



Pratt Center for Career and
Professional Development

Moderated User Testing Report

By
Nidhi Gowda
Lillian MacGuire
John Veon
Betty Yang

Pratt Institute
2024

Executive Summary

Pratt Institute's Center for Career and Professional Development has the overall goal of assisting Pratt students and alumni in career development. CCPD representatives recognized a need to enhance their web presence after receiving feedback that communication could be improved surrounding services and offerings.

Our team selected a diverse set of 8 Pratt students from the undergraduate population in order to conduct a Moderated Remote Usability Testing Study. No prior experience with the CCPD was required. During testing, the team presented a set of 5 tasks related to student job search, resume creation, portfolio creation, workshop availability, and alumni connection.

Based on our analysis of participant responses, the team is presenting the following recommendations:

1. Reorganize content to be less dense, and add relevant images to help with content searching
2. Introduce deep links to the appropriate page on Handshake
3. Remove non-CCPD content from the left side navigation
4. Add a sticky button that is clickable and leads to the CCPD FAQ
5. Add a share button for different events

The team feels that these recommendations provide high value with fairly low effort, immediately improving communications with students searching for help with portfolio and resume creation, career workshops, and seeking connections with alumni. These recommendations were created with the Pratt web template in mind, so the recommendations could be implemented into the existing interface.

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Introduction

The Pratt Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) website serves as a vital platform for undergraduate students at Pratt Institute to access resources, services, and support to enhance their career readiness and professional development.

To ensure the effectiveness and user-friendliness of this crucial resource, a usability testing initiative was undertaken to evaluate the website's navigability, functionality, and overall user experience. For this study, four students from Pratt Institute - Nidhi Gowda, Lillian Macguire, John Veon, and Betty Yang conducted eight moderated online user tests to identify usability issues on the CCPD website. We lay out the methodology of our moderated online user testing, present our key findings, and share our five design recommendations.

Throughout the testing process, participants were tasked with navigating the CCPD website to accomplish specific goals, such as accessing information on professional skill-building services, resume assistance, event listings, and alumni connections. Their interactions with the website were closely observed and analyzed to uncover any usability issues, challenges, or areas of confusion that may hinder their ability to utilize the available resources effectively.

This report presents the findings and recommendations derived from the usability testing sessions, offering valuable insights into the user experience of the CCPD website and suggesting actionable strategies for enhancing its usability and functionality. By addressing the identified issues and implementing the proposed recommendations, the Pratt Center for Career and Professional Development can further empower students in their career pursuits and provide them with a more seamless and rewarding online experience.

Methodology

Moderated User Testing

We utilized the moderated remote user testing method for our data collection. Moderated testing is a great method for usability evaluations since facilitators are present during the study, and available to assist participants with any questions or confusion (Shade, 2013). We completed our testing on Zoom, with all participants' cameras and microphones on. We made use of the "Think Aloud" method, by probing our participants to continuously verbalize their thoughts and feelings about the CCPD web interface as they completed the assigned tasks (Nielsen, 2012).

Procedure

Through a meeting with our client, we were able to obtain information about the CCPD's target users, as well as the key functions of the website that were highlighted for evaluation. In the same meeting, we were able to identify the desktop version of the Pratt CCPD website as a focus for this study. As a team, we created 5 tasks to test these key functions and then tested them ourselves in a pilot study. After a successful test, we sent out our screener survey form to begin recruiting participants for our moderated usability test sessions.

Participant Recruitment

To identify a target user base we spoke with CCPD Director Marisa Lobianco to gain more details on the website's potential users. Based on this information, we came up with the following user profile:

- Undergraduate students at Pratt Institute
- Interested in researching information related to resume creation and review
- Working on portfolio creation and potential review
- Looking for internships
- In search of general career help

We then created a screener questionnaire to be sent out to students at Pratt Institute. We collected the following information from this questionnaire:

- Are you an undergraduate student?
- Are you an international student? (If yes, also their country of origin)
- Have you ever used the Pratt CCPD website before?
- How old are you?
- What is your current year in school?
- Do you have access to a computer, with Zoom installed?
- Race
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Email contact

This screener survey was created on Google Forms and sent out to the Pratt student body through the platform Handshake. We created flyers with QR code links to the screener, which were posted around Pratt's Brooklyn campus. Both the email and flyer explained that participants would be receiving a \$10 Amazon gift card if they were accepted to participate in the study. In total, we received 46 responses on our screener survey. We selected 8 respondents to participate in the testing stage of our study. By using the demographic data gathered in our screener, we were able to ensure a diverse set of respondents were chosen to participate to make sure we got feedback from a range of people with different backgrounds. Some of our participants had some experience with using the CCPD website and Handshake, while for others this was their first time.

Participant Demographics

Each member of the research team selected two participants for this study. These participants were selected based on responses from our screener survey form. The demographic breakdown of our participants is attached below:

