Usability Testing of Wix.com

Rita Gray and Melissa Dos Santos
IT 521 | Fall 2018

Introduction

Wix.com is a freely hosted web authoring tool. It allows users to create HTML5 websites and mobile sites through the use of online drag and drop tools (a quick-to-launch site builder platform). Users can create an account using an email, a Facebook or Google account. After a user creates an account, they can browse template themes in seconds. According to Wix.com there are 500+ free designer-made templates available to choose from that are organized into industry-specific categories. Creating a Wix account affords the user access to these templates, the Wix editor, web space, and a Wix domain name.

Two similar free web authoring, site builder tools include Wordpress.com and Weebly.com. We considered the following in our comparison; flexibility, ease of use, user support, and ongoing maintenance.

Wix vs. Wordpress: Wix and Wordpress both offer free tools to create a website, but Wix's monthly free plan covers hosting, templates and domain names. Wordpress.com is also free to build a website but hosting is not included, and although free templates are available, there is a charge for industry-specific layouts.

Wordpress (WP) is an open-source platform; this means their code is open to everybody to use and modify. Users can use the WP code to create a theme or plugin (software that adds additional functions). According to Wordpress powers 27% of the Internet according to Whois.com. [i]

Since WP is so large it is difficult to have quality control – anyone can create a plugin or theme and offer it on the internet. WP does not provide free technical support per se, but there are many online resources to answer FAQs. Wix is not an open source platform, so their code is not available for modification. Wix's offers fully integrated tools with its website builder. Qulaity control is established and maintained within the Wix environment. Wix also offers additional apps (like plugins), but they are built into the site and users do not have to download or update them. Wix technical support is available is the user experiences issues with their website.

The learning curve for WP is more significant than for Wix users without coding experience. WP is more flexible but more complex. Wix is easy for users who are not skilled web developers. Wix offers a WYSIWYG (What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get) website builder. Users can drag and drop text, pictures, slideshows, galleries, shopping carts, etc. onto their pages. The published page is identical to what the viewer sees in Wix editor. With WP whatever content you put into your page will not be evident until you preview or publish it. Wix users do not have to know how to use any code.

Wordpress offers a large online community of users and readily available tutorials, but it is up to the user to find the information that will help them with a specific problem on their site. Some people choose to hire a WP developer to help with technical issues. Wix offers a support team and also provides tutorials, online forums, and hints as you hover over different features in the site-building editor.

Website maintenance is kept up to date by Wix, Wordpress users must download updates as they become available. A user must create a copy of a WP theme, called a child site, and work from this copy to avoid unwanted changes in formatting or design when a template update occurs.

Table 1: Wix and Wordpress Comparison

Flexibility	Wix has limited customizability, but features/functions are serviced by Wix technical support.	Wordpress is very flexible and customizable but quality control may be an issue and no formal technical support is provided
Ease of Use	Wix is a very user-friendly drag and drop website builder. No coding knowledge is required.	Wordpress has a greater learning curve and to change items in a template some coding knowledge is beneficial.
User Support	Wix has a dedicated support system for its users and offers tutorials. Technical support is also available by forums, email, or phone.	Wordpress has online resources available, but users must find information on their own.
Maintenance	Wix controls all aspects of platform including updates and maintenance.	Wordpress requires users to be responsible for updates and maintenance of their sites.

Wix.com and Weebly.com have things in common. They both offer drag and drop interfaces for building a website without code and free plans.

Wix's editor has a lot more options and offers hints as users hover over each tool. Users have complete control over their design. They can change fonts, add external fonts, pictures, animations, and videos. They can also add any of these elements as a background to their pages. Users can also move items anywhere on the Wix page,the and that is where they will appear when published. This technique is called Pixel Perfect. Wix offers something called ADI (Artificial Design Intelligence)[ii] which connects the user's social media accounts to their webpage without adding code. Wix also offers a global undo button and a site history feature if you want to go back to an earlier design on a page.

With Weebly.com users do not have this much flexibility. Templates are locked in a grid set up with limited possibility for rearrangement of elements. There is no global undo, after the publication of a site, changes or history cannot be retrieved. Weebly has fewer options, but fewer choices could be more comfortable for some users.

Table 2: Wix and Weebly Comparison

Flexibility	Wix offers the Pixel Perfect technique which gives users the freedom to move items anywhere on the page and a global undo and history option.	Weebly's templates are predefined and items cannot be moved anywhere on the page. There is no undo or history option after the site is published.
Ease of Use	Wix's editor affords the user more options (such as fonts and backgrounds) with a drag and drop builder. No coding is required.	Weebly has a limited editor and users must basically use the given template layout.

