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# **NEW ERA**

*Product Purchasing Process User-Experience Analysis*

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# Introduction

## *The Overall Goal of this Project*

### **ABOUT NEW ERA**

Since 1920, New Era has been the world's premiere headwear company, elevating the cap from a fashion accessory to a cultural icon. From the basepaths of Yankee Stadium to the catwalks of Paris, our products transcend time, culture, sport and fashion, making statements that are as unique as your DNA.<sup>1</sup>

### **New Era's Brand Philosophy As It Pertains To User-Experience**

New Era's website states:

Our focus is, has been and always will be on creating products that are inspired, designed and handcrafted to fit your life.<sup>2</sup>

Quality products are important, but just as crucial is presenting those products in a way that echoes the brand philosophy. It is because of this that an analysis is important. Allowing customers to understand that the same amount of thought and work that goes into the product has gone into their shopping experience while visiting the website is crucial.

### **ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**

This document is an heuristic analysis of the product purchasing process currently in use on the New Era website. Included here is a brief run-down of the current tools and methodology, as well as some suggestions for improvement. This document aims to describe and detail the paths that are encountered from landing on the home page, choosing products to order, the ordering process, and completion of an order.

This document is not intended to describe areas of website design and functionality that are not related to the product purchasing process.

### **Document Organization**

This document will first describe the current interaction functionality of the New Era Website, outlining look and feel, interactivity, user-flow, and overall user-experience. Next, it describes some recommended alterations and/or changes<sup>3</sup>. Finally, a few notes about optional considerations are offered.

### *Footnotes*

The footnotes contained within this document may contain interesting asides and/or personal observations that are relevant to the body text. Don't forget to read them.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www2.neweracap.com/category/9/GENERAL/page/303/CAREERS\\_AT\\_NEW\\_ERA.aspx](http://www2.neweracap.com/category/9/GENERAL/page/303/CAREERS_AT_NEW_ERA.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www2.neweracap.com/category/9/GENERAL/page/303/CAREERS\\_AT\\_NEW\\_ERA.aspx](http://www2.neweracap.com/category/9/GENERAL/page/303/CAREERS_AT_NEW_ERA.aspx)

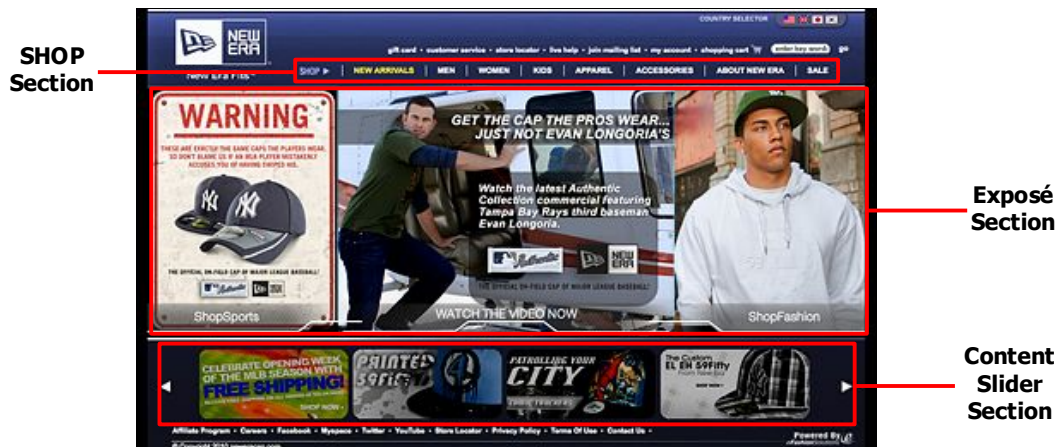
<sup>3</sup> **Feel like skipping current functionality?** Start at the "A New Product Purchasing Process User-Flow" section on page 9.

# First Impressions

## A User's First Experience

### THE HOME PAGE

Aside from looking a little dated, the New Era home page appears to be fairly straightforward. It is easy to understand what the company sells and they appear to have a wide range of products. It is during interaction with the home page that the appeal begins to fade. This is explained in further detail in the following sections.



