



www.lightspeed-tek.com

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executiveSummary

Lightspeed Technologies is an Oregon-based company that has spent the last 30 years developing products to promote inclusivity in the classroom through audio and video systems. nounTown set out to develop a content strategy to both reach out to new customers and improve accessibility on Lightspeed's website.

METHODOLOGY

Our recommendations were created by following content strategy best practices. Since a team member's spouse is the CEO/CFO at Lightspeed, we were able to get a feel for the company, customers and current business plan. The company already had a mission statement, and we create vision and content strategy statements laying out the path ahead.

Our group of six separately selected 10 tone of voice words, from which we chose that came up most often. From that we concluded that Lightspeed was a professional, innovative company that truly cares about equality in education.

Since Lightspeed's traditional customer is school administrators, we sought to create a persona to match. Our plans changed when we found it difficult to reach out to superintendents and principals in the limited amount of time we had. This constraint caused a shift in user focus which provided an unexpected potential new opportunity for Lightspeed. Teachers can become a big advocate for Lightspeed's product.



clientProfile



nounTown is working with Lightspeed, a learning company that removes barriers in education environments through innovative audio solutions.

ABOUT

Established in 1990, Lightspeed is dedicated to making a remarkable difference for teachers and students by creating access to powerful in-the-moment insights into the learning process. We create access to the teacher's voice for all students in the classroom that isn't there for them without our solutions. We also provide access to authentic student conversations and the learning process that isn't available to the teacher in any other way. At our very core, we aspire to improve the lives of those we touch with our research, products, service and partnerships.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Lightspeed, our mission is to make a remarkable difference for teachers and students by creating powerful, in-the-moment, active insights into the learning process.

VISION STATEMENT [proposed]

We envision a future with fewer barriers to learning, where generations of students in physical and virtual classrooms can engage meaningfully with their teachers and peers without distraction, delay or complication.



client profile

CORE VALUES









CONTENT STRATEGY STATEMENT [proposed]

Lightspeed's content inspires educators to discover new, innovative ways to reach their students using technologies that remove barriers to learning across a variety of classroom formats.



- 1 Makes educators feel more confident and ready to act through positive, supportive language about reliable products.
- 2 Offers new, accessible ways to solve persistent problems.
- 3 Critical to our mission to connect educators and students for effective learning.
- 4 Empowers educators and students by eliminating obstacles to effective learning.
- 5 We adjust to the needs of educators and students by being flexible and responsive across in-person, distance, and hybrid learning environments.



brandVoice

DETERMINING LIGHTSPEED'S BRAND VOICE METHODOLOGY

nounTown leveraged six team members to evaluate a representative sample of Lightspeed's content taking into consideration their established mission and core values along with the proposed vision and content strategy statement to create a list of key traits. Each member proposed a list of ten identifying key words they felt was representative of Lightspeed's voice. From those sixty words, themes emerged that help refine the proposed Brand Voice guide.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Caring	Formal	Authoritative	Authoritative	Approachable	Respectful
Straightforward	Authoritative	Caring	Empathetic	Informative	Caring
Formal	Direct	Formal	Supportive	Direct	Formal
Respectful	Corporate	Informative	Energetic	Empathetic	Innovative
Credible	Technical	Matter of fact	Respectful	Passionate	Trustworthy
Compassionate	Approachable	Professional	Caring	Innovative	Passionate
Informative	Empathetic	Inspirational	Discerning	Credible	Professional
Transformative	Innovative	Approachable	Attentive	Caring	Educational
Farsighted	Sincere	Respectful	Observant	Professional	Philanthropic
Professional	Confident	Practical	Reliable	Respectful	Confident



brandVoice

FORMAL

CARING

AUTHORITATIVE

INNOVATIVE

THEMES

Caring and **respectful** emerged as the top tone of voice words across the group, both words appearing on five out of six (83%) of our individual lists.

Formal and **professional** also ranked as top tone of voice words for the group, both appearing on four out of six (67%) of our lists.

No antonyms appeared across our lists of ten tone of voice words, but a few words were used just once, including transformative, corporate, attentive, energetic and philanthropic.