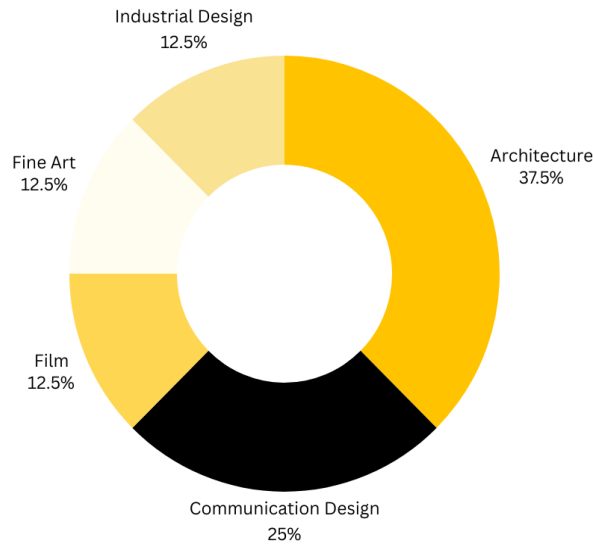
Race	Gender	Age	Year in School	Country of Origin	Ethnicity
Caucasian/White	Non-Binary	18-24	Freshman	USA	Not Hispanic or Latino
N/A	Female	18-24	Junior	Turkey	Not Hispanic or Latino
Black/African American	Female	18-24	Freshman	USA	Not Hispanic or Latino
Caucasian/White	Female	18-24	Junior	USA	Not Hispanic or Latino
Asian	Female	18-24	Senior	USA	Not Hispanic or Latino
Caucasian/White	Male	18-24	Senior	USA	Not Hispanic or Latino
Asian	Female	18-24	Sophomore	China	Not Hispanic or Latino
Asian	Male	18-24	Junior	South Korea	Not Hispanic or Latino

(Table 1)

Pre-Test Questions

We asked participants 3 pre-test questions to gather general information about them, as well as their experiences with the CCPD. The results of those questions are shown below:

1. What are you studying?



(Chart 1)

2. Have you ever used the CCPD website before?



(Chart 2)

3. Have you attended any events organized by the CCPD previously, If yes how did you find out about it?

Participant 1	No
Participant 2	Yes, attended a career fair. Gets info from the CCPD through her email
Participant 3	Yes I have. I get it mostly through email or my friend sends it to me
Participant 4	I went to career fairs and focus groups I found through email
Participant 5	Yes - Career fair that was advertised through email
Participant 6	No
Participant 7	No
Participant 8	Yes but not the career events. Attended an event to introduce what the CCPD is to students

(Table 2)

Tasks

The following tasks were given to participants to complete during their testing sessions. In collaboration with our client, we determined the key functions of the website and built tasks around them. We purposely selected terminology that was not currently used on the website to ensure participants were following their natural thought patterns, and not being led in certain directions based on our word choice.

- 1. You're looking to apply to jobs soon, locate information on resume building/review services and check meeting availability.*
- 2. You're graduating soon and have been thinking about starting to apply for jobs within your field. See if the CCPD offers any events that could help you with this.*
- 3. One of your friends could make use of some of the services at the CCPD, and they mentioned being interested in seeing if any workshops are happening. See how the CCPD could help with this.*
- 4. You need to update your portfolio materials for a job interview you have coming up, and find information about portfolio services offered on the CCPD website.*
- 5. You are trying to find your alumnus for advice regarding your career, and see if the CCPD has any resources to foster these connections.*

Post-Task Questions

After each task was completed, participants were asked 3 separate questions to evaluate how they felt about the process of completing the tasks and the interface. (See Appendix x)

- 1. Overall, I was satisfied with the ease of completing this task*
 - 1. Very satisfied*
 - 2. Satisfied*
 - 3. Neither*
 - 4. Dissatisfied*
 - 5. Very dissatisfied*
- 2. Did you complete the task successfully?*
 - 1. Definitely*
 - 2. Very Probably*
 - 3. Probably*
 - 4. Probably Not*
 - 5. Definitely Not*
- 3. Was there something different you expected to see on the screen?*

Responses to these questions were recorded in a shared spreadsheet and later utilized during the analysis stage of our testing (See appendix).

Post-Test Questions

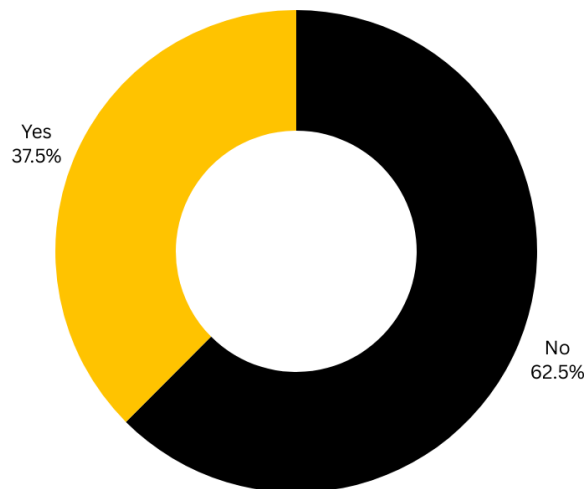
After participants completed all tasks, we asked them 2 additional post-test questions. The results of these questions are attached below:

1. *Can you please give me three words to describe your experience with the CCPD website?*

Participant 1	Frustrating, Difficult, Mundane
Participant 2	Relatively intuitive, Craigslist
Participant 3	Sterile, Experience, Confusion
Participant 4	Confusing, Tedious, Frustrating
Participant 5	Handshake, Hard, n/a
Participant 6	Redirected, Vague, Confusing
Participant 7	Clean, Clear, Efficient
Participant 8	Helpful (Handshake), Clear (Handshake), Confusing

(Table 3)

1. *After your experience with the current CCPD website, would you be inclined to revisit it?*



(Chart 3)

Analysis Process

During and after conducting each test, evaluators recorded their notes into a shared spreadsheet. Recording sessions also helped with later note-taking, since each test could be revisited for more information or further clarification. As a group, we captured problems that came up for users during testing on post-its. We then utilized the affinity mapping technique and grouped these post-its and labeled them by category. By doing this, we were able to identify the most common issues that users encountered within the interface. Based on frequency and severity, we were able to identify which problems to create design recommendations for. Our findings and recommendations will be outlined in the following section of this report.