User Support	Wix has phone support, good tutorials, and active online forums.	Weebly also has phone support, good tutorials, and active online forums.
Maintenance	Wix controls all aspects of the platform including the updates and maintenance.	Weebly also controls all aspects of platform including updates and maintenance.

Target User

In general, Wix.com is ideal for individuals and small business owners, and online stores. It works well for those who want to save money and do self-promotion and marketing. Users will likely use Wix to create online portfolios and self-promotion sites, write a personal blog, run a self-owned business or an online store.

For this Wix Usability test, our users were 17 community college students, both male and female, between the ages of 18 and 62. All participants were enrolled in Melissa's Introductory Design for Web and Print class at Pellissippi State Community College during the Fall 2018 semester.

Table 3: Demographics of Wix Testing Group

User	Gender	Age	All Users Fulfilled the Following Requirements:
1	F	20	College reading/comprehension level
2	M	19	
3	F	38	
4	F	19	Voluntary participation in usability test
5	M	20	
6	F	22	Rewarded for completing test with extra credit in Melissa's class
7	M	20	
8	F	22	
9	F	19	Competent using Mac computers
10	M	18	
11	F	50	Familiar with Quicktime Player used for recording sessions
12	F	23	
13	F	20	
14	F	45	
15	F	62	
16	F	19	
17	F	18	

Affordances

Wix offers users a truncated free web authoring, site-builder tool to create websites through the use of online drag and drop tools (a quick-to-launch site builder platform). Users create an account using an email, a Facebook or Google account. There are hundreds of free templates available organized into industry-specific categories. With a free account, a user has access to templates, web space, and receives a Wix domain name with wix in the URL and Wix ads.

Wix users must pay a monthly fee to obtain all of the options. Paid accounts are available if a user wants a dedicated domain name (without wix in the URL) and does not want ads to run on their website. Paid accounts start at $5 per month and range up to $20 a month for business and e-commerce options.

Table 4: Wix Pricing[iii]	
$0	**Free:** Create a free website with Wix ads. Not included; a dedicated domain name without wix in URL or Wix ads Free account has Wix subdomain (e.g., yourwebsite.wix.com).
$5	**Connect Domain:** Connect your personally-chosen domain name with your Wix site (wix not in URL). Your site will still show Wix ads.
$11	**Combo:** Ideal for smaller professional websites. No ads and plenty of storage, full functionality of editor.
$14	**Unlimited:** The right plan if you need a lot of web space (up to 10 GB included).
$20	**Business & eCommerce:** Best plan to create an online store or use premium apps like Wix Bookings or Wix Hotels. Higher plans (VIP & Unlimited) available too.
Monthly prices for 1-year contracts; Domain included in selected packages.	

Testing Method and Description

We conducted the Wix usability test on October 11, 2018, at Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC) with 17 students from an Introductory Design for Web and Print course that Melissa teaches. We performed the test in a PSCC classroom equipped with iMac computers for each user, internet access, and the Quicktime Player application preinstalled on the machines (used to record the testing sessions). The purpose of the test was to determine if Wix was an easy to use tool for creating an online website and for us as observers to become familiar with Usability testing using low-cost methods to record results.

The students were given the option to participate or not during their assigned class time. Those students who chose to participate received minimal extra credit as a participation grade. Students were allowed to take 45 minutes to complete the usability test.

Tasks assigned to users:
1. Locate Wix using the internet
2. Create an account and select a template
3. Edit the template (measured total clicks in editing session)
4. Upload at least one image (6 images provided as samples by Melissa)
5. Edit home page title
6. Add text to a page
7. Create one additional page

Testing Results

Table 5: Results

User	Clicks for Task 1	Clicks for Task 2	Clicks for Task 3	Clicks for Task 4	Clicks for Task 5	Clicks for Task 6	Clicks for Task 7	Total Time of Test in minutes
1	2	6	32	3	2	2	1	39:18
2	3	11	50+	3	2	3	2	45:39
3	2	8	22	2	3	2	1	26:03
4	2	17	50+	3	2	2	2	43:08
5	2	4	45	2	2	3	2	29:10
6	2	9	50+	2	2	2	2	44:15
7	2	15	16	**Did not complete	2	**Did not complete	**Did not complete	14:05
8	3	10	50+	2	2	3	2	45:49
9	2	18	50+	3	2	5	6	42:27
10	3	5	14	2	2	2	1	8:44
11	26	9	23	13	5	**Did not complete	**Did not complete	21:23
12	1	10	38	5	44	**Did not complete	1	27:20
13	2	7	18	31	**Did not complete	3	4	28:58
14	2	5	42	6	2	2	**Did not complete	33:22
15	5	19	50+	9	5	8	**Did not complete	41:10
16	3	6	25	15	14	15	7	33:38
17	1	2	18	37	50+	3	4	31:36
Average	**4**	**9**	***32**	**7**	**9**	**4**	**3**	**32:54 minutes**

Approximation because we opted to cut off the count at 50 clicks
*** Did not include in column average*

Conclusion
We observed that all users in our test group located Wix on the internet quickly (average of 4 clicks) and completed the necessary steps to create an account and choose a template. The users who took more extended amounts of time to finish task 2 (create an account and select a template) spent more time selecting a template but did not seem to have technical difficulties with the selection itself. A factor that may be a consideration is that the user group consisted of graphic design students who are consistently asked to consider the aesthetics of the template design and layout in their course training.