THEMATIC FAMILIES

Formal manifests as content that's direct, professional and straightforward. **Caring** manifests as content that's respectful, empathetic and approachable. **Authoritative** manifests as content that's credible, informative and confident. **nnovative** manifests as content that's passionate, energetic and inspirational.

WHAT LIGHTSPEED'S VOICE IS NOT

In relation to Lightspeed's formal theme, the company's tone of voice is not **casual**. In relation to Lightspeed's caring theme, the company's tone of voice is not **indifferent**. Although Lightspeed's tone of voice is authoritative, it is not **overbearing** or **arrogant**. In relation to Lightspeed's theme of innovation, it is not **stagnant**.



brandVoice

FORMAL

CARING

AUTHORITATIVE

INNOVATIVE

VOICE SAMPLE SENTENCES

ON BRAND

Formal

Find out more how Lightspeed instructional audio solutions help overcome listening challenges and ensure clarity of speech and even sound distribution for in-class and remote learners. (source)

Caring

Lightspeed's technology allows the voices of all students to be heard. Our classroom audio systems are easy-to-use, so teachers can focus on educating instead of troubleshooting. Loss of visual cues for comprehension: Non-transparent masks will make it impossible for students to read teachers' lips and properly interpret facial expressions, making them entirely reliant on the teacher's voice. (Source)

Authoritative

Our solutions help overcome barriers to listening so students can clearly hear their teacher to receive the best instruction and support at the right time. (Source)

Innovative

We define ourselves as a learning company because we will continue to find new ways to create access to learning by studying the dynamics of the classroom. (Source)

Lightspeed's classroom audio systems have re-invented communication between teacher and student.

NOT ON BRAND

- | Lightspeed's classroom audio systems lets the kids in the back be heard.
- | Easy-to-follow YouTube videos make installing our speakers a snap.
- Redcat Access system means students will spend less time chatting and more time learning.





METHODOLOGY

NounTown conducted six phone interviews with teachers from around the world, including the US West Coast, Texas and Russia. A few notes about the team's interviewees:

- 1. They work primarily in public elementary schools, including one special-ed teacher
- 2. Each has a combination of experiences with in person, distance and hybrid teaching formats
- 3. Their comfort with adopting, learning, and implementing new tech in their classrooms spanned a wide range

NounTown brainstormed potential interview questions as a team, then worked to pare ~30 questions down to eight. After conducting interviews, final transcripts were shared across the team. As individuals, top insights were pulled from conversations and added them in our bank of sticky notes in Miro.

From there, we looked for commonality across the team's top interview insights. With sticky notes bunched into natural-feeling groups, we created fitting titles for our

TARGET PERSONA BROAD CHARACTERISTICS

K - 12 teachers (public/private) United States

Younger than average age teacher (42.4 yrs)

Female (proportionally)

Proactive, engaged and passionate about student success

Tech-savvy

Willing to advocate for tools needed to be most effective in class

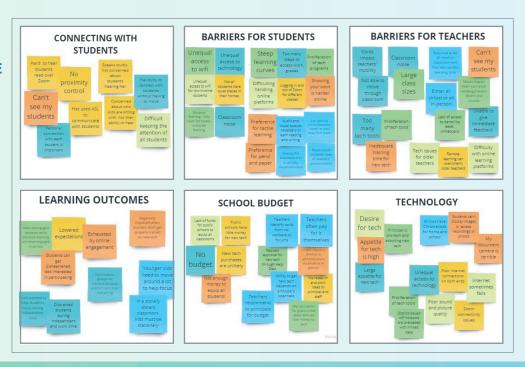




INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. In the past year, have you taught primarily in person, virtual or in a hybrid model?
- 2. What are a few of your biggest challenges teaching right now?
- 3. How would you describe the effectiveness of your current classroom setup? What could be improved?
- 4. Do you feel like all students in your classroom, regardless of instructional format, have equal ability to see and hear you and each other? If not, please explain.
- 5. When you think about the ideal classroom for effective learning, what does it look and sound like?
- 6. What is the process by which you identify and request solutions to educational barriers?
- 7. What are your thoughts about adding new technology to your classroom?
- 8. How would you describe your school administration's appetite for pursuing new classroom technologies?

