

Recovery Pathways LLC Website Usability Study Report

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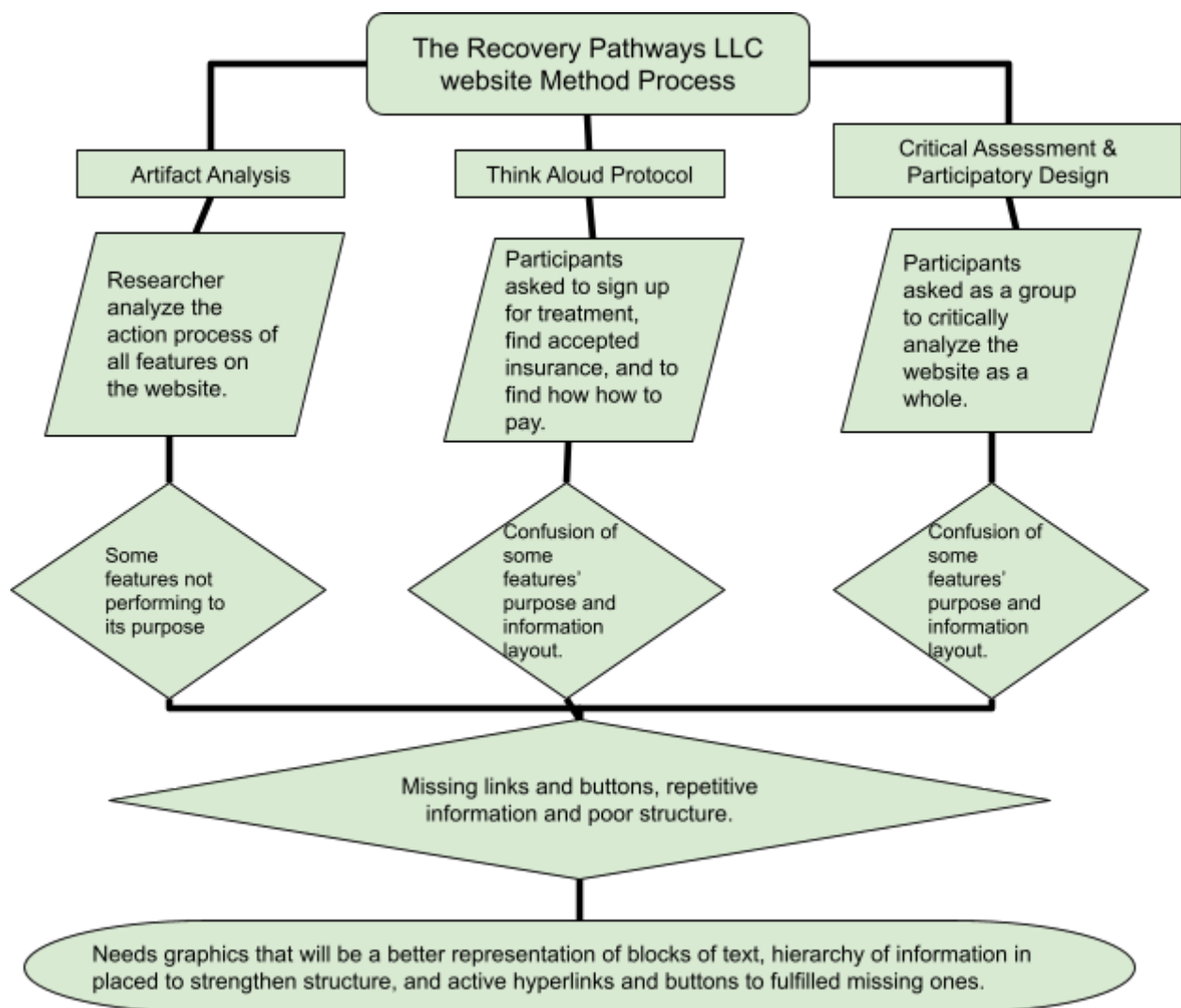
Summary