### SHOP Section

Initially, the SHOP section appears to be an easy-to-use collection of navigational links. Not surprisingly, clicking the first link (NEW ARRIVALS) begins to confirm this. Unfortunately, clicking some of the other links within this section do not yield the same results. Most of the subsequent links<sup>4</sup> found here are actually just category hotspots that trigger sliding menus<sup>5</sup> which display various cross-links that can be chosen/clicked (e.g., rolling-over MEN triggers a long list of clickable links such as MLB, NBA, Golf, etc.).

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Unfortunately, clicking some of the other links within this section do not yield the same results.

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### About New Era?

The oddest inclusion within the SHOP Section is the "ABOUT NEW ERA" category (this can also be viewed in the Home Page Product Content Inventory table below). It appears between several product categories and a SALE category. Finding a new location for this link, allowing the SHOP Section to remain just for those items that pertain to shopping would be optimal.

<sup>4</sup> MEN, WOMEN, KIDS, and ABOUT NEW ERA are only triggers, while APPAREL, ACCESSORIES, and SALE are triggers and actual links.

<sup>5</sup> While traversing various pages throughout the entire website in Mozilla Firefox, it was found that the drop-down code for the SHOP Section categories/links is buggy: the link options themselves will always become visible, but the drop-down menu's background doesn't always appear, making the menu very hard to use.

## “Exposé” Section

Under the SHOP Section links found in the header of the home page is a centered exposé of three select products, or product categories. Initially, each of these areas appear to be items that can be clicked-through in order to view product and/or category details. This is not entirely the case. The outer-most spots within this section (ShopSports and ShopFashion) don’t function the same way as the middle spot — which is a single, clickable link.

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The menu here is an animated grouping of brand logos that contain no other descriptive information.

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In this case, hovering over the spot creates a new “menu” in which the customer must choose from several categories. The menu here is an animated grouping of brand logos that contain no other descriptive information. Clicking any of the logos takes the customer to a list of products that pertain to the specific brand. (This also varies slightly from clicking the center spot, which displays a variety of product styles within a category rather than a brand.)

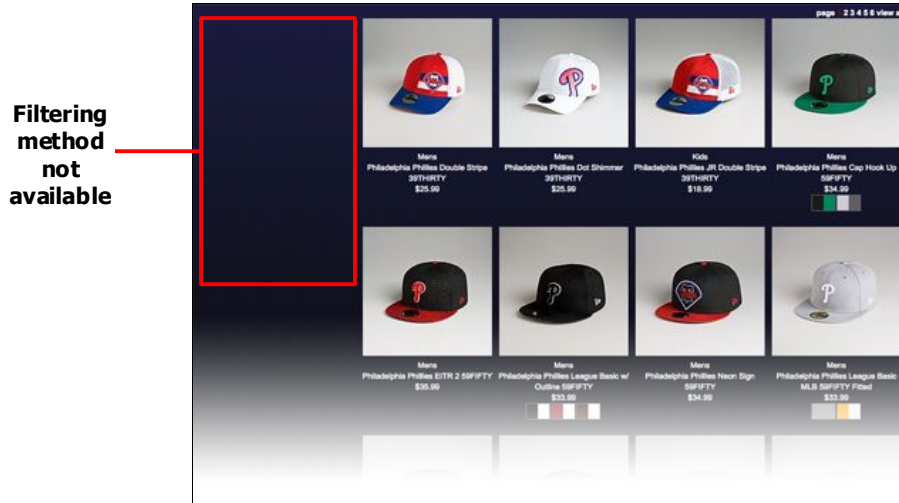


## “Content Slider” Section

Under the Exposé Section (just above the website footer), is another navigational element: an interactive content slider. This section can be clicked and navigated similarly to content sliders on other websites. Clicking on an individual image will proceed to the corresponding category page. Clicking the arrows on either side of the section scrolls the content (thirteen images/categories) within the section.

## Search

A fourth method for accessing products on the New Era website is a site-wide search function<sup>6</sup> (found in the top-right corner of the website header). As expected, entering a search term (or search terms) results in a view displaying all of the products that relate to the search<sup>7</sup>. Search results can include a multitude of items and the lack of a filtering method (usually available in the left sidebar of other product list views) is unfortunate.



