HP Website User Interface Analysis and Suggestion

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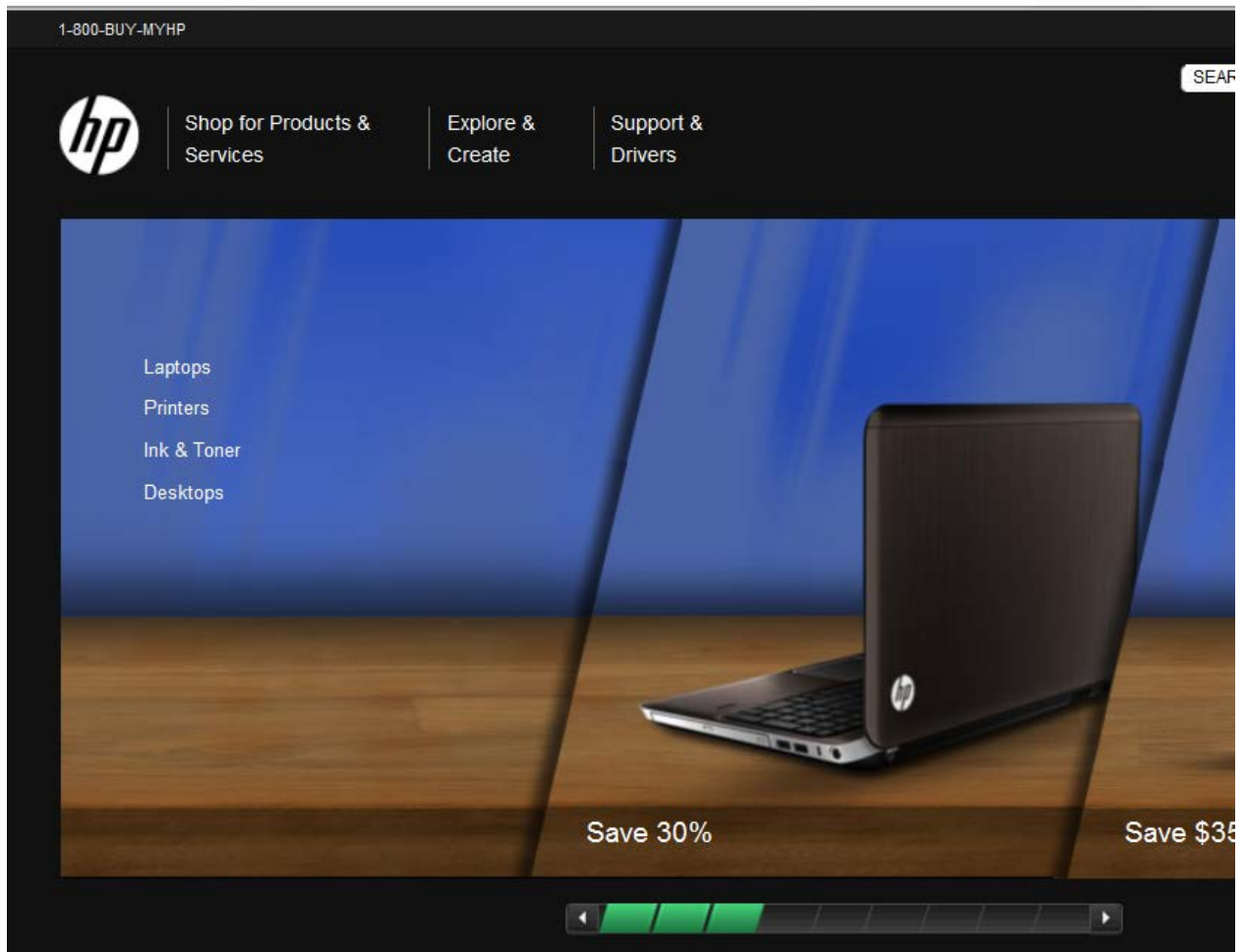
5 years ago, I got my first laptop which is 'Campaq V3212TU'. The first thing I would like to do when I took back my new laptop was to reinstall the operating system and software since I didn't like the factory default software configuration.

At that time Campaq had been merged to Hewlett-Packard(HP), so I got on the HP web site to download the drivers of my laptop (The reason I didn't use the drivers in disk was I wanted to get the latest drivers.). However, problem rose up which was I couldn't find where to download drivers of my laptop at HP's support&driver website according to its laptop catalog. I could only use its driver search engine to find out, but it was very inconvenient for me since the search engine only accepted the laptop model types to search drivers and I knew little about HP laptops at that time. Finally, I could only telephone the service number to solve my problem.

Now, from the question, I remembered such instance and I checked the HP driver website again. Although the web page has a more cool style compared the former one, the problem still exists.

Then, let me analyze HP website to find the reason why it is hard to find drivers.

First, let's look at the homepage of HP website,

Now this homepage is designed in a simple style which only includes three parts. It has demo flash pictures in the middle, main menu on the top left and the search engine on the top right. And I think the main menu is design much better compared the former one of 5 years ago since it now only has three catalogs which are 'Shop for Products & Services', 'Explore & Create' and 'Support & Drivers'. We can imagine that our aims to access computer website can just be divided into three: first is buying computers, second is to know about the services from the computer company and third is to download drivers or find support of our computers, which are just the three catalogs. I remember, 5 years ago, the main menu of HP website was so complicated 5 that I took a really long time to find the 'drivers & support' link.

Second, we look at the 'drivers & support' webpage,

Support & Drivers

Enter a product name/number

eg. Touchsmart IQ504, LaserJet 1100 or CA224A   **SEARCH**

? How do I find my product name / number?