Tunisia Smith (researcher) is studying the usability of signing up for treatment, finding insurance and payment options, and the site as a whole of the Recovery Pathways LLC website. The result of this process shows great findings! As it shows that the website presents many challenges that may stop potential stakeholders (patients, loved ones, healthcare workers, etc.) from using the website effectively with the high interest in the site. As each challenge presents itself, the more the stakeholder will lose interest in the site and abandon Recovery Pathways LLC as a whole. To begin the study, the researcher started with Artifact Analysis to be aware of the problems that users may have when using the website to complete an action. The researcher examined each action and the process that the user will pursue and its outcome. The researcher also uses Artifact Analysis to gain a broader perspective of what it's like to be a user of the Recovery Pathways LLC website. Next, the researcher completed a study of the Think Aloud Protocol with user participants who have had mental health challenges recently. Through Think Aloud Protocol, the researcher analyzes the users' thought process of navigating the website to sign up for treatment, to see if their insurance is accepted, and how to pay for treatment. Finally, the study concluded with Critical Assessment and Participatory Design. Both the Critical Assessment and Participatory Design methods were done together for more effective data on the study by having participants (users/stakeholders) analyze the site as a group and have a critical discussion about the problems that the Recovery Pathways LLC website presents to them and what solutions would be best to solve it. The usability study was able to gather essential data to create a thorough recommendation report so that the Recovery Pathways LLC website can be more user-friendly for potential and current patients. With this data, the researcher gained a better understanding of Recovery Pathways LLC users and created two personas.

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Graphic Pathway



Artifact Analysis

The Artifact Analysis was the first method applied to the object of study (Recovery Pathways LLC website). The researcher wanted to study the website first-hand to identify potential problems, understand the website more, and be able to connect with the users effectively when difficulty arises when using the website.

The goal of analyzing the object of study was that the researcher can come up with the optimal solutions to the main actions that are often used on the website such as signing up for treatment, looking for insurance and payment plans, finding resources in their community, etc. The Artifact Analysis was used to identify every feature and its purpose on the Recovery Pathways LLC website so that the researcher can have better control of the problems they are dealing with.

The Artifact Analysis was applied by listing the names of every feature of its website, its category, and what action it presented when pursued. The main features that presented peculiar results were the Drop Down Menus, Pages, and Secondary Pages. It was important to give greater attention to these three features than others for this study as these are the aspect of the site that stakeholders often use. The three most common features throughout those pages were hyperlinks, buttons, and a drop-down menu. The “Hyperlinks” were categorized as green text with the ability to redirect to another website. The “Buttons” were categorized in the green text as well which will redirect to another page on the site. However, the menu categories are white and will turn green when its button has hovered over. All data collected is visually organized for anyone who desires to look at and understand the process.

One moment in the study that stood out to the researcher is that users may be confused about differentiating between a hyperlink and a button. As both are green but actions do completely different things. Another moment in the study was when the researcher found that some of the resources made available to users through hyperlinks no longer exist. This finding may raise concerns among users if they want to find out important information for their treatment and recovery.

It was found that users were having trouble locating certain information such as the black box that doesn't look like its green text counterparts. The drop-down menu on the home page raised questions as it has no purpose since the text within it is not a button or hyperlink. The Information and Location drop-down

menus will also be hard to navigate as one has to quickly go right after hovering over them to keep the drop-down menu from disappearing.

Overall, some features have created false expectations by not performing up to their purpose. This will only cause frustration and disinterest in the end for their users. Each time a user encounters a feature that doesn't make sense or doesn't perform the same as the others their view of Recovery Pathways as a whole will become negative. Artifact Analysis helped the researcher gain a better understanding of the site overall.

Artifact Analysis application with its data will make communication between the researcher and designer regarding what needs to be done to solve the problems easier. The application of Artifact Analysis and its features will help the researcher with the recommendation report.

Think-Aloud Protocol

The Think-Aloud Protocol was the second usability method that the researcher applied to this study. Since the researcher has now gained a better understanding of the key components of the site, the researcher will gather participants for the Think-Aloud Protocol.