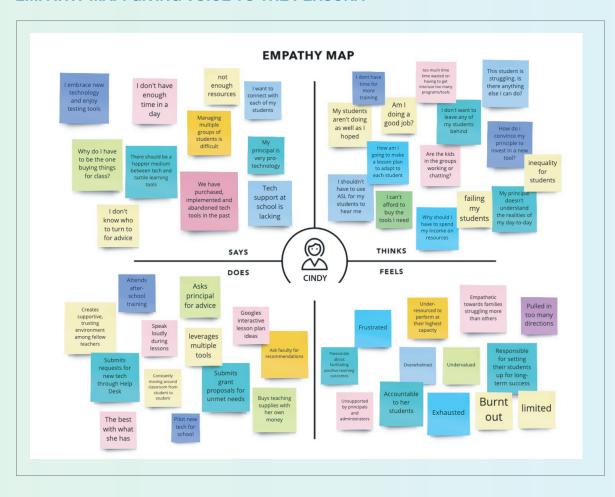
DIAGRAM EXERCISE





targetPersona

EMPATHY MAP: GIVING VOICE TO THE PERSONA





targetPersona

USER PERSONA | MEET CINDY

User Persona CINDY



Age: 35

Education: Bachelor's degree Title: First grade teacher

Employer: Jaguar Elementary School

Location: Corvallis, Oregon, US Classroom Format: In-person

Income: \$61,000

BIO

Cindy graduated from Oregon State University in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in elementary ation. Since then, she's taught kindergarten through third graders at schools across the Pacific Northwest. For the past four years, Cindy has been a first grade teacher at a public school in Corvallis, Oregon, where her work ethic and dedication to student success have been recognized at the annual awards ceremony. Cindy is viewed as a leader among her peers and is trusted by her team to represent their best interests in interactions with the principal. Cindy grew up in Portland and has been married for seven years.

Motivations

- To make a positive impact in the lives of her students
- To meaningfully connect with her students
- To make learning more enjoyable and engaging through creative means
- Positive learning outcomes for all students

Goals

- Equal access for all students
- Administrators understand constraints and successes
- Ensure students are hitting key learning milestones and progressing through the curriculum
- Create a collaborative environment between faculty, students, and parents
- Provide equal access to all students

Frustrations

- Tech tools and platforms purchased by the district are implemented too fully, leaving a lack of time and space for handson/tactile learning
- Lack of space and large class sizes could impact some students' ability to see her which is imperative for teaching sounds and
- Lack of budget for implementing tech tools and platforms in all classrooms

Lightspeed.

Preferred Channels

- Social Media Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Direct Mail Email

Top Resources

- Private teacher forums
- Tools Go Noodle, Clever, Level Up
- Teachers Pay Teachers
- Webinars

Brand Affinity







- If Cindy wants to implement new tools that the school can't pay for, she'll have to pay for them herself
- Not all schools have a technology contact on-site to facilitate student's and teacher's knowledge and understanding of tech tools



journeyMap

METHODOLOGY

Referencing our target persona (Cindy) and research interviews, nounTown produced a journey map of key stages in Cindy's interaction with Lightspeed's brand and content. In doing so, we charted four key stages in Cindy's journey: awareness, research, recommend, and engagement. Keeping in mind our core strategy, we identified touchpoints at which Lightspeed's content can support Cindy's goals and address her frustrations. We've also identified further opportunities and proposed internal ownership for specific phases of interaction with Lightspeed's brand.



journeyMap



CINDY

Cindy teaches first grade at a public school in Corvallis, Oregon. With a decade of experience in the classroom, she's considered passionate, proactive and engaged by her peers. Cindy is willing to go above and beyond to ensure her students' success, even when it means she'll need to take on extra work.

SCENARIO: Class sizes are getting bigger each academic year at Cindy's school. As her class roster grows, she is finding it difficult to keep her students' attention and connect with each pupil. Inclined to embrace new technologies, Cindy hopes to identify new in-class audio solutions to address these barriers, as well as equip herself for future shifts in classroom formats (e.g., distance and hybrid).