Or automatically find your products and solutions

START NOW

Note: This tool applies to PC's, handhelds and direct and network connected printers.

? How HP finds your products and solutions

Or select a product category

Desktops & Workstations   Notebooks & Tablet PCs   Printing & Multifunction

+ See All

We can see this 'Support & Drivers' page also contains three parts: drivers& support search engine, automatically products solutions button and product select category. First, as said above, the support search engine only accepts model type of computers which is convenient only for customers who are really familiar with HP computers. Besides, I always have such a point: search engine is a necessary but actually a bad way to find things in UI design (This is just my experience, I am not sure whether it is exactly right). Second, the automatically products solutions button which can automatically find drivers is good, but it need installing plugins to the browser. I believe many customers like me don't like this. Third, let's carefully look at the third part—product select category. Assume we want to download drivers for my Compaq notebook, so we enter the 'Notebooks & Tablet PCs',

Then enter the 'Notebook PCs',

Now we can see the problem, it shows really long entries about types of notebooks that we feel a mess at the first glance. **At least, we can add a level of catalog like**:

Compaq Notebooks>
HP Notebooks>

Then enter the 'Compaq Notebooks', we will just see such list:

Compaq Armada Notebook PCs ›
Compaq Concerto PCs ›
Compaq Contura PCs ›
Compaq Evo Notebook PCs ›
Compaq LTE PCs ›
Compaq Mini PCs ›
Compaq Notebook PCs ›
Compaq Portable PCs ›
Compaq Presario Notebook PCs ›
Compaq ProSignia Notebook PCs ›
Compaq SLT PCs ›

Now it is much better than the list we saw before. However, for newbie customers, they still can't find the right link or catalog. Then, we can add representative pictures of each type laptops from this level of catalog. But if we just add pictures to the right of the links, it will split out the links. Even it only has 11 links for the Compaq notebooks, it will still occupy a large space of the whole page (long in vertical distance) and this will make them mess again. We can see if we did like that:

Compaq Armada Notebook PCs ›

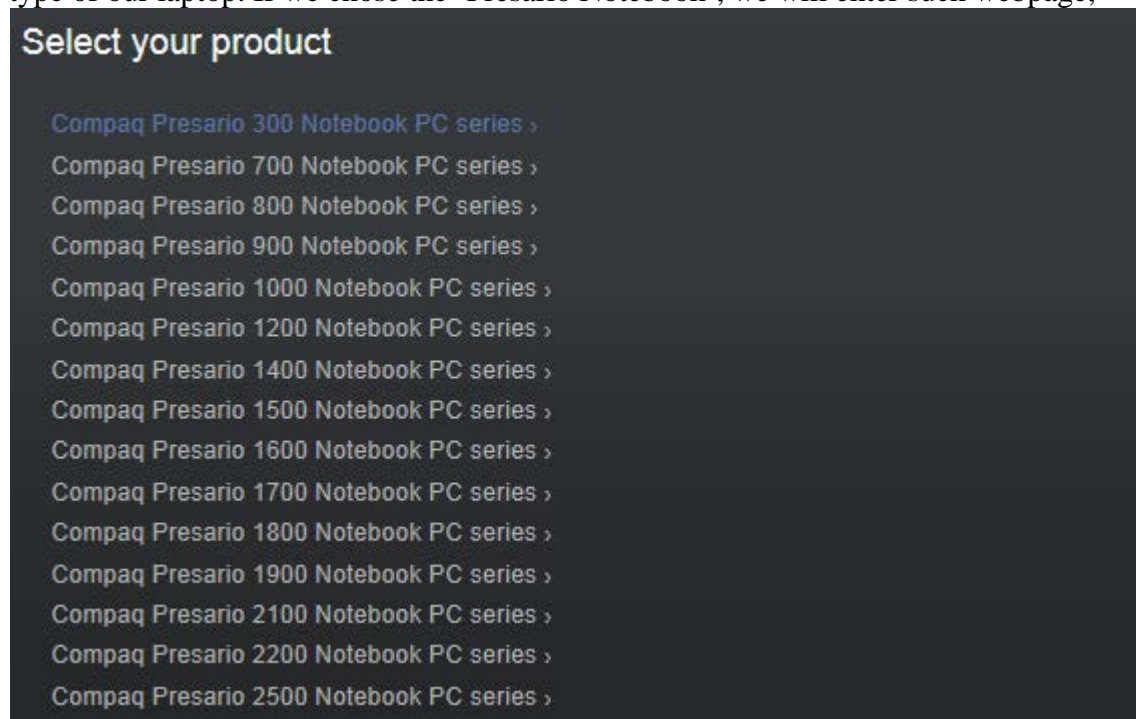Compaq Concerto PCs ›

Compaq Contura PCs ›

I only listed three links, the vertical length has already longer than the whole 11 links listed together. Therefore, we should change the way to show the pictures. What we can do is to popup the picture when the customer move the mouse to one of the link. Like this,

Compaq Armada Notebook PCs ›
Compaq Concerto PCs ›
Compaq Contura PCs ›
Compaq Evo Notebook PCs ›
Compaq LTE PCs ›
Compaq Mini PCs ›
Compaq Notebook PCs ›
Compaq Portable PCs ›
Compaq Presario Notebook PCs ›
Compaq ProSignia Notebook PCs ›
Compaq SLT PCs ›

After we selected which laptop class we have, then we have to choose the exact model type of our laptop. If we chose the 'Presario Notebook', we will enter such webpage,

We see another list of laptop products without any tips. That's why we really hard to find drivers of our own laptops. **We can still take the strategy of pop-up picture shows, but it is better to add tips about how to find the model type on the laptop on the right space of the list since in the same class of laptops, their figures may seem to be almost same.**