The researcher conducted a study with four participants individually. These participants all have had mental health issues currently or recently. The participants were given specific sets of instructions in mind a broad idea of what it was like to find the site by typing in the browser, navigating the site on how to sign up for treatment, see if the site accepts their insurance, and how to pay for treatment. The data proved how difficult it was for the researcher conducting the study and for the participants. The goal of this study was to see how a potential patient would navigate the Recovery Pathways LLC website and what problems they would encounter when performing the task on the site and how they would go about solving them.

This method was applied by both screen and audio recording of the participant's journey through the Recovery Pathways LLC website. The participants were given a set of verbal instructions by the researcher. The overall goal was for the participants to sign up for treatment and to find insurance and payment plans by typing in the URL of the website presented on the home page. The participants were instructed to think aloud all thoughts that were going through their minds and any initial impressions while navigating through the site. The participants were also instructed to give a play-by-play of their thought processes throughout the study.

While observing the participants and reviewing the data, the researcher was able to identify several key patterns that made the site more difficult to use for the participants:

- Black Box Confusion
- Spacing Issues
- Forms Page
- Information and its Submenu Confusion
- Payment Plan Page Confusion

The researcher also found several key points in this study:

Outdated Appearance:

P1: The page looks dated (which means old, not modern). Specifically the logo.

P1: More difficult compared to similar sights because it hasn't been updated.

P4: looks "interesting" (outdated, very 2000s - 2010s)

Website Theme Color: Negative Visual Effect on Website's Text:

S1: Claims that someone else might need a little help when finding information because it's hard to look at.

S3: The user says that the website is very "green"

S4: Most users will have to hunt to find out information on the site instead of knowing how to use it instantly. Believes it should pop out at the person. It's in between, as it was tedious and assumed a lot about their patients. Seem to care more about the adults. Believe that the user has to be tech savvy (good with technology) to fully understand how to use the site effectively)

Title for Substance Use Disorder Forms Confusion:

P3: The user says that it's kind of hard to figure out which forms are for substance abuse due to it being at the bottom and not having a space of their own. Doesn't know if the text before the title is for substance abuse or the forms after. Says that some of the forms' information is tight. No space in between. Not a lot of space.

P2: Ask for reassurance of the forms she was looking at was the right one when first getting on the page.

P4: The title seems mixed in

The Map on the Payment Plan Page is Outdated

P1: Says that the map on the site is 2014, not updated

P4: Michigan's chart/map. Insurance policies can be difficult, adolescents will have a hard time filling them out. Want to know how much to pay and how?

What I've learned from the usability study of the Oos is that certain aspects of the website indicated the wrong idea when not performed properly. For example, when the user questions the undated map they'll also question the validity of the resource, treatments, and medication. Eventually, they'll question the site as a whole. The researcher concluded that users will interact with the site in a normal way until a problem arises. The website's theme color, buttons, hyperlinks, drop-down menus, and informational layout have confusing elements that don't serve well.

Critical Assessment and Participatory Design

The Critical Assessment and Participatory Design were the final methods that were applied to this study. Now knowing what participants think individually, the researcher wanted to bring new participants together in the group to critically analyze the site together which will bring new problems that have been missed in Think-Aloud Protocol and have users bounce off of each other's ideas and common to come up with the best solutions to the problems they've faced when using Recovery Pathways LLC website.

The researcher conducted the study with four participants in a group. These participants have never seen the website before. They also have mental health issues or have had one recently. The participants were given instructions to critically analyze the website aloud so that other participants may speak on it and enhance further ideas in the discussion of what they're analyzing. The goal of this study was to see how users would navigate the site if they were with someone and to see the patterns of problems that were found in the Think-Aloud Protocol connects in a way. In addition, the researcher would be able to find new problems that users will encounter.

This method was applied by screen and audio recording the participants' journey through the Recovery Pathways LLC website as a whole. The group of participants was given a set of verbal instructions by the researcher who will then pitch in here and there throughout the discussion to ask what the pain point from 1 to 10 (small to the large problem) of what they would rate the problems they encounter and the reason behind it. The participants were instructed to speak aloud their thoughts so that other participants can hear and respond.