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<sup>6</sup> It is worthwhile to note that search results are displayed randomly each time they are accessed.

<sup>7</sup> Note that most of the searches that were tested worked, although some categories yielded very few results when compared with actual product that was listed via other navigational processes.

## Home Page Product Content Inventory

This table provides a high-level content inventory of the product navigation contained on the home page. The table's intent is only to show the variety of paths to similar content, but not indicate structural minutiae such as complete link lists, descriptions, document types, keywords, content owners, notes, etc. Numerical ranges within this table described the amount of items found within that particular section (e.g., "1.1.0.2.1 – 2.12" means that 12 items exist).

Page ID	Page Name	Link
<b>1.0.0</b>	<b>Home</b>	<a href="http://www.neweracap.com/">http://www.neweracap.com/</a>
<b>1.1.0</b>	<b>Shop</b>	
1.1.0.1.0	New Arrivals	<a href="http://www.neweracap.com/nshop/product.php?groupName=NewArrivalsMen&amp;view=listing&amp;useGN=1">http://www.neweracap.com/nshop/product.php?groupName=NewArrivalsMen&amp;view=listing&amp;useGN=1</a>
1.1.0.2.0	Men	
1.1.0.2.1 – 2.12	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.3.0	Women	
1.1.0.3.1 – 3.5	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.4.0	Kids	
1.1.0.4.1 – 4.4	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.5.0	Apparel	
1.1.0.5.1 – 5.7	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.6.0	Accessories	
1.1.0.6.1 – 6.4	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.7.0	About New Era	
1.1.0.7.1 – 7.9	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.1.0.8.0	Sale	
1.1.0.8.1 – 8.5	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
<b>1.2.0</b>	<b>Content Exposé (under header)</b>	
1.2.0.1.0	Shop Sports	
1.2.0.1.1 – 1.5	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
1.2.0.2.0	The EK Spring Collection	<a href="http://www.neweracap.com/nshop/product.php?page=viewall&amp;hatGroup=&amp;hatFit=viewall&amp;groupName=EKbyNewERA&amp;view=listing&amp;searchBy=fit&amp;prevHatGroup=&amp;prevHatFit=44&amp;resetDropDown=hatGroup">page=viewall&amp;hatGroup=&amp;hatFit=viewall&amp;groupName=EKbyNewERA&amp;view=listing&amp;searchBy=fit&amp;prevHatGroup=&amp;prevHatFit=44&amp;resetDropDown=hatGroup</a>
1.2.0.3.0	Shop Fashion	
1.2.0.3.1 – 3.5	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	
<b>1.3.0</b>	<b>Content Slider (above footer)</b>	
1.3.0.1.0	<i>Several category cross-links</i>	

Top-level, section top page  
 Major Sub-Section  
 Cross-link

# The Current Experience

## *The State of New Era's eCommerce Functionality*

### SELECTING PRODUCTS TO PURCHASE

As with any website containing several hundreds or thousands of products, first impressions are important. Because of some minor inconsistencies in functionality contained on the New Era's home page, there is potential for some customers to be driven off just because of an inability to understand how to navigate the site. Once past these issues, viewing products, as well as viewing different colors, views, and variations of each product works well<sup>8</sup>.

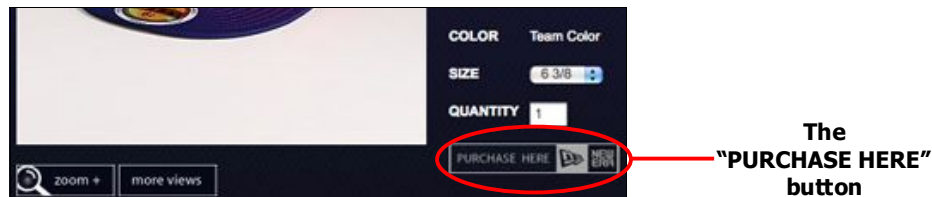
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As with any website containing several hundreds or thousands of products, first impressions are important.