Findings and Recommendations

Some participants had experience with the CCPD and those participants highly appreciated the services offered. Different participants had very positive remarks about:

- Finding internships through CCPD services
- Booking appointments for feedback on resume creation
- Attending events sponsored by the CCPD, including career fairs and focus groups

The following table shows some quantitative data we collected during our moderated testing sessions:

Task	Average Time	Average Satisfaction Rating	Average Confidence in Task Completion	Number of Task Abandons
1	3:14	3	2.1	0
2	1:47	1.6	1.4	0
3	2:06	2.1	1.9	0
4	2:43	3.2	3.2	0
5	2:40	3.9	3.9	2

(Table 4)

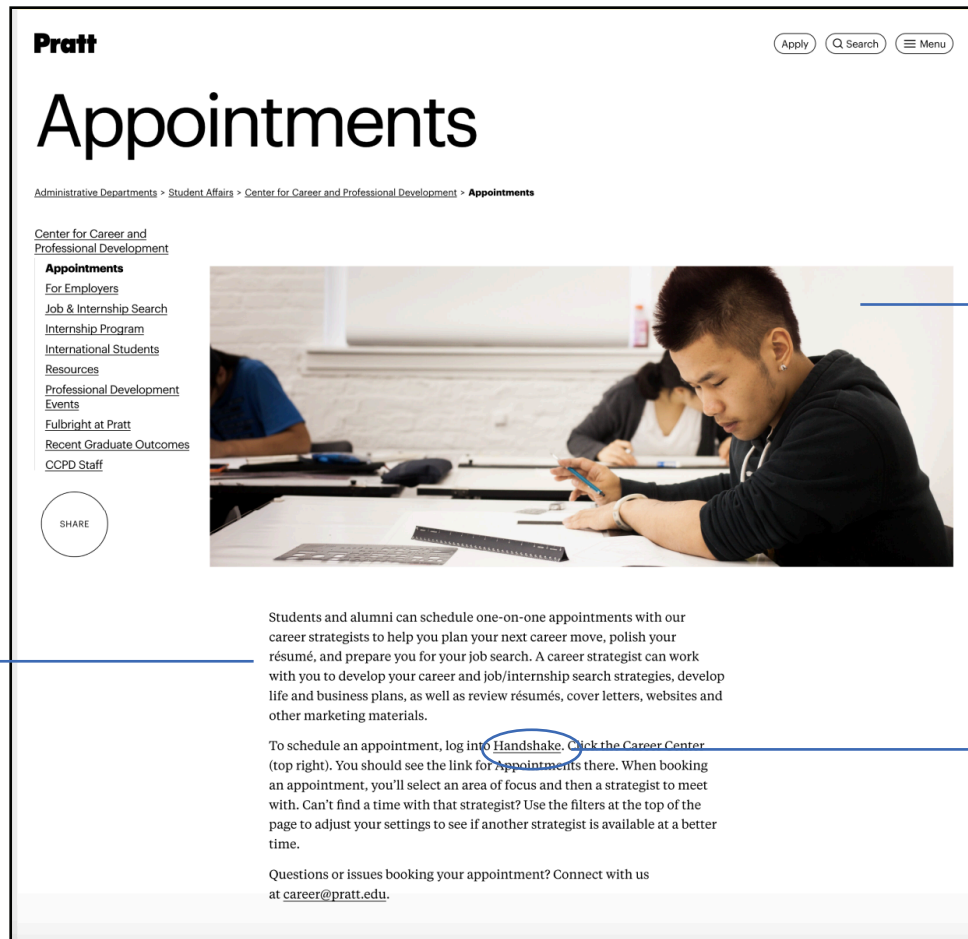
Averaged responses following each task. Lower numbers indicate better results - 1 is best, 5 is worst. Participants were given a warning at 3 minutes to wrap up.

Half of our participants stated that they did not find value in the CCPD site and would not be interested in revisiting it, with three stating they'd just rather go directly to Handshake and one stating that they would simply email the CCPD office for help. While they value CCPD services, they find the current site too frustrating to rely upon.

Recommendations

Finding 1: Participants have a hard time locating key information on pages

In our testing it was revealed that participants had trouble searching for specific information on the CCPD website. As a team, we discovered this was due to three key issues. First, the current photos on the website don't assist in content searching. Second, pages have dense text that users don't allocate time on, preventing them from accessing important information. Thirdly, external links are unclear, as they're often hidden within paragraphs and easy to miss.



