REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

ExploreAsheville.com Web Usability Testing
for the
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau

Introduction

The Buncombe County (NC) Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) under the auspices of Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau is seeking proposals for Web Usability Testing for its website, ExploreAsheville.com.

Background

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is an 11-person board charged with oversight of the tourism marketing and sales efforts of the Asheville area. The BCTDA oversees Explore Asheville in managing the execution of marketing and sales strategies and tactics, as well as the destination website. ExploreAsheville.com is Explore Asheville's official tourism website, with 4.3 million user sessions per year. Key pages of the ExploreAsheville.com site include Things to Do, Places to Stay, Event Calendar, Outdoor Adventures and Food Scene. Conversion goals tracked by Explore Asheville include: eNewsletter sign-ups, travel guide requests, partner listing views, partner website clicks and hotel booking engine views and transactions. At present, 32 percent of the traffic to ExploreAsheville.com is on desktop, 54 percent is on mobile and 14 percent is on tablet.

Project Overview

In an effort to continuously improve the performance of Explore Asheville's website and prioritize future development efforts, Explore Asheville is seeking to conduct user testing.

Ideally, the Explore Asheville web and content teams would like to observe this research either in-person or via a live streaming video feed. Therefore, a 1:1 user testing format is preferred unless the vendor has a strong rationale for using a different approach.

To date, the Explore Asheville team has been utilizing Crazy Egg, Google Analytics and A/B Testing with Google Optimize to perform user testing.

Project Objectives

The project objectives include (in priority order):

1. Develop a better understanding of whether the navigation is intuitive and meets user expectations.
2. Evaluate usability of various page layouts and site elements.
3. Understand the ease or difficulty for site visitors to find the information they are seeking during the trip planning process.
4. Determine whether the functionality of the site navigation works well on desktop and mobile and enables site visitors to easily find information they seek.
5. Improve the user experience in planning and executing an overnight stay in Buncombe County.
6. Understand how verbiage on specific sections of the site is interpreted.
7. Obtain an understanding of whether the stories, itineraries and other more expansive content is being used as part of the trip planning process. Does the content meet user expectations? Is it easy to read? Is it too long? Is the content motivating a trip? Does the format of the website lead visitors down the funnel?

Having researched different user testing approaches, the Explore Asheville team has a strong interest in doing a "card sort" exercise with respondents to understand what they would expect to see in the top and sub level navigation, and how they'd ideally like to search for information. That said, the team is open to other approaches that would inform site nomenclature and hierarchical taxonomy.

Participants should adhere to Asheville's target audience. We would request that participants meet the following criteria:

- $75,000+ household income
- Most with a college degree
- Demonstrated interest in planning a future Asheville trip
- Enjoy experiential travel, explore new activities and destinations, and/or perform research in advance of their trips
- 3/4 of participants should represent key markets: Atlanta, Raleigh, Nashville, DC, Cincinnati, Tampa, Orlando. The remaining should be from the Eastern US or Texas.
- 1/3 of participants should have visited Asheville in the past 3-4 years

Scope of Work

By submitting a response to this RFP, the Bidder acknowledges understanding and acceptance of this Scope of Work and agrees to fulfill all its terms in the event of a contract award.

This request for proposal is for designing, executing and analyzing a full-service Web usability testing project. The services must include the following functional areas:

1. Identify the research methodology.
   - This includes number of participants and where they will be procured.
2. Develop the research instrument.
   - Allow for two rounds of revisions.
3. Execute the research.
   - Recruit for research.
   - Conduct research.
   - Allow for Explore Asheville web and content teams to observe research.
4. Analyze and document the research findings.
   - Provide written transcript of sessions.
   - Deliver results of research in a Word document within 10 business days of final session being completed.
   - Provide video recording of the user testing sessions.
5. Recommend improvements based on professional expertise.
   - Provide a summary of findings and key recommendations in PowerPoint format.
   - Recommendations should address or keep in mind SEO considerations and impacts that updates to site navigation will have on search rankings.
6. Project management, including the creation of schedules and management to deadlines. Vendors will be asked to:
   - Create a project plan of specific tactics, timelines, and milestones.
   - Manage work to meet deadlines.
   - Maintain regular communication with Explore Asheville, arranging for adequate review and approval.
   - Facilitate meetings with Explore Asheville, take notes, and follow-up.

Proposal Requirements and Content

1. Executive Summary
2. Prior Relevant Experience
   - How long has your company been in business?
   - What is your experience with tourism and destination websites in particular?
   - Are you able to assess ADA compliance?
   - At least two (2) client references for the firm, including primary contact name, telephone number, location and e-mail address for each contact.
3. Case Studies
   - Provide at least three (3) case studies for web usability testing projects, preferably for destination marketing websites.

4. Quote
    - Provide itemized pricing based on the Scope of Work provided.
5. Timetable and Delivery
    - Provide a project start date, noting that Explore Asheville is anticipating a quick start following the selection of the vendor. Project would start no later than November 26th, 2018.
    - Note the timeframe for project completion.
    - Provide information on how the deliverables will be communicated and options for follow up questions.
    - Identify the key point person for the project.

Proposal Submission & Selection Timeframe

Responses to this RFP must be delivered electronically to Explore Asheville by 5:00 p.m. EDT on October 12th, 2018. Responses submitted after 5:00 p.m. EDT will not be accepted. Responses must be submitted electronically via email to: ewhite@exploreasheville.com with RFP Submittal for Explore Asheville Web usability Testing, in the subject line.

Individual questions regarding this RFP will be responded to only as follows: questions regarding requirements and scope of work will be received up to 5 p.m. EDT on October 8th, 2018 via email only at ewhite@exploreasheville.com and answers will be posted on the ExploreAshevilleCVB.com website no later than 5:00 p.m. October 10th, 2018. No further questions will be answered after that time.

Main Project Contact:

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