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#### Selecting Products

Adding and removing products to and from the Shopping Cart is relatively easy: it's a single click action in most cases and functions similarly to other widely used eCommerce systems. The only major issue in this case is that the button used to add products to the Shopping Cart is called, "PURCHASE HERE." This description is confusing until the button is actually used (i.e., until the customer sees what the button actually does). After viewing the Shopping Cart, customers may go forward with their purchase or continue shopping<sup>9</sup>.



#### Purchasing Products

Customers may purchase products as unregistered users, although registering for an account with New Era makes checkouts easier (registered users may also save items in a "Wishlist" for future purchase).

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<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, a size guide (a la [http://www.lids.com/size\\_chart.html](http://www.lids.com/size_chart.html)) is nowhere to be found on the site.

<sup>9</sup> Currently, if a customer chooses to continue shopping, they are transported back to the New Era home page.



Purchasing products can be accomplished by one of three methods: as a registered user of New Era, by using Amazon.com<sup>10</sup>, or "Quick Checkout."



### Shopping Cart or Shopping Bag?

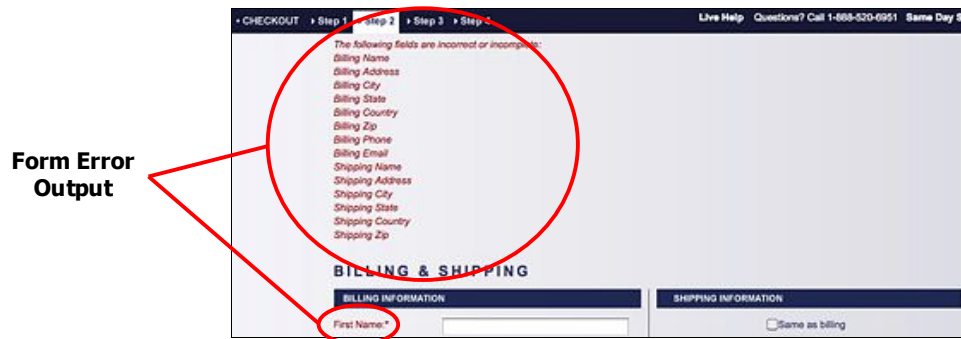
There is a bit of semantic variation throughout the New Era website. During the Product Purchasing process, this can be seen in the "Shopping Cart" (where products are placed before completing an order), where the text displayed on the Shopping Cart page is:

Your NEW ERA Shopping Bag is Empty.<sup>11</sup>

### QUICK CHECKOUT: PURCHASING PRODUCTS AS AN UNREGISTERED USER

After adding products to the Shopping Cart, customers may checkout without registering for a user account. To do this, they must click Quick Checkout<sup>12</sup>.

The first page that a customer encounters after clicking Quick Checkout is the Billing & Shipping page<sup>13</sup>. Not only does this step allow the customer to enter all personal information, but it gives another chance to become a registered user. This is a typical form in which the customer must enter all of the required information<sup>14</sup>. Failing to enter certain required fields results in an inline list of the required fields that must be completed before proceeding.



<sup>10</sup> Customer must be registered at Amazon.com.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.neweracap.com/nshop/shopcart.php?topDept=cart>

<sup>12</sup> During the Quick Checkout process, there are several inline help modals that don't quite work in Mozilla Firefox.

<sup>13</sup> The "Continue" button on the Billing & Shipping Step doesn't have a rollover state.

<sup>14</sup> This does not include payment/credit card information. Also, for some reason the customer's middle initial is neither transferred to the Shipping information (if applicable), nor the Confirmation page (described below).

The next page, or "Step," allows the customer to select a Shipping Method for their order. It also displays a number of recommended products that the customer can add to their order<sup>15</sup>. Lastly, there are two sections on this page that allow the customer to enter Promotional Codes, Gift Certificate numbers, or Store Credit codes<sup>16</sup>.

The fourth, and last Step in the ordering process is the Review & Submit page. This is where the customer can review the order, their Billing & Shipping information<sup>17</sup>, and enter their credit card number<sup>18</sup>. If required fields have been left empty, clicking Submit will result in a notice to complete the fields<sup>19</sup>. After entering all required information, the customer may click Submit<sup>20</sup>.