EXPECTATIONS

- An easy-to-navigate online experience that clearly outlines the value of Lightspeed
- A variety of up-to-date educational resources covering the company's solutions
- Convincing downloadable and shareable online materials that she can leverage while pitching Lightspeed to her school administrators
- · Evidence of a strong customer support team

AWARENESS RESEARCH RECOMMEND ENGAGEMENT Searches the web to identify Leverages buyer's kit templates to Attends Lightspeed's campus potential classroom audio build a strong business case for training for first time users Lightspeed's technologies DISTRICT IMPLEMENTS LIGHTSPEED . technology solutions Detects a correlation between Watches webinar on different ways students' ability to focus and their Finds the Lightspeed website and Outlines key benefits of Lightspeed in to make the classroom more digs deeper into the company's an email to the school administrator interactive product offerings and technology director; requests Reaches out to Lightspeed support staff to troubleshoot issues; has Believes that some of her students in-person follow-up meeting are having issues seeing and Watches videos of previous Lightspeed webinars and registers hearing her Presents her recommendation via an positive experience for an upcoming session in-person pitch meeting, highlighting Asks herself if there's anything she Engages with Lightspeed's social all of her takeaways-opportunities, can do to help her students who are Reads a case study and downloads content questions and concerns the document to share with her Recommends Lightspeed to team Confirms other teachers are teachers at other schools experiencing similar issues "I believe the value of this technology is worth the cost. We can't afford to let our students down." "I love my kids, but I feel like I'm losing them." "Without additional support, I can't do my job effectively as class sizes continue to grow "I think this is what I've been looking for!" How can I get the module of Lightspeed?" "Yes! The school purchased the system." "I need to build a strong case for Lightspeed to convince administrators of its value."

OPPORTUNITIES

- · Create more top-of-funnel content with teachers in mind
- Invest in SEO (paid and organic) and digital advertising to increase awareness
- Build out PR efforts to better position Lightspeed news and offerings in the press

INTERNAL OWNERSHIP

- · Marketing Team:
 - Create buyer's kit to help prospective buyers build their business cases
 - Build out post-sale content to increase customer engagement
- Web Team: Add functionality to allow Cindy to compare products
- Customer Support Team: Ensure service-level agreements are met





METHODOLOGY

We used several trusted accessibility audit tools, including **Wave**, **WebAIM**, and **Lighthouse** to audit for accessibility issues. Automated tools are helpful, but they are limited in usefulness. For example, they can assess if alt text (alternative text for images) is present, but they can't evaluate whether or not the alt text is accurate, comprehensive, or useful. Consequently, we manually inspected alt text with Chrome's built-in web inspector. We also manually inspected the page for style inconsistencies, grammar, content structure, and visual qualities.

WEBSITE USABILITY DIAGNOSIS

The nounTown team has identified opportunities for Lightspeed to improve content usability on its homepage. We've organized our analysis under three general categories:

ACCESSIBILITY
SEARCH
INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

ACCESSIBILITY

ISSUE

The Lightspeed homepage contains several excellent images that align with the brand's unique product line and mission. However, several of the images create barriers for some users, primarily because of missing or insufficient alt text.

Alt text, or alternative text, is a written description of an image that enables users of screen readers or other assistive technologies to access the purpose and meaning of images on a website. More effective alt text also promotes better search engine optimization (SEO), as search engines use alt text (among other attributes) to index and organize images.

EXAMPLE

Exhibit A is one of several opportunities that Lightspeed should explore to improve the application of alt text on the company's homepage:



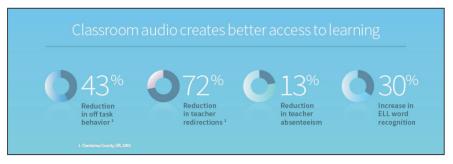


Exhibit A

RECOMMENDATION

This a compelling image that demonstrates Lightspeed's positive impact for teachers and students, but the data conveyed is only available to sighted users. The current alt text for this graphic is, "classroom audio stats."

SHORT-TERM

Lightspeed should consider implementing descriptive alt text across images on its website. For this example, that could be something similar to, "Classroom audio creates better access to learning, with 43 percent reduction in off-task behavior, 72 percent reduction in teacher redirections, 13 percent reduction in teacher absenteeism, and 30 percent increase in ELL word recognition, data collected in Clackamas County, 2002."