While observing the participants and reviewing the data gathered from the study, the researcher was able to not only identify several patterns from the study that connected with the pattern in Think-Aloud Protocol but other key points that were essential and that have been missed from the previous study which help the researcher refine their Artifact Analysis. It's good to note that they were key patterns from this study with Artifact Analysis as well such as how "Make a Payment" and missing links on the "Community Resource" Page. The key patterns that were identified between this study and the Think Aloud protocol were:

- Spacing Issues

- Black Box
- Payment Plan Page and Insurance Information Navigation Confusion
- Information and its Submenu Confusion
- Forms Page

The group not only identify problems that were the patterns from the previous study but new key problems as well which are:

- Font Issues
- Ineffective Logo
- Make a Payment & Resource Pop-Up Menu Confusion
- Community Resource Page Brings False Expectations and Frustrations
- Green + and - Sign
- The Infinite Spinning Loading Gallery
- Underline Text
- Phone Number
- Graphics
- Information context Issues
- Website on Mobile Devices

Font Issues:

CAPD Group:

- Don't mind the font, but wanted the phone number to be green instead of blue and not be within the text pain point: 3
- The text on the location page is black, which brings serious readability issues to users (especially to those who are visually impaired). Lots of space. Pain point: 10
- Finds the bright red words on the location page done poorly (darker or muted red would've worked better)
- Find the green title random since it was inconsistent throughout the website

Ineffective Logo

CAPD Group:

- The logo looks like a construction, Asphalt, or road repair company instead of one for health treatment
- The logo and website don't go together regarding color. The logo doesn't look like a health treatment company. The road on the logo doesn't look pleasing and professional.

Make a Payment & Resource Pop-Up Menu Confusion:

CAPD Group:

- Two bottom green buttons blend into the page instead of popping out. Finds archives unrelated to payment.
- Make a payment and resources on the bottom shows a drop-down menu however it shows archives under both which weren't clickable (Pain point: 10)
- Clicking on make a payment green box doesn't do anything, so she goes to forms which doesn't have it there, then went to customer service.

Community Resource Page Brings False Expectations and Frustrations

CAPD Group:

- Some are clickable, some are non-clickable. High pain points because users will have a difficult time reading it and looking at it to find the correct (health partners) site on the community resource for 7 or 8 pain points (Not finding necessary resources can put users' lives in danger.
- Some were links that she expected but some were not which is what she didn't expect.

Green + and - Sign

CAPD Group:

- Finds the green + and - buttons convenient and finds it cool that the content goes in and out.
- Finds the + and - interesting

The Infinite Spinning Loading Gallery

CAPD Group:

- The loading gallery has a continuing loading icon. The spinning gallery thing is annoying.

CAPD Individual:

- Comments on how the spinning gallery is still loading after going to a new page

Underline Text

CAPD Group:

- Spaces and underlining purpose on the certain text on the form page bring confusion to the users

- Important parts are not bolded
- Thought that the underlined capitalized white words were a link but it wasn't

Phone Number

CAPD Group:

- The two phone numbers put together should be separate and should be shown more than the text.
- The first number doesn't have a location attached so users will be confused about where they're calling versus the 2nd one that has Corunna's location with its number in parentheses
- Wanted the phone number to be green instead of blue and not be within the text
- Says that the fax number is "messed up" as well.

Graphics

CAPD Group:

- The graphic is a slap to the bottom left side of the page and has bad quality (could only see the title, therefore, the graphic is irrelevant to users).
- A lot of text on the information page, believe that there are graphics that bring the message better across and not tiring to users.
- There are better graphics that can get the point across than loads of information.
- Inconsistency as there will be a lot of text or very little text.
- Suggest a mini-map to take up space next to the location will be better or a map with detailed information.