Participants either quickly skim or entirely skip past dense paragraphs

Irrelevant imagery does not reinforce page information

Links embedded in paragraphs go unnoticed by participants

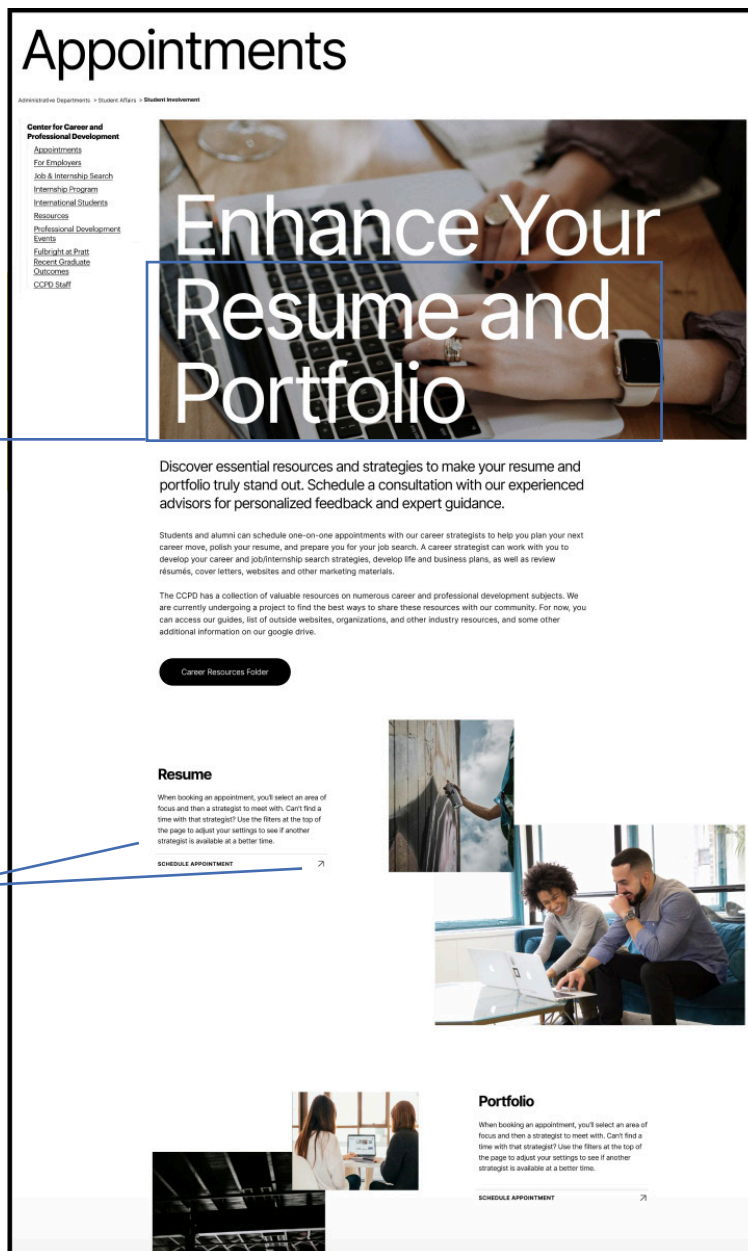
(Figure 1)

Recommendation 1: Reorganize content to be less dense, and add relevant images to help with content searching

To address the usability issues associated with content searching, we've come up with the following recommendations. To begin, the resources page content on the current CCPD website has been added to the appointments page. This is because all the other content on this page pertains to resume building and portfolio material improvement, so participants were confused about why additional resources were somewhere separate. Next, more relevant imagery was added to the page to assist users with content searching. Finally, dense areas of text were refined - specific services offered through appointment will have their own section within the page. The "Schedule Appointment" section with the arrow more clearly shows the presence of a link.

This information was very important to participants, so we've highlighted that information for help with this is on this page

Focus content in more so it's easier to scan. Utilize icons to show the presence of links



Resources information is now visible on appointments page

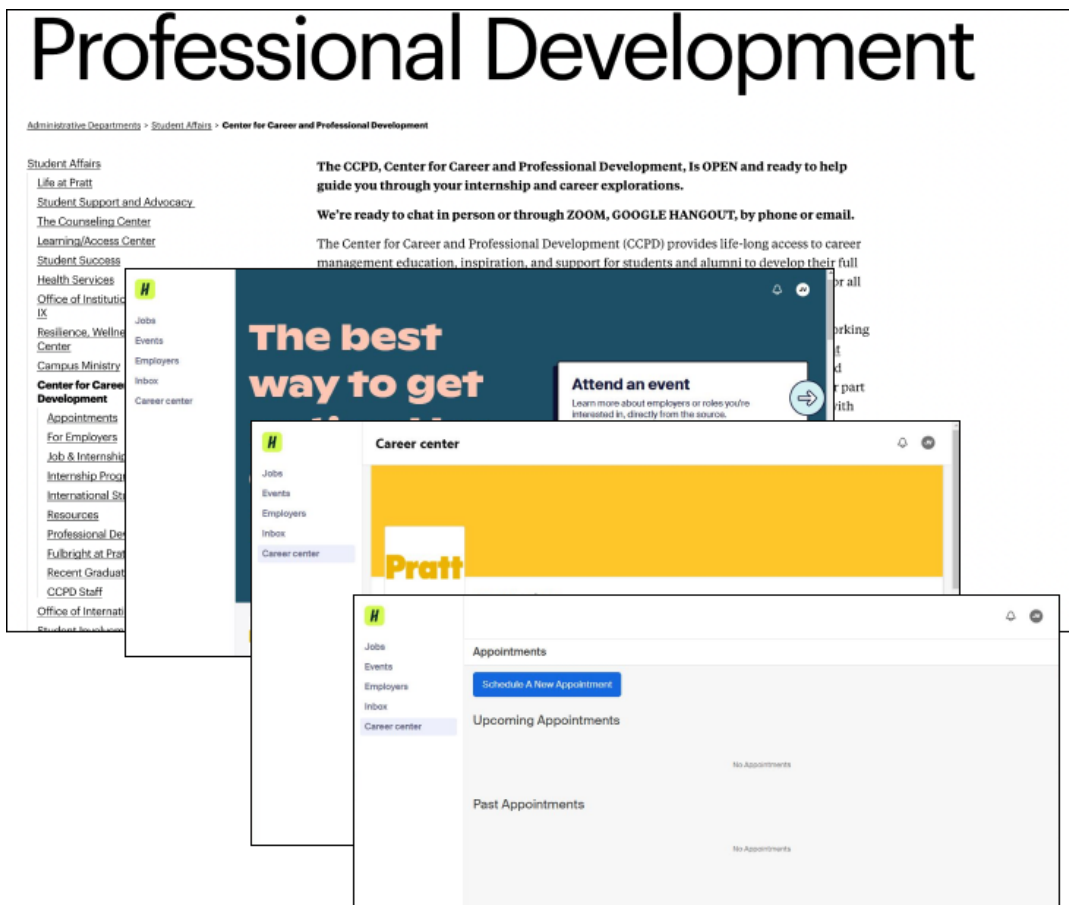
Relevant photos can help users locate information more quickly

(Figure 2)

Finding 2: Users felt that finding information related to portfolio services and resume building appointments was difficult.