LONG-TERM

Lightspeed should consider using HTML/CSS or SVG for this content since many screen readers will stop reading alt text after 125 characters. See Exhibit B for an example of a more accessible technique for data visualization that is completely accessible to assistive technologies. Though it would take longer to implement, we recommend Lightspeed explore a similar option in the future employing their brand and style to a production version.

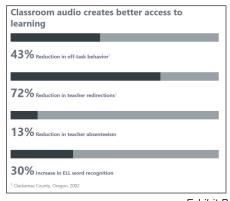


Exhibit B



SEARCH

ISSUE

Search functionality on the Lightspeed homepage presents a usability barrier. Simply by clicking on the magnifying glass option on the main nav, visitors are routed to a separate page with an alert that reads, "No products were found for the provided criteria." Web users get this alert before they've been given an opportunity to enter a search query (see Exhibit C).

This interaction could discourage users from continued engagement with the site and its content. It may also confuse users by making them think the latter was the result of something they did incorrectly. Either outcome is detrimental to Lightspeed's goal of turning web traffic into prospects and, eventually, customers.

Additionally, the search landing page clearly distinguishes between content pages and products, yet the alert placeholder text implies the user is confined to a search for products. The search placeholder text could alienate users who are discovering the brand for the first time or users who are seeking support, training, research, press, careers, or several other types of content that they might not immediately associate with "products."

EXAMPLE

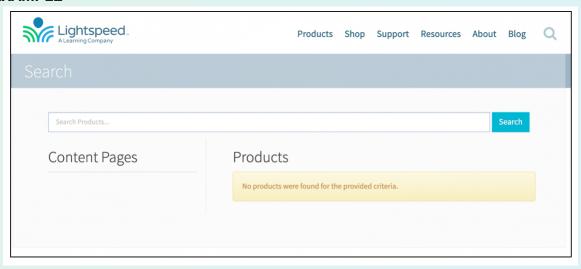


Exhibit C



RECOMMENDATION

SHORT-TERM

It's recommended to remove the default alert text users see when they land on the search page. When the user does enter a search for which there are no results, we see value in updating the alert text to an active voice. The active voice builds trust and implies accountability and aligns with voice and tone characteristics we previously recommended (caring, respectful). Consider an alternative, such as: "We couldn't find what you're looking for. Please let us know if we're missing something." Importantly, also provide the preferred way for the user to contact you.

LONG-TERM

Budget dependent, it's recommended to have the addition of an integrated search bar on the homepage. Right now, search is a three-step process for users (click magnifying glass, navigate to search lander, enter query, get results). With an integrated search, Lightspeed could eliminate one step entirely to create a more seamless on-page experience (click magnifying glass, enter query in integrated search bar, get results specific to user's query). Here's an example of integrated search functionality (Exhibit D):

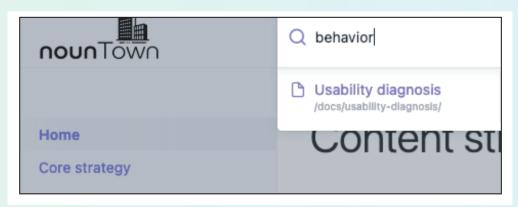


Exhibit D



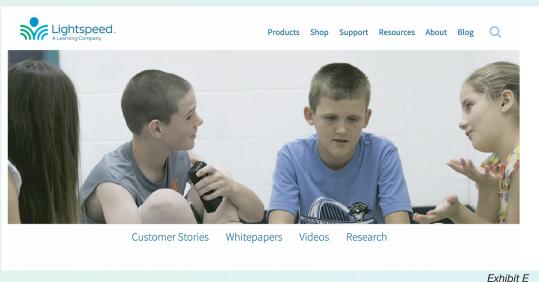
INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

ISSUE

We've noticed some inconsistencies on the homepage in how content is organized. We believe this could confuse Lightspeed's website visitors.

EXAMPLES

At the bottom of the homepage, the "See the research" callout box links to a page with no research listed (Exhibit E). Instead of offering any content, research or otherwise, users are routed to a landing page consisting of links only. One of the four links is "Research." The correlation between "Research" and the other, more marketing-focused options ("Customer Stories," Whitepapers," and "Videos") is unclear.