In retrospect, we would have shortened the time allowed for the usability test because measuring the ability to find and use a tool versus measuring how long it takes a user to

make an aesthetic design decision once they have successfully learned what and how to do something is more of an individual preference than a test of the usability of Wix.

Users have dozens if not hundreds of choices available when using the Wix editor. We feel this could be a limiting factor in that too many options could overwhelm some users. We base this belief on watching several users stall in the progress of building their webpage by vacillating between fonts, colors, background images, animations, etc. Also, the ability to place any element anywhere on the page caused some users to continually move elements during task 3 (editing the Wix template) and caused them to take more clicks to complete a task.

We noticed that users could take more than one path to complete a task, some chose to use the mouseover hints, others the menu tabs, and others the sidebar menus. We observed a few users who tried one way to do something, couldn't get it to work, and tried other ways until they succeeded.

Some users typed messages about what they thought of using Wix during the test (Figures 1 and 2). We found this helpful and entertaining.
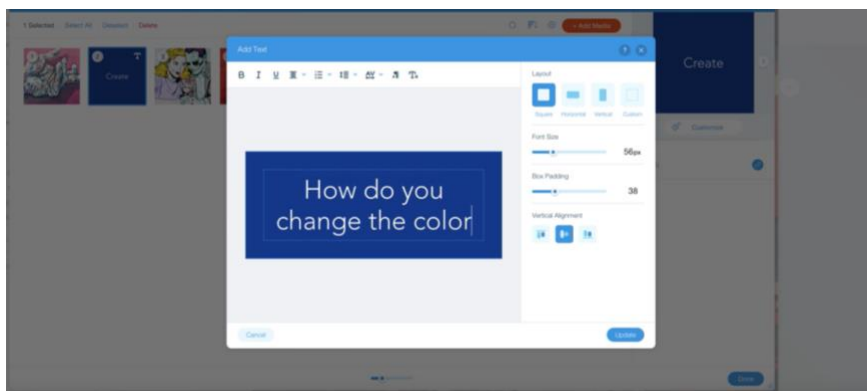

Figure 1

Figure 2

We noted that all of our users could locate Wix.com, and use it to create at least one webpage using 4- 9 clicks. The amount of clicks it took to for each user to edit the website varied from 14 clicks to over 50 clicks. The average testing session took a little over 30 minutes. This led us to conclude that Wix is a viable web authoring tool option that offers many design and layout choices to its users and is relatively quick and easy to navigate.

Observed Design Failures
There were as many as 8 Google ads when users did an initial Wix search on Chrome, causing some users to click on a related but tributary option to create an account and begin the design of a website. Users hesitated after creating an account with the Wix screen that asked them to choose between allowing Wix to create a site for you and entering the Wix editor to create a site on your own. The questions posed to users about the nature of the site and the end product goal caused many to hesitate. It would help users if these questions and options to be selected were incorporated automatically at a later point in the user experience, or offered in the menu and not required. Users selected elements via a side bar and also a top navigation, it was not immediately clear that both were navigation systems to the same features. Having two paths to use the same tools is redundant.

Recommendations for Potential Users
- Determine if you want more convenience or control over the coding in the development of your website.
- Decide if your long-term goals for the website will require specific plugin apps that are not available in the Wix App market
- Consider if you are willing to pay a monthly charge for a premium account to get more features and flexibility
- Try Wix out in a free version, consider that a free account requires a Wix subdomain (e.g., yourwebsite.wix.com)

Future Design Improvements
The usability test could improve by testing all users with identical information. We would not ask users to decide on the context, but provide them with specific information, taking out the design opinion/decision factor. For example, we would give them a website name, a description of what the website's purpose was to be, a title, and specific text to add. We could also assign fonts, colors, and which template to use. By controlling the tasks more succinctly, we would be measuring the usability of the Wix tool itself instead of the behavior of the user in making design and layout decisions. We could also provide step-by-step instruction on how to do each task.

References

[i] https://www.wix.com/features/mains
[ii] https://www.wix.com/features/main
[iii] https://www.wix.com/upgrade/website