When participants were asked to search for information related to resume services, portfolio updates, and workshops within the several tasks during usability testing, they spent a good deal of time searching for any reference to these elements on the CCPD site.

Eventually, participants clicked into the Appointments navigation element and were redirected to the Handshake site, which presented additional frustrations; participants spent a lot of time clicking around searching for what they were specifically looking for. There are no navigational elements on Handshake that clearly state “Resume Help Here” or “Portfolio Help Here” - users are required to search the site until they find a section that feels nearest to their need.



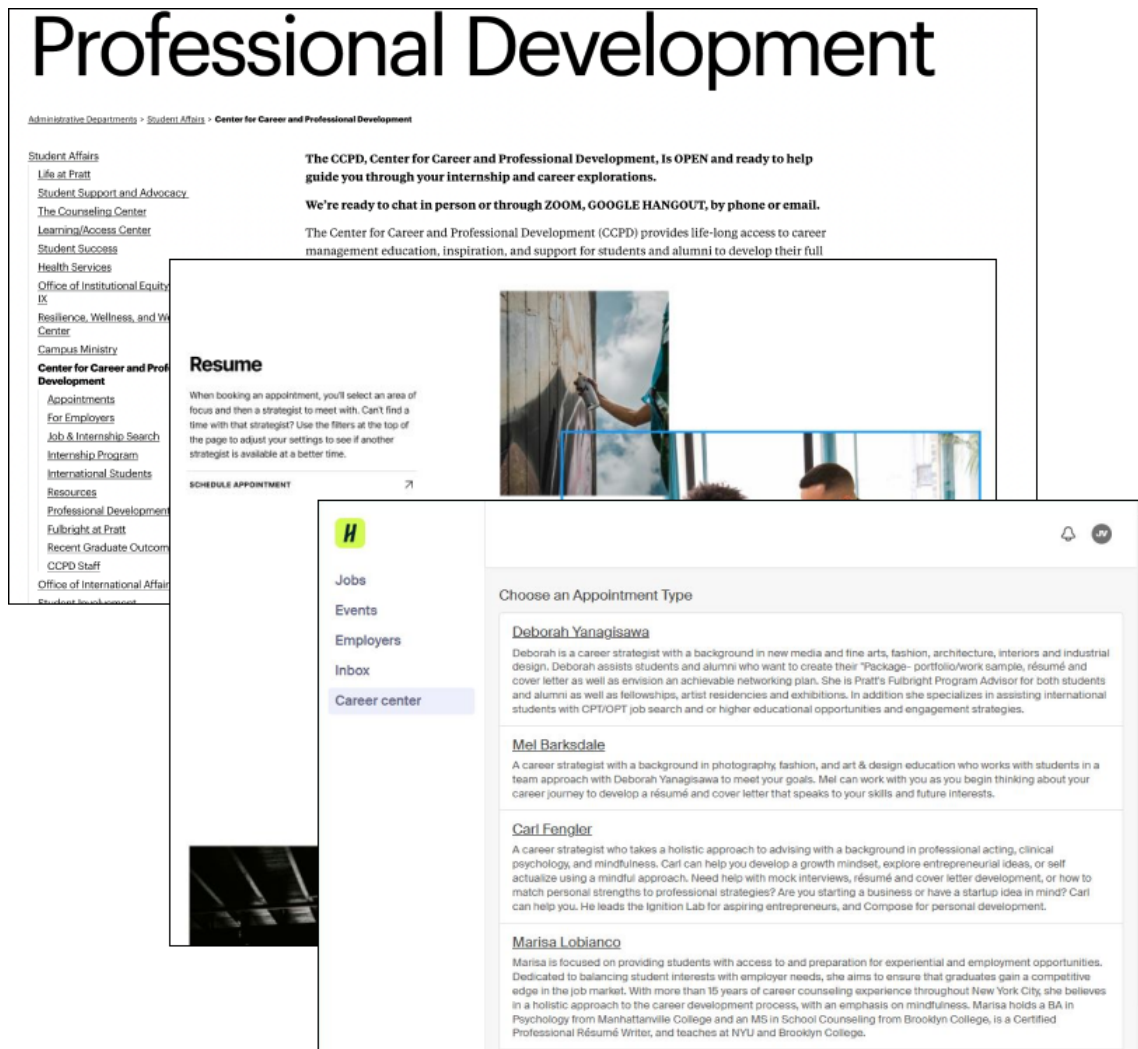
(Figure 3)

In order to find the appropriate section to book an appointment, users have to click multiple times, often hunting around in Handshake until they finally arrive at the right formula of clicks that meet their needs.

Recommendation 3: Introduce deep links to the appropriate pages in Handshake

Building on Recommendation 1, from the newly designed appointments page, create a deep link to the Handshake appointments page for their specific context (resume appointments, portfolio appointments). This eliminates time, frustration, and multiple clicks that students encountered when they were trying to find specific appointment groups for these activities.

Note: A student will still need to go through the initial login process for Handshake if they are not logged in. New students or students who have never visited Handshake will be asked to create a new Handshake account.