Information context Issues

CAPD Group:

- Covid - 19 procedures confuse because it does not apply to everyone who has used recovery pathways. Thought it was just for them and not a specialized group of people.
- Should have locations info only in locations to not confuse the users

Website on Mobile Devices

CAPD Group:

- The website looks worse on mobile, users comment that they will stop after looking at the website on mobile first-hand. Wouldn't use the site, and it gives them OCD.
- Finds the website page color theme (green) irrelevant overall

Problem Patterns Within Think-Aloud Protocol and Critical Assessment and Participatory Design

Black Box

Think-Aloud Protocol

P1: Was confused about what the black box was when hovering over it. Pauses. Says that the black rectangle box doesn't look like a button, but the box where you type something in.

P2: Was scrolling up and down on the page for almost a minute because the user wasn't sure where to find how to pay (black button) until she ask. She didn't know what the black button was and she didn't know that she can click it.

P3: The user thought that the black box was just there and empty. Wasn't aware of it what it was until the end of the study when I pointed it out. Was scrolling up and down on the page for almost a minute because the user wasn't sure where to find how to pay (black button) until she ask.

P4: She thought that the black box was a glitch which she believes can cause issues.

CAPD (Critical Assessment & Participatory Design)

CAPD Group:

- Black button, payment feature - don't know what it is, it looks like a missing image, some may click out of curiosity but older users may give up instantly after being on the page trying to find certain information
- The hyperlink site of the black button looks very sketchy and untrustworthy because of how it looks. On the big white screen. Had to reload to see the payment information
- She thought that it was a search bar (pain point: 10) Thinks that older people will have a hard time finding out how to pay (will get confused by the black box).

Overall, all participants were confused about what the black box was and its purpose even though the black box was a button to pay a payment with a credit or debit card.

Spacing Issues

Think-Aloud Protocol

P1: The main page is overwhelming because of how the information is all in one area.

P3: The user expected images when they first opened the website. Claims that it's all text-based.

P4: Very plain, very minimalistic. The website lacks emotion (due to lack of pictures and purpose), feels unwelcome, is very cold, has the same color, and has no variety.

P3: The user says that it's kind of hard to figure out which forms are for substance abuse due to it being at the bottom and not having a space of their own. Doesn't know if the text before the title is for substance abuse or the forms after. Says that some of the forms' information is tight. No space in between. Not a lot of space.

P2: Ask for reassurance of the forms she was looking at was the right one when first getting on the page.

P4: The title seems mixed in

CAPD (Critical Assessment & Participatory Design)

CAPD Group:

- The welcome logo is way too far down on the page.
- A lot of blank space didn't know if a picture was supposed to be there or not.
- The official logo should be on top of the page before "welcome".
- Pain points: 2,5,2.
- Good padding on both sides but spacing issues throughout the opening page
- Spaces are uneven, which makes users even more frustrated and confused if there's no reason why the space is there
- Information on the webpage seems to be a lot to take in and worries that users don't have the attention span to hunt down what they're looking for. Don't like that they have to keep scrolling
- A lot of space, though something was supposed to load (picture, quote, logo, etc.) and it wasn't loading.

Overall, the Recovery Pathways LLC website has several serious spacing issues that have negatively affected users when using the site that needs to be fixed.

Forms Page

Think-Aloud Protocol

P1: Look more closely when looking for the substance abuse forms. Says there are a lot of forms. The number of forms can be overwhelming, but filling out the info might not be.

P2: When asked to find the forms she went to the forms but then back out and click on another section. When I mention filling out forms she then when back to the forms page.

P3: The user pause and went back and forth between the previous paragraph, the substance use disorder title, and the forms accompanying it.

P4: Forms are convenient, yet can be repetitive of filling out forms and emailing each one.

CAPD (Critical Assessment & Participatory Design)

- Confusion about which form to fill out, like the adult and minor form separation. Suggest that the most used form can be on the top (the general form that everyone uses) and then specialized forms at the bottom.
- Spaces and underlining purpose on the certain text on the form page bring confusion to the users
- Suggest that hyperlink won't be green due to eye straining but still, a hyperlink in regular text for users for each form on the forms page.
- Knows to click on the PDF in forms and finds it cool

Overall, the "Form's Page" brings some confusion to users due to spacing and informational architecture issues.