## REGISTERING AS A NEW ERA USER

Registration<sup>21</sup> as a New Era User can take place in a couple of different locations: from the My Account page<sup>22</sup> or through the Quick Checkout process (see above).

### Registering Via My Account

When registering through the My Account page, the form is similar to the ones used during the Quick Checkout process, although they are styled differently. The change in look and feel from the other process is subtle, but noticeable.

#### Checkout Form vs. User Registration Form

The image shows two side-by-side forms. The left form is titled "BILLING & SHIPPING" and has a sub-section "BILLING INFORMATION". It contains input fields for: First Name\*, Middle Initial, Last Name\*, Company Name, Street\*, Apt #, City\*, State / Province\* (with a dropdown arrow), and Zip/Postal:\*. The right form is titled "REGISTER AS A NEW ERA MEMBER". It contains input fields for: First Name\*, Middle Initial, Last Name\*, Company Name, Street\*, Apt #, City\*, State/Province\* (with a dropdown menu showing "Alabama"), Zip/Postal Code\*, and Country\*. Below these fields is a note: "For shipping purposes please select below what best describes the above address" followed by two radio buttons: "Commercial" and "Residential". A red asterisk and the text "\*Denotes Required Field" are positioned above the input fields.

<sup>15</sup> These items have a default quantity of "0" so that they are not ordered without user interaction.

<sup>16</sup> The "Continue" button on the Shipping Method Step doesn't have a rollover state.

<sup>17</sup> Clicking "Edit" under each of these items takes the customer back to that step in the process, in which they must click back through each subsequent step in order to return to the Review & Submit page.

<sup>18</sup> **Security warning:** the credit card number input box is not secure and therefore "remembers" previously entered numbers.

<sup>19</sup> For some reason, all previous information is retained except for the credit card expiration year, which must be reset.

<sup>20</sup> The Submit button is accompanied by a "Only click once" warning, meaning that the form could probably be built better in order to catch any user mistakes like these.

<sup>21</sup> In reality, registering as a user on the New Era site is broken. I registered once, but then could not login the next day. When I registered again (using the same login information), I was able to create a new account without error.

<sup>22</sup> Link available among the header links at the top of the page.

Like during the order process, failing to complete all of the required fields prompts the user with an inline list of the fields that must be completed. Completing the form transports the customer to an Account Summary page. Here, the customer may edit their Personal, Billing, and Shipping information, as well as add entries to an Address Book, view past Invoices, and Logout.

From this point, the customer may access the Shopping Cart to continue their order<sup>23</sup>, or Logout and complete their order later<sup>24</sup>.

### **Registering Via Quick Checkout**

Registering via the Quick Checkout process works a little more seamlessly than the prior method. This is because all of the required information is pertinent to the order being placed rather than just being arbitrary personal information, not applicable to the registration process. Registering here is done by entering a username and password along with the other required order information.

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Registering via the Quick Checkout process works a little more seamlessly than the prior method.

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### **REGULAR CHECKOUT: PURCHASING PRODUCTS AS A REGISTERED USER**

The checkout process for registered users is similar to that of unregistered users. Completing orders can either be done through the New Era website or via Amazon.com. The main difference experienced while checking out as a registered user is that all of the address information is automatically propagated into the process and no additional forms (other than credit card information) must be completed.

Another benefit of purchasing products as a registered user is that a record of all past purchase invoices can be viewed by accessing the My Account section of the site<sup>25</sup>.

### **CONFIRMATION SCREEN**

Upon a successful order, the customer is presented with a Confirmation page. This displays a “thank you” note, a blurb about how orders are processed, a summary of the order, as well as the Billing & Shipping information, and the invoice number.

The Confirmation Screen also states that email confirmations will be sent. Unfortunately, no email confirmations have yet to be received<sup>26</sup>.

### **WISHLISTS**

Wishlists allow customers to save interesting items for future purchase<sup>27</sup>. Adding an item to a Wishlist can only be accomplished by registered users. A customer who attempts to add an item to their Wishlist before

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<sup>23</sup> Link available among the header links at the top of the page.