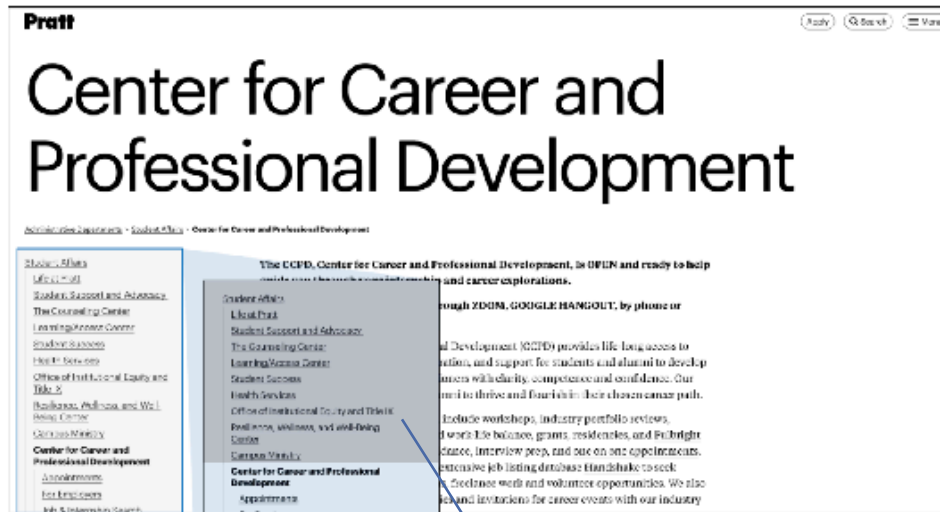


(Figure 4)

Introducing deep links to appropriate content on Handshake - in this case, resume help - takes users directly to the appropriate scheduling team, with no need to hunt for an answer.

Finding 3: The side navigation bar is overcrowded with irrelevant information

During testing, it became evident that participants encountered significant challenges with navigation efficiency. One prominent issue identified was the overcrowded side navigation bar, which contained an excessive amount of irrelevant information. This abundance of content overwhelmed participants and made it difficult for them to quickly locate the information they needed. The website featured a surplus of content that fell outside the realm of career services, further complicating the navigation process. Thus participants reported spending excessive time navigating through irrelevant topic headers, resulting in frustration and inefficiency.



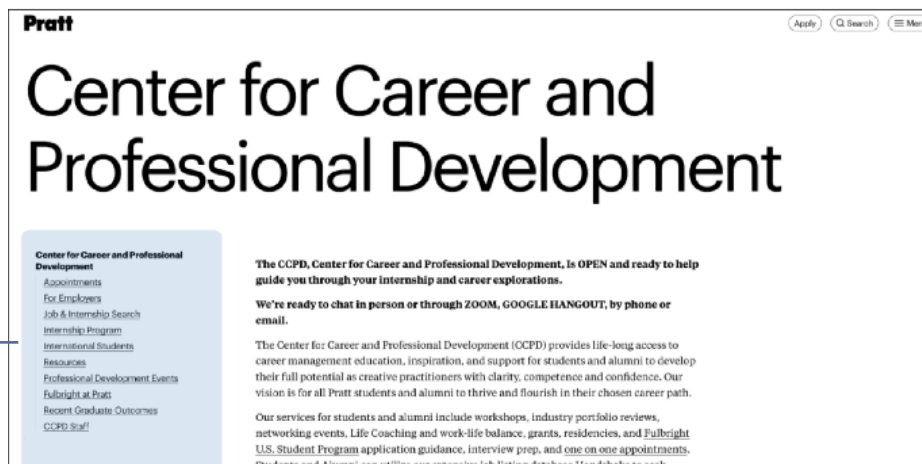
(Figure 5)

The sections shaded extend beyond the CCPD category. Yet, they remain visible on the main navigation screen within the CCPD webpage

Recommendation 3: Remove non-CCPD content from the left-side navigation

The proposed solution is to streamline the user experience by removing content that falls outside the scope of the CCPD. This ensures participants have easy access to relevant resources and a clutter-free navigation experience aiding faster discoverability.

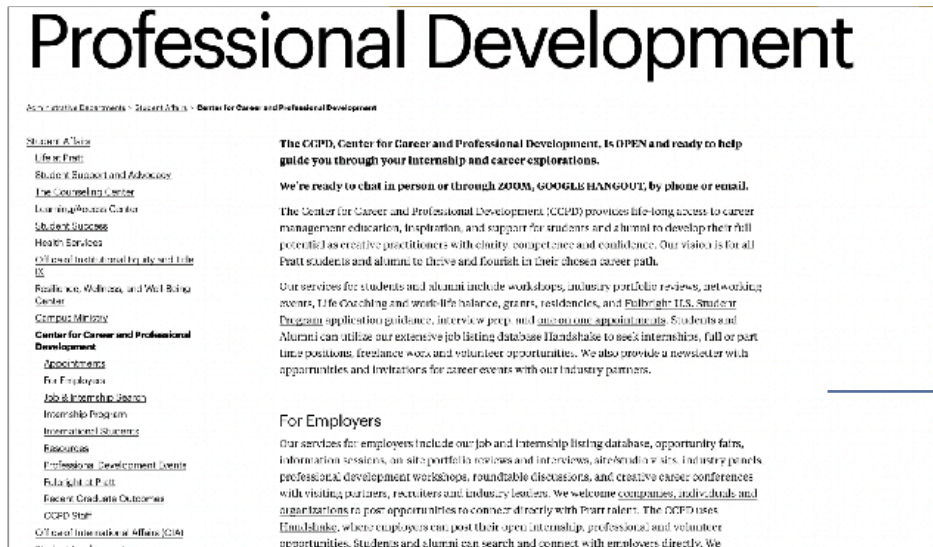
The main web page of CCPD now contains topics relevant to the department. This eliminates distractions to facilitate easy access to information.



(Figure 5)

Finding 4: Overall, specific information is hard for users to locate

Participants encounter challenges in locating essential information on various pages within the CCPD website. The absence of a clear and prominent ability to quickly access contact information or seek assistance from CCPD staff results in frustration and inefficient navigation. Participants stated they wanted to contact the staff for further help or have an easier way to find answers. In testing, participants would resort to clicking every section of the left side navigation in search of information.



