

Web Site Review of Regence BlueCross BlueShield



Banner image of Home Page

Navigation/search window bars at top and middle are unobtrusive.

This aid implies comparison shopping but only for Blue Cross plans. It is misleading to a user.

Added navigation that takes you further into the site. This avoids long lists of links on the home page and adds to readability.

Links to other member sites.

Introduction is short and "Chunked" up for clarity.

Links are the same color as text.

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Regence BlueCross BlueShield Home Page

<http://www.or.regence.com/>

Blue Cross Quick Facts

- Members: More than 3 million
- Employees: More than 5,400 in Idaho, Oregon, Utah and Washington
- Affiliation Composition:
 - Regence BlueShield of Idaho
 - Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon
 - Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah
 - Regence BlueShield (in parts of Washington)

Financial Picture: The Regence Group had nearly \$5.8 billion in total premiums in 2001

Provider Networks: The Regence Group has networks of more than 23,000 providers

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon

- Headquarters: Portland, Oregon, with eight local offices in the state
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies founded separately in 1941; incorporated in 1983
- More than 1 million members

For a company of this size, and for the number of people they serve, they have managed quite well to adopt a minimalist approach to the web design with a varied user base each with different concerns or needs. This presents a more web-centric approach to placing corporate information on the web with a conscious attempt not to overwhelm the user. A user can easily navigate through the site and find relevant forms, doctors, careers, news, or shop online for a health plan. Users can also review the health plan contract, its limitations, and exclusions. Employers have a link to a separate page that provides much of the same information. Providers of the health care services also have a page that is relevant to them. In all cases, the information that is provided is organized and accessed within 5-10 links from the left navigation bar.

Page Layout and Design

The pages are designed to be one page in length (with only a few exceptions) and intended to prevent the user from vertical scrolling. The one page format also allows for quick response times when pages are reloaded. All introductory text is chunked and short paragraphs are written in plain language. The background color matches the logo and is presented in a light blue color which presents a soothing tone (or dominant mood as McCloud would say-pg.190) to the website and allows for the

perfect melding of “commerce and technology” of a corporate website. The navigation structure is simplified in each section and only has a couple of links for “terms of service” and “privacy policy” at the bottom of the pages for navigation links.

Audience analysis:

There are 5 audiences for this website and they are grouped under the headings of members, providers, employers, supplemental Medicare plans, and those with no health insurance at all.

Members: The largest of the four groups, members contain a subset grouping which is contained under the umbrella of “members.” They are: Employees and their dependents, those who carry private insurance, Medicare.

Providers: Hospitals, clinics and doctors who provide services under these the health plans.

Employees: Businesses purchase the plans for their employees and Regence administers the plan by handling all claims and associated paperwork.

Medicare: Those requiring supplemental insurance can find coverage here.

No Coverage: Those wishing coverage can find links on nearly every page directing them to further information. These links are also made larger than other links which was obviously a marketing gimmick to encourage those without insurance to inquire,

Summary of website Critique

In a design approach where “less is more” [quote from Nielsen], more corporate websites are shifting away from the concept that the website can be a “catch-all” or even operate as a gate keeper that presents a barrier between you and the “relentless horde” that is your customer. Nielsen discusses the need for Home Run sites that keep visitors returning to a website. (pg 380-383)

High Quality content

Often Updated

Minimal Download Time

Ease of Use

Relevant to users needs

Unique to the online medium

Net-centric corporate culture

I believe Nielsen would state they have created a robust user-centered website with the exception of a few design issues that are easily correctable.

Issues that should be addressed

- No provision for other languages. Regence serves a large Spanish-speaking population.
- No apparent site map provided.
- No direct contact to the webmaster for site problems.
- Members, Employers, and About Us will not take you Home after clicking on the Home link. You are only home for those pages and will continue to refresh continually confusing the user. The user must click

on the Oregon link. There is no cognitive relevancy between “Oregon” and “Home” listed as a navigation item on all three pages.

- Colored links are not a standard blue as Nielsen prefers.
- The Oregon icon acts as a link back to the home page. This feature is not intuitive for the user and has to be “learned” only after clicking on the home link at the top of the navigation structure. Redundant coding occurs when you click on “Oregon” while on the home page.
- Once on a members, employers, or providers page, you cannot get back to the home page of the site by clicking “HOME”. The link only brings you back to the current mini-home page of the members, employers, or providers.

Good design elements

- Short paragraphs for “chunking” of the information to reduce cognitive overload and written in plain language.
- Consistent use of a single color scheme which is consistent for a corporate website. The use of the color blue connotes a soothing positive concern about health-care and the customers they serve.
- Left Navigation has never more than nine links and also contains “For members” and “Need Coverage” to serve existing and new customers from any page on the website. This prevents cognitive overload from having too much information on the page.

- Flash or animated graphics are not added to the site to distract the user. It achieves the goal of providing the information the users need, without the frills of the latest technology.
- Ability to shop and compare health care plans online is user friendly and avoids consuming corporate resources for small questions that can be answered through the site

Overall, this site has utilized a number of design features that most corporate sites lack. It is very impressive for the size of the company, its content, and the varied user base, that they are able to achieve their goals with such a simplistic and well thought-out design.

Works Cited

Nielsen, Jakob. Designing Web Usability, New Riders Publishing, 2000

McCloud, Scott Understanding Comics The Invisible Art, HarperCollins Publishers,
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