is frames based. So, only in this section of VZ Central the browser back/next/refresh buttons may not be used to navigate. There is no way to bookmark pages. And as these pages are available to guests (as marketing?), the inability of search engines to find this content can be another issue.

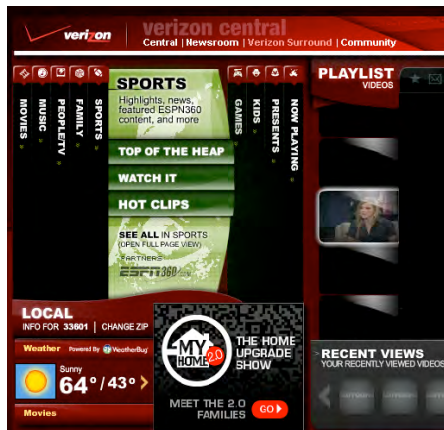
At one point, I got a half-page sized super-imposed layer on the page showing "*** started launchDebugViewer()", with each click of the mouse it began to log line after line of SWF codes.

Surround > Main page: Too hip for it's own good? The Surround main page video or (something else that was loading?) repeatedly froze IE. There is what looks to be a video pane, but no preview frame, just a dark blank and a play button. No suggestion to click and nothing about what might happen if one does.

Again, the question what's going on here? No explanation or rationale for the site is given on this page.

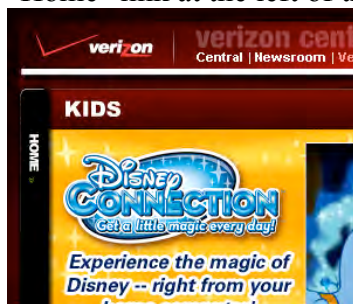
Category navigation: the sideways labels you could define as "unique", if not bizarre. Clicking *Presents*, *Kids* and *Games* leads directly to those pages. But clicking or rolling over any other

category link displays a large rollover area (quirky, too as it may or may not appear) that "compresses" the other category labels.

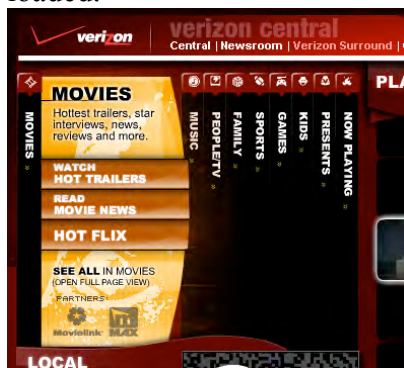


The rollovers, themselves, offer several links within them. In the case of *Movies* there is even an icon for a link-away to Movielink, which opens in a new window.

Weirdly, after visiting one of these sections and clicking the barely perceptible, sideways "Home" link at the left of the screen



the mouse ended up over Movies so the Movie rollover was open after the Surround home page loaded.



All the categories weren't reviewed, but some seem to have site-based video content, while others, like Kids, may also take the user off to another site, like Disney connection.

Search bar

The screenshot shows the Verizon Central website interface. At the top, the Verizon logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Central', 'Newsroom', 'Verizon Surround', and 'Community' are in the center. On the right, there are links for 'Email', 'Shop', 'My Account', 'Support', 'Hello Jeanne', and 'Sign Out'. A search bar at the top right contains the text 'disney'. Below the search bar, a 'Web Results' section displays '20 Results for disney'. The results list several sponsored links for Disney vacation packages, world packages, Disneyland, Disney Dreams, Disney Shopping, and The Walt Disney Company. On the left side of the page, there are sections for 'MOVIES' (with links to trailers, news, and hot flix), 'LOCAL' (with weather and zip code change options), and 'MY HOME 2.0' (with a 'GO' button). At the bottom, a large banner for 'One Flat Fee and You Get Tons of Games' is displayed, featuring the Verizon Surround logo and a 'Try It Free for 14 Days' button.

A text box for searching the Web brings up generic web search results whose links open a new browser window. (This directs the user away from Surround which seems counter-productive for site where one could assume a basic goal to encourage user "stickiness".)

The **Advertising banner** at the bottom of the page (not just in Surround) has a huge VZ Surround logo abutted to another logo labeled, "Presented by Verizon" followed by a bright blue ad that totally overwhelms the actual content in contrast to the dark tones of the rest of the page.

The screenshot shows the bottom navigation bar of the Verizon Surround website. It features a large 'verizon surround' logo on the left, followed by a 'PRESENTED BY verizon' logo. To the right is a blue banner for 'One Flat Fee and You Get Tons of Games' with a 'Try It Free for 14 Days' button. Below these, there is a row of navigation links: 'SIGNED IN | SIGN OUT', '10+ 30 UNREAD MESSAGES CHECK EMAIL', 'NEWS LATEST HEADLINES', and 'FRI, 16 NOV 2007 10:31:00 GMT Webcasts an Option for TV Viewers'. At the bottom, there is a footer with links for 'Verizon Wireless', 'Verizon.com', 'Email & More', 'Send Us Your Feedback', 'Verizon Online Privacy Statement', and 'Copyright © 2007 Verizon'. A disclaimer at the very bottom states: 'All rights reserved. Verizon Online Internet access and Web sites are subject to user compliance with our Policies and Terms of Service.'

Bottom Nav: There is a *Check email* link in the bottom nav, but a *Signed In* item before it and a *News* (not *Newsroom*) item after it, both complete with logo, are not links.

This screenshot is identical to the one above, showing the bottom navigation bar of the Verizon Surround website. It highlights the navigation links: 'SIGNED IN | SIGN OUT', '10+ 30 UNREAD MESSAGES CHECK EMAIL', 'NEWS LATEST HEADLINES', and 'FRI, 16 NOV 2007 10:31:00 GMT Webcasts an Option for TV Viewers'. The footer contains links for 'Verizon Wireless', 'Verizon.com', 'Email & More', 'Send Us Your Feedback', 'Verizon Online Privacy Statement', and 'Copyright © 2007 Verizon'. A disclaimer at the bottom states: 'All rights reserved. Verizon Online Internet access and Web sites are subject to user compliance with our Policies and Terms of Service.'

Heuristic Ratings

Excellent – Good – Fair – Poor	
User Interface Element	Rating
Overall	Fair
Usability / User Centered	Poor
Information Architecture	Poor
Navigation	Poor
Page Layout / Print	Poor
Style Sheets	None
Visual Design	Fair
Branding / Identity	?
Consistency	Good
Ordering / Forms	Poor
Customer Service	Fair
Security	Poor
Dynamic Content	Needed
FAQ	Poor
Contact	Fair
Search	None
Search Engines Ranking	Poor
Privacy Policy	Excellent
Online Support	N/A
"Push Email Communications"	None
Technical: Server Organization	Poor
Technical: HTML	Poor
Technical: Graphics	Good
Execution of Goal	Fair