No clear way to access help or assistance

(Figure 6)

Recommendation 4: Add a sticky button that is clickable and leads to the CCPD FAQ

Introduce a prominent and consistently placed call-to-action (CTA) button labeled “Click Here for Help” at the bottom of every CCPD webpage. This CTA should stand out visually and provide participants with immediate access to contact information and support options, facilitating efficient communication with CCPD staff. This enhancement promotes a more user-centric approach to website design, ultimately contributing to a more positive user experience and greater engagement with CCPD services.

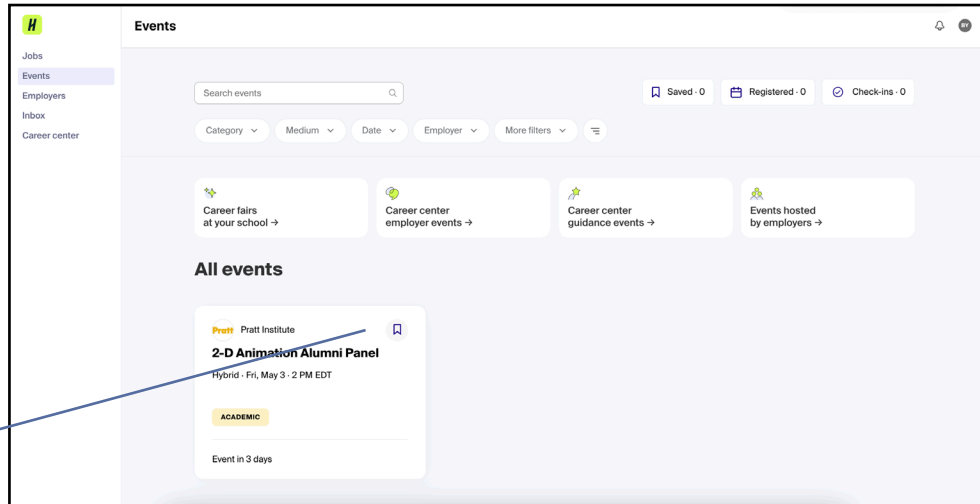


BONUS: This FAQ page could also be converted into a page accessed through the left side navigation

(Figure 7)

Finding 5: There is not a share event function on Handshake

The Handshake platform, utilized by Pratt Institute for accessing job and internship listings, lacks a share button feature for easily sharing events with peers, colleagues, or social networks. This absence of a share button limits the ability of participants to disseminate information about upcoming events hosted by the Pratt Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) to their networks, potentially hindering event attendance and participation.



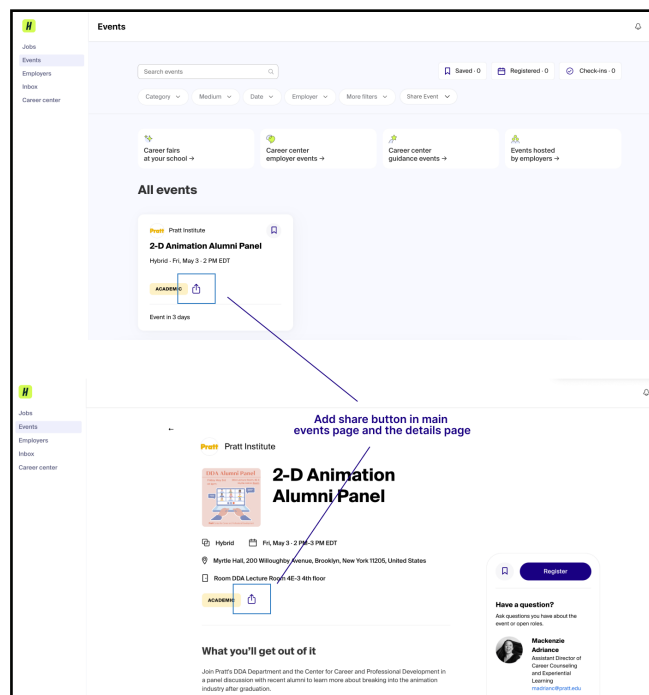
No available button to facilitate sharing

(Figure 8)

Recommendation 5: Add a share button for different events

Integrate a share button feature into the Handshake platform to allow participants to share event details with their networks easily. The share button should enable participants to share event information via email, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and other communication channels, enhancing event promotion and increasing attendance and engagement.

Note: We recognize that Pratt may have limited control of the appearance and functions of Handshake, so this recommendation is more of a “bonus”



(Figure 9)

Conclusion

Pratt's Center for Career and Professional Development provides a wide array of useful, valuable services to students and alumni. In our user testing we found that while participants were positive and appreciative of CCPD services, they were disgruntled with the experience of trying to find helpful resources through the current Pratt CCPD website. This project provided our team the opportunity to launch a comprehensive and evaluative user research project focused on enhancing the Pratt CCPD website's usability to boost user engagement, specifically aimed at facilitating students' easy access to career-related services.

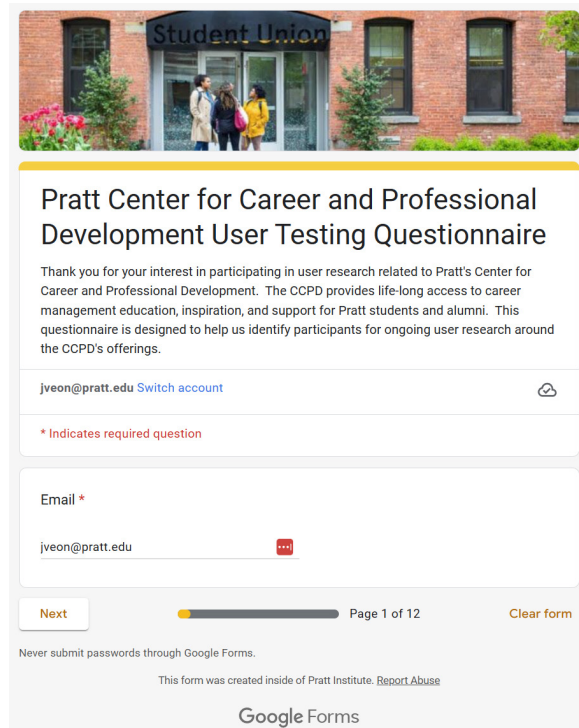
We feel that by moving the needle a bit at a time (and also observing the constraints that the current system places on changes), the CCPD can improve communications with students around critical services such as portfolio assembly, resume writing, and interview prep workshops. We consider that, 1) reorganizing content to be less dense, 2) introducing deep links to Handshake, 3) refining the left navigation to be CCPD-focused, and 4) injecting buttons for immediate help are all opportunities to effect immediate usability improvements with low cost, and high impact results.