<sup>24</sup> Signing in to a user account is possible during the checkout process.

<sup>25</sup> Oddly, the My Account page header contains the text “INVOICE INFO,” “ADDRESS,” and “Invoice Summary,” although it is unclear why (they are neither descriptive of the page, nor links to other areas).

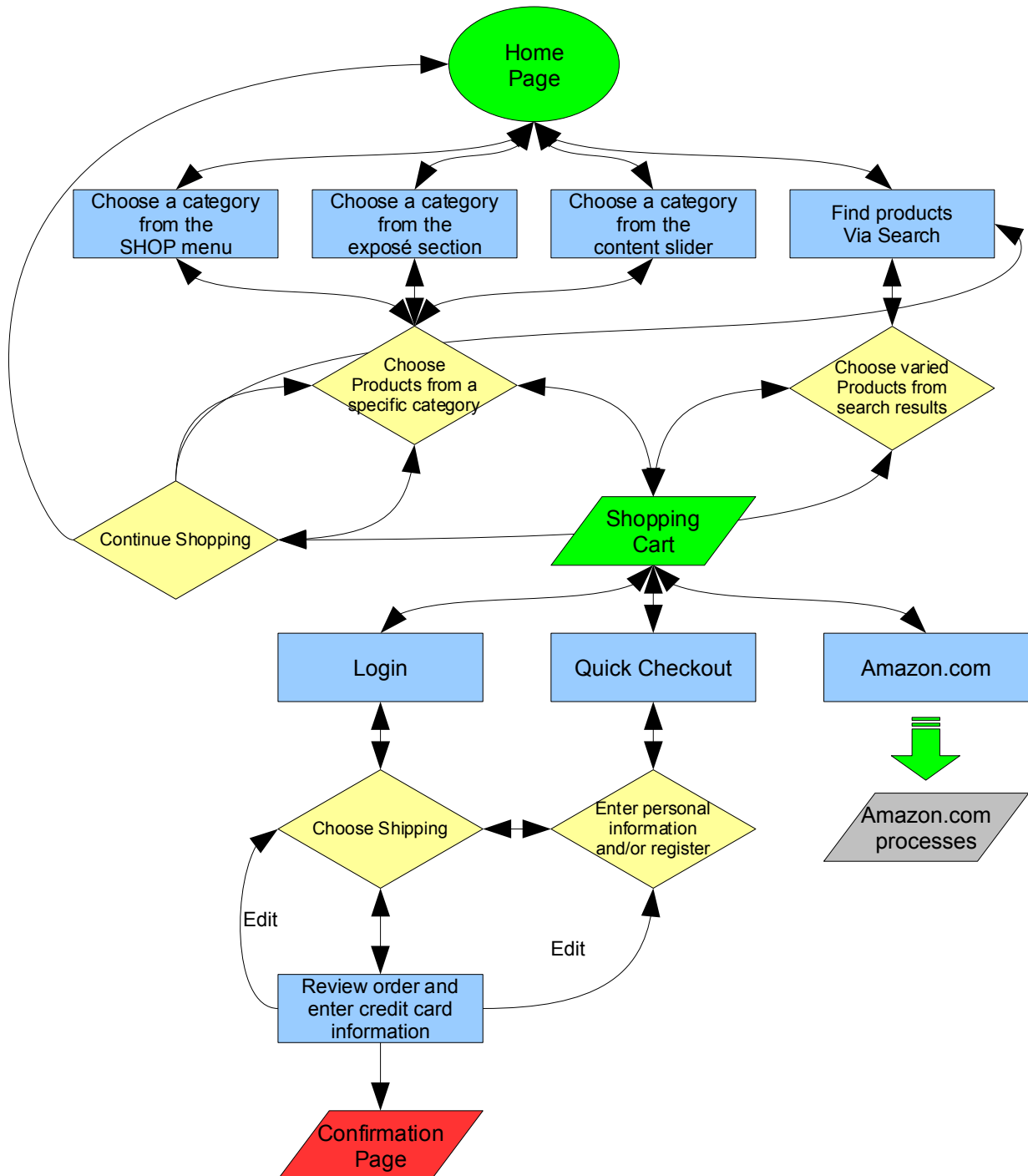
<sup>26</sup> Currently, New Era’s email functionality — even retrieving passwords and emailing Wishlists — appears to be broken: order confirmation emails **were not** received, tracking number emails **were** received, and even though mailing list offers were declined a mailing list email **was** received.