EXAMPLES (continued)

Another example is that the homepage's main navigation menu options are different from the navigation options listed in the footer and they are in a different order (Exhibit F). In the main navigation menu, "Resources" contains whitepapers, videos, stories, and resources. In the footer, those items are nested under a heading called "Learn".

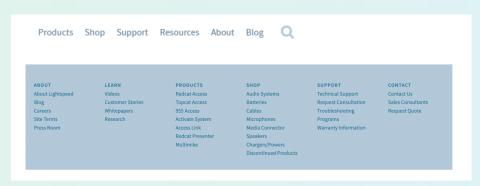


Exhibit F

RECOMMENDATION

It's recommended to establish consistency in the way Lightspeed refers to content categories and content types. Further, we recommend documenting how Lightspeed will organize and refer to content categories and content types. Addressing both of these areas, and similar issues across the site, Lightspeed can make their website easier and more logical to navigate through for all visitors.



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

INSUFFICIENT COLOR CONTRAST ISSUES MAY PRESENT BARRIERS FOR SOME USERS

Our automated accessibility audit revealed 67 color contrast errors on the homepage. Insufficient contrast can make the content difficult to read or interpret for color blind and visually impaired users (Exhibit H).



Exhibit H

TEXT OVERLAID ON BACKGROUND CAN BE DIFFICULT TO READ

Text on top of images can be difficult to read, particularly if the font is thin or fine. This can be resolved, in part at least, by lowering the contrast on the background image and increasing the weight of the font (Exhibit I).



Exhibit I





ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (continued)

FEATURED DATA ON THE HOMEPAGE IS FROM 2002. CONSIDER UPDATING TO SUPPORT YOUR BRAND CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATIVE AND INFORMATIVE.

Out-of-date data can undermine its own purpose; it can erode trust in your brand. If users don't think the data is relevant, it may result in the opposite effect of what was intended.



Exhibit J



METHODOLOGY

After diagnosing usability barriers, the team has identified methods by which Lightspeed can improve content performance for users. We've expanded on our previous recommendations, while also establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) that provide a framework for measuring progress toward addressing usability issues. Importantly, Lightspeed should consider gathering analytics and conducting research of the current state for each KPI in order to establish a baseline for evaluating progress.

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase ease-of-use for all of Lightspeed's web visitors, we suggest the following updates to the site's information architecture:

CONTENT CATEGORY STANDARDIZATION

The content categories included in the main navigation and the footer are inconsistent, including when referring to the same piece of content. For example, in the main nav, "Resources" is where whitepapers, videos and customer stories live. In the footer, those items are included under a heading called "Learn." To avoid confusion, ensure that all content categories are standardized across the organization and catalogued for guick reference.

CONSISTENT ORDERING OF NAVIGATION OPTIONS

The main nav and the footer contain many of the same menu options, but are ordered differently on the page. For example, "About" is the second to last menu option along the main nav, but the first menu option along the footer. For a consistent user experience, the options in both areas should be consistent (Exhibit K).



Exhibit K



INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

CONSISTENT SUBNAV OPTIONS

In addition to standardizing content categories and nav menu ordering, subnav items should mirror each other in the main nav and footer. For example, in the main nav, "About" has no secondary drop-down sections listed. In the footer, "About" has five sub-sections listed. Similarly, "Support" in the main nav includes a FAQ subnav option, while FAQ is not listed under "Support" in the footer (Exhibit L).

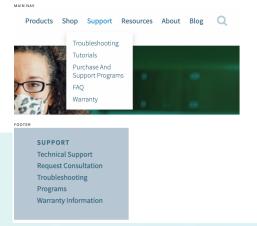


Exhibit L

LAYOUT OF STICK NAV MENU

As web visitors scroll through any page on the Lightspeed website, a sticky version of the main nav bar stays fixed along the top. This is a helpful usability feature that prevents visitors from needing to scroll back to the top of a page before continuing on to explore other sections of the site. However, the layout of this fixed nav could be confusing, as "Contact" appears directly to the left of a search magnifying glass—where you typically see a search field. Consider moving "Contact" to the left alongside the other menu options (Exhibit M).



"PRODUCTS" vs. "SHOP

For website visitors, the difference between "Products" and "Shop"—both options along the main nav—may not be apparent. We suggest combining both product specs and sales details under one main nav option called "Solutions." On that page, we believe a comparison tool to evaluate Lightspeed's offerings alongside each other would be especially helpful for a specific use case.



INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

ADDRESSING MIXED MESSAGES AROUND 'CONTACTING' LIGHTSPEED

On the homepage, visitors may be overwhelmed by the number of invitations to connect with Lightspeed—especially if they're not at a point where reaching out is appropriate. More complicated is that the invitations to connect lead users down different paths:

Once on the Contact page, users are prompted to choose between requesting an evaluation, submitting a sales inquiry, asking for technical support or finding their local Lightspeed rep; all options lead to separate form fill pages

On the Sales Consultants page, users can either contact sales or find a rep; both lead to separate form fills

To avoid confusion, consider streamlining Lightspeed's contact page and the avenues people are given to arrive there. Add "Contact Us" to the main nav for visibility, and use that as an opportunity to remove some of the duplicate links across the page.

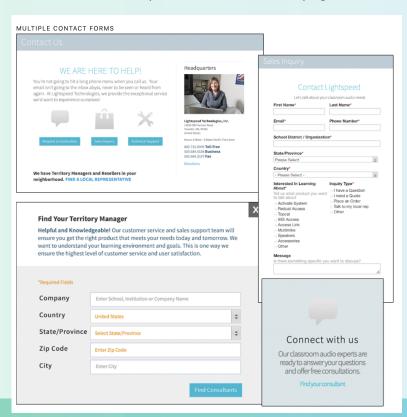


Exhibit O



INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

SIMPLIFY AND STREAMLINE THE NAVIGATION

The Lightspeed website's main navigation and footer are difficult to navigate and have content cross-listed in multiple areas. To simplify the user journey and make it easier to find useful, relevant information, we propose a restructure of both nav menus. The proposed main nav and footer structures also take into account all previous IA suggestions previously outlined (Exhibit P).

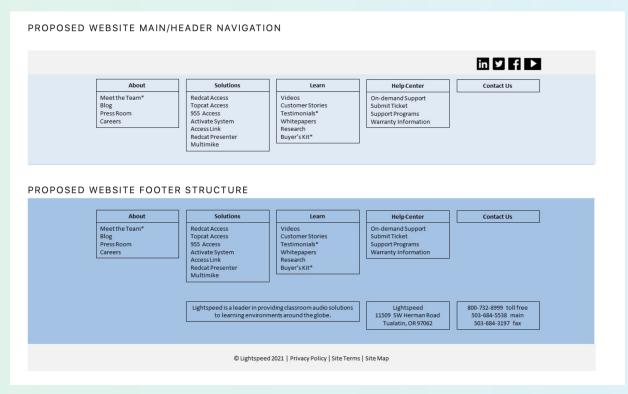


Exhibit P



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

KPI	KPI TYPE	CURRENTLY	TARGET	METHOD	MEASUREMENT
The website is fully accessible	Behavioral; quantitative; attitudinal; qualitative	Homepage has 67 contrast errors and 19 formatting errors (using WAVE)	100% compliance scores for automated accessibility tests; screen reader interactions are meaningful and effective	Add alt text where missing; improve alt text by making more descriptive; increase color contrast; convert data images to interactive visualizations	Automated accessibility audits; screen reader testing; usability testing
The website is optimized for social media engagement	Behavioral; quantitative	White space shown when homepage link posted on FB.	The website incorporates best practices for social media metadata	Add meta tags specific to for social media	Social media referrals and engagement
Search is easy to use and delivers predictable results	Behavioral; quantitative; attitudinal; qualitative	Search icon redirects to a dedicated page. Error shown by default.	Search is integrated into every page; search results are predictable and useful	Integrate search field into header	Overall use of search; search keywords and search results interactions; usability testing
Navigation is consistent and intuitive	Behavioral; quantitative; attitudinal; qualitative	Nav bar and footer items are not consistent.	Navigation and sub- navigation is organized according to user expectations	Apply consistent terms for navigation items and categories	Behavior flow chart; card sorting and/or tree testing with users



additional Resource

nounTown website

https://uw-content-strategy-nountown.netlify.app

As an extension of the class work, nounTown created a website to house all the assignments and in addition employ some of the lessons learned throughout the class such as usability.