References

- Center for Career and Professional Development. (n.d.). Pratt Institute. Retrieved April 30, 2024, from <https://www.pratt.edu/administrative-departments/student-affairs/center-for-career-and-professional-development/>
- Nielsen, J. (2012, January 15). Thinking Aloud: The #1 Usability Tool. Nielsen Norman Group. <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/thinking-aloud-the-1-usability-tool/>
- Schade, A. (2013, October 12). Remote Usability Tests: Moderated and Unmoderated. Nielsen Norman Group. <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/remote-usability-tests/>

Appendix

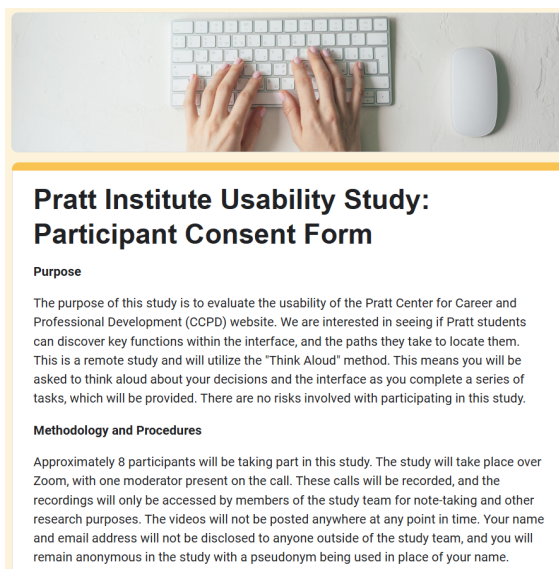
Appendix A: Screener Questionnaire



The screenshot shows a Google Form interface. At the top, there is a header image of a brick building with a sign that says "Student Union". Below the image, the title of the form is "Pratt Center for Career and Professional Development User Testing Questionnaire". The form body contains a thank-you message: "Thank you for your interest in participating in user research related to Pratt's Center for Career and Professional Development. The CCPD provides life-long access to career management education, inspiration, and support for Pratt students and alumni. This questionnaire is designed to help us identify participants for ongoing user research around the CCPD's offerings." Below the message, there is a user profile section showing the email "jveon@pratt.edu" and a "Switch account" link. A red asterisk indicates a required question. The "Email *" field contains "jveon@pratt.edu". At the bottom of the form, there is a "Next" button, a progress bar showing "Page 1 of 12", and a "Clear form" link. A footer note says "Never submit passwords through Google Forms." and "This form was created inside of Pratt Institute. Report Abuse". The Google Forms logo is at the very bottom.

Link to screener questionnaire form: <https://forms.gle/NP4BjJ1greRAg8jw6>

Appendix B: Consent Form



The screenshot shows a Google Form interface. At the top, there is a header image of hands typing on a keyboard with a mouse. Below the image, the title of the form is "Pratt Institute Usability Study: Participant Consent Form". The form body contains two sections: "Purpose" and "Methodology and Procedures". The "Purpose" section states: "The purpose of this study is to evaluate the usability of the Pratt Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) website. We are interested in seeing if Pratt students can discover key functions within the interface, and the paths they take to locate them. This is a remote study and will utilize the 'Think Aloud' method. This means you will be asked to think aloud about your decisions and the interface as you complete a series of tasks, which will be provided. There are no risks involved with participating in this study." The "Methodology and Procedures" section states: "Approximately 8 participants will be taking part in this study. The study will take place over Zoom, with one moderator present on the call. These calls will be recorded, and the recordings will only be accessed by members of the study team for note-taking and other research purposes. The videos will not be posted anywhere at any point in time. Your name and email address will not be disclosed to anyone outside of the study team, and you will remain anonymous in the study with a pseudonym being used in place of your name."

Link to consent form: <https://forms.gle/TRv3pjK-kUnwjNXwm7>

Appendix C: Data from Screener Questionnaire

The screenshot shows a Google Sheets spreadsheet with the following columns: ID, Name, Age, Gender, Education, and several Likert-scale questions. The data is organized into rows, with some rows highlighted in red and others in yellow. The spreadsheet is titled 'Full Screener Questionnaire' and includes a toolbar at the top with various editing and viewing options.

Link to data from screener questionnaire: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_7KcJOF7CwrtF-p4rMT3uvX_L9_rdGxZ9v8U0Jk9bpeg/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix D: Data from Usability Testing

The screenshot shows a Google Sheets spreadsheet with the following columns: ID, Name, Age, Gender, Education, and several Likert-scale questions. The data is organized into rows, with some rows highlighted in blue and others in yellow. The spreadsheet is titled 'Usability Testing' and includes a toolbar at the top with various editing and viewing options.

Link to data from screener questionnaire: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1p4Bo9MRRnx-vnTAb8vDGs9Xa6BpOqgBQUE6cKYx2-4Uw/edit?usp=sharing>