Payment Plan Page and Insurance Information Navigation Confusion

Think-Aloud Protocol

P1: Was a little confused (“I don't understand, what is this?”) at first glance at the payment plans page. Found the insurance policy. Says “Yep, there it is” Claims that after looking at the page for a bit, was a little confused but was able to find where to pay. Says it's a lot. When finding out if her insurance is going to be covered or how to pay, she wants to be able to have one quick swipe and quickly find it.

P4: Ask for clarification on how to find payment options when looking for them. Confusion when the sliding fee wasn't the payment plan.

P4: Most users will have to hunt to find out information on the site instead of knowing how to use it instantly. Believes it should pop out at the person. It's in between, as it was tedious and assumed a lot about their patients. Seem to care more about the adults. Believe that the user has to be tech savvy (good with technology) to fully understand how to use the site effectively)

CAPD (Critical Assessment & Participatory Design)

CAPD Group:

- The insurance policy description is confusing to raise a high pain point 5 or 6
- Should show the insurance page and then payment (to show that the company will try to have health expenses covered and then ask for payment)
- The sliding fee scale should be up more for users can see how much they're paying
- Proof of income discretion should be at the top, not the bottom (Users will start to think that the website has something to hide)

Overall, the payment plan page cause problems for the users by not clarifying information like the sliding fee scale and the hierarchy from insurance to pay to not to give off the wrong tone to users.

Information Menu and Submenu Confusion

Think-Aloud Protocol

P1: Found it hard to hover over information on payment plans as the submenu kept disappearing. The frequent back-and-forth movement of the mouse. The information didn't lead to type in form as others. Pauses.

P2: The user goes back and forth between the information and location submenu. However, once she found the payment plans sub-section she was able to follow

CAPD (Critical Assessment & Participatory Design)

CAPD Group:

- The information menu should correlate everything in its submenu. The navigation bar on top of the information page. The information page can be a mission statement.
- The mission statement should be in its tab of information with About Us
- Didn't notice the drop-down menu
- Doesn't like the dropdown menu color finds it random and not consistent with the page
- Doesn't like drop-down menu because services are cut off, tries to minimize it, doesn't do anything. Finds it too long (Pain point: 10).

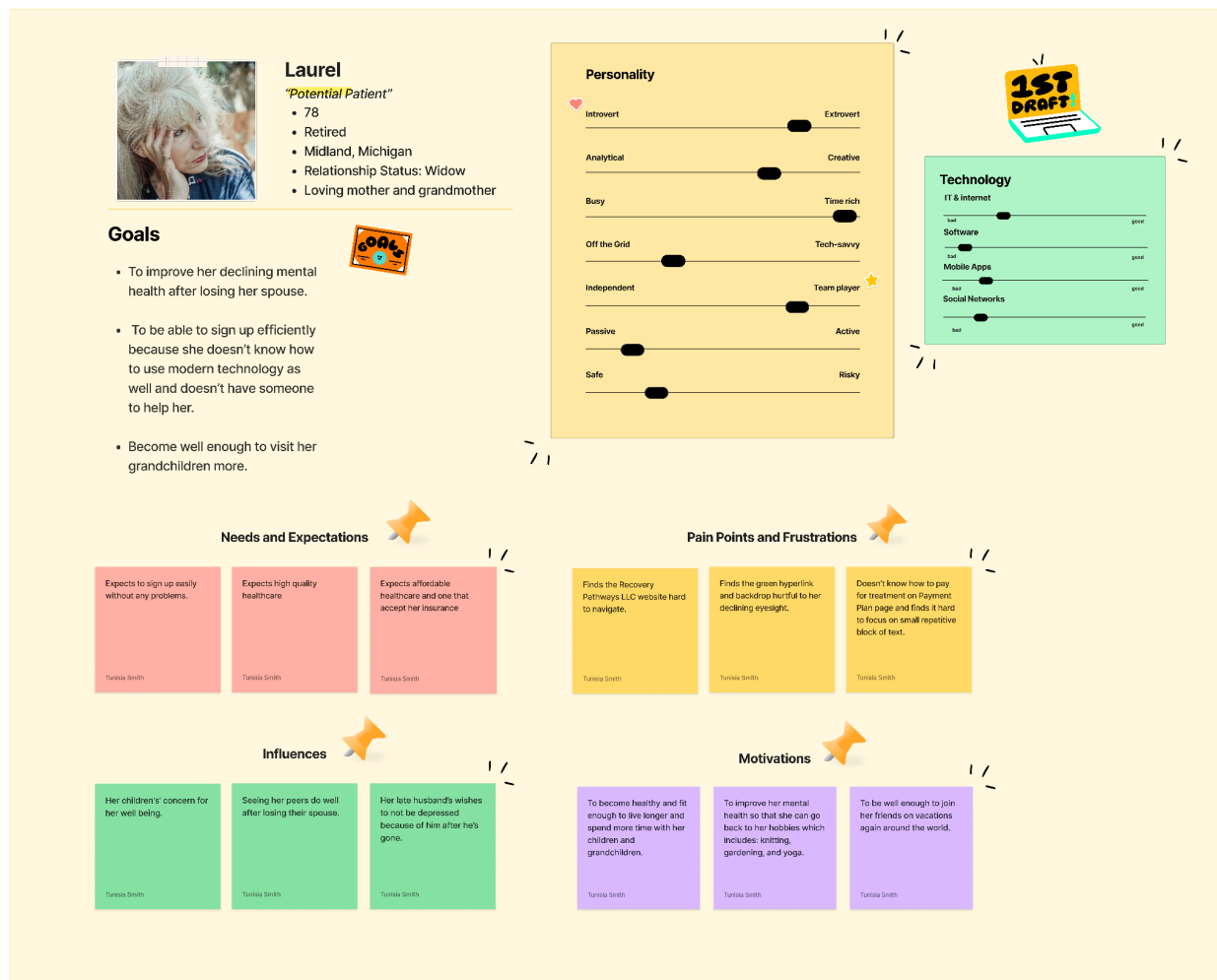
Overall, the information menu makes it harder for users to access the sub-menu information.

The lesson that the researcher learned through this method is that it seems to value the company more than the users. The website can be hard to work with due to having various problems and only a few good aspects. The website does a good job of displaying most information and having access to most outside resources. However, the green theme, unfulfilled features, and the repeating blocks of the text make the page repetitive to users' eyes creating confusion and disinterest.

Users Personas

The first persona that the researcher has created with their data is Laurel. Laurel is a potential patient for Recovery Pathways LLC and wants to sign up for mental health treatment to improve her mental well-being. Laurel is 78 and retired so she's at the age where she doesn't understand how to use technology as well as someone way younger than her. Laurel expects the site to be made for her as they know the challenges that the elderly face with their low eyesight and low comprehension of technology. She also expects quality healthcare and one that takes her insurance. When she goes to sign up she's frustrated with the saturated green as it's too bright and hurts her eyes. Also, the small blocks of text make it hard for her to focus on what's being said without losing where she left off through the blocks of text. She's frustrated. Below is her profile...

Laurel's Profile



The second persona that the researcher has created with their data is Noah. Noah is 18 and just graduated from high school. However, his parents don't want him to negatively influence his three younger siblings so they gave him an ultimatum that the only way that he can stay is if he gets treatment and recovers. Noah wants to improve his relationship with his parents as it has been rocky since the start of his addiction. In addition, he doesn't want to become homeless and wants to go off to college. As Noah loves and is good with technology and wants to become a Software Developer. So he finds Recovery Pathways LLC when he looks for treatment on his computer. Noah is stunned by how poorly the website is made and becomes frustrated that the site doesn't have links that can help him during and after treatment. He finds the blocks of information repetitive and boring and finds that they don't accept his insurance. Noah is worried because he doesn't have a lot of money to fully pay for treatment and doesn't want to ask his parents for help. Below is his profile...

Noah's Profile