<sup>27</sup> Registered users can also view others’ Wishlists or share their own via email (which, as stated previously, is not currently working).

logging in to the website will be prompted to login before proceeding. Once logged-in, any number of items can be added to the Wishlist. Unfortunately, a Wishlist can only be accessed by adding items to the Wishlist from their details page, as there are no other discernible methods to get to the Wishlist.

### CURRENT PRODUCT PURCHASING PROCESS USER-FLOW

If it isn't clear by now, the process(es) for purchasing products on the New Era website is a little convoluted (some aspects even being broken). The user-flow diagram below illustrates this point.



# The New Experience

## *Improving the New Era's eCommerce User-Flow*

### SWAPPING PARADIGMS

While some of the processes involved in New Era's current eCommerce user-experience are inherent in most eCommerce websites, a few steps can be taken to ensure a seamless route for customers as they find their way through the website and, ultimately, purchasing products. One of these steps is thinking of the website as if it were a physical retail store.

Typically, upon entering a retail store, a customer might do one of several things:

1. Find a section of the store to begin shopping in
2. Look for the "Sale Rack"
3. Ask someone for help
4. Search for a random item<sup>28</sup>
5. Et cetera

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One of these steps is thinking of the website as if it were a physical retail store.

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### ALTERING NEW ERA FOR THE NEW PARADIGM

In order to make the New Era website feel more like a real store, a few simple steps must be taken. First, reducing the number of paths available for reaching the same results is important: give the customers a few helpful options rather than a multitude of similar ones.

#### Shopping

Currently, SHOP is where the main menu of categories resides on the New Era website. Since a new style of "menu" was described in the previous section, a recommendation for the "shop" philosophy is as follows: give the customer what they want. What this means is that the main goal of the New Era website is to present customers with exactly what they expect to find. Burying items withing numerous subcategories only makes purchasing those items more difficult.

Here, the current "exposé" section really works. Show three or four major categories (sports, fashion, Spring Collection, etc.) and let those be the major entry points into the guts of the website. What doesn't work in the current exposé section is the sub-choices that it provides<sup>29</sup>. It would be much easier to understand if each category presented here was a single click to another page. In this case, more than a few choices create a convoluted user-experience.

<sup>28</sup> Even though some people are used to *aimless searching* while they shop, most people don't enjoy it. But, since everyone who visits a website is used to having a global "search" function available at all times, it should be included on every page.

<sup>29</sup> I.e., the animated menu that appears when the outer-most sections are hovered-over.

## **The “Sale Rack”**

Sales are one of the major draws that bring customers into stores. Because of this, strongly indicating sale items is very important. Creating a large “Sale” button<sup>30</sup> would be beneficial and would help customers find a natural entry point into looking for products.

## **The Menu (and “Guided” Search)**

Normally, customers don’t walk into a store without a general idea of what they’re looking for. Because of this, a person won’t just start looking at items on a rack, but they’ll go to a specific section in the store and begin looking there.

This can be accomplished on a website as well. One consideration might be to place all of the product categories contained at New Era in a drop-down menu that is tied to a Search box. This way, customers can choose a specific category (or section) to begin their search in. For example, someone might choose the “Baseball Caps” category in order to enter their search term(s) in.

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One consideration might be to place all of the product categories contained at New Era in a drop-down menu that is tied to a Search box.

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In some regards, this would be the only way a customer might find a product on the New Era website. Of course, the other methods exist as well, but this is the most straightforward.

## **Help**

While “Live Help” is an option on the current New Era website, it is not clear how important it is as an entry point for new customers. Likewise, there is no indication of “store hours” or when customers might receive this help.

Realistically, while Live Help might not be the best way to allow customers to find products, it could be a very powerful tool. Customers are used to asking for help at real stores, so why not online?

## **SIMPLIFYING THE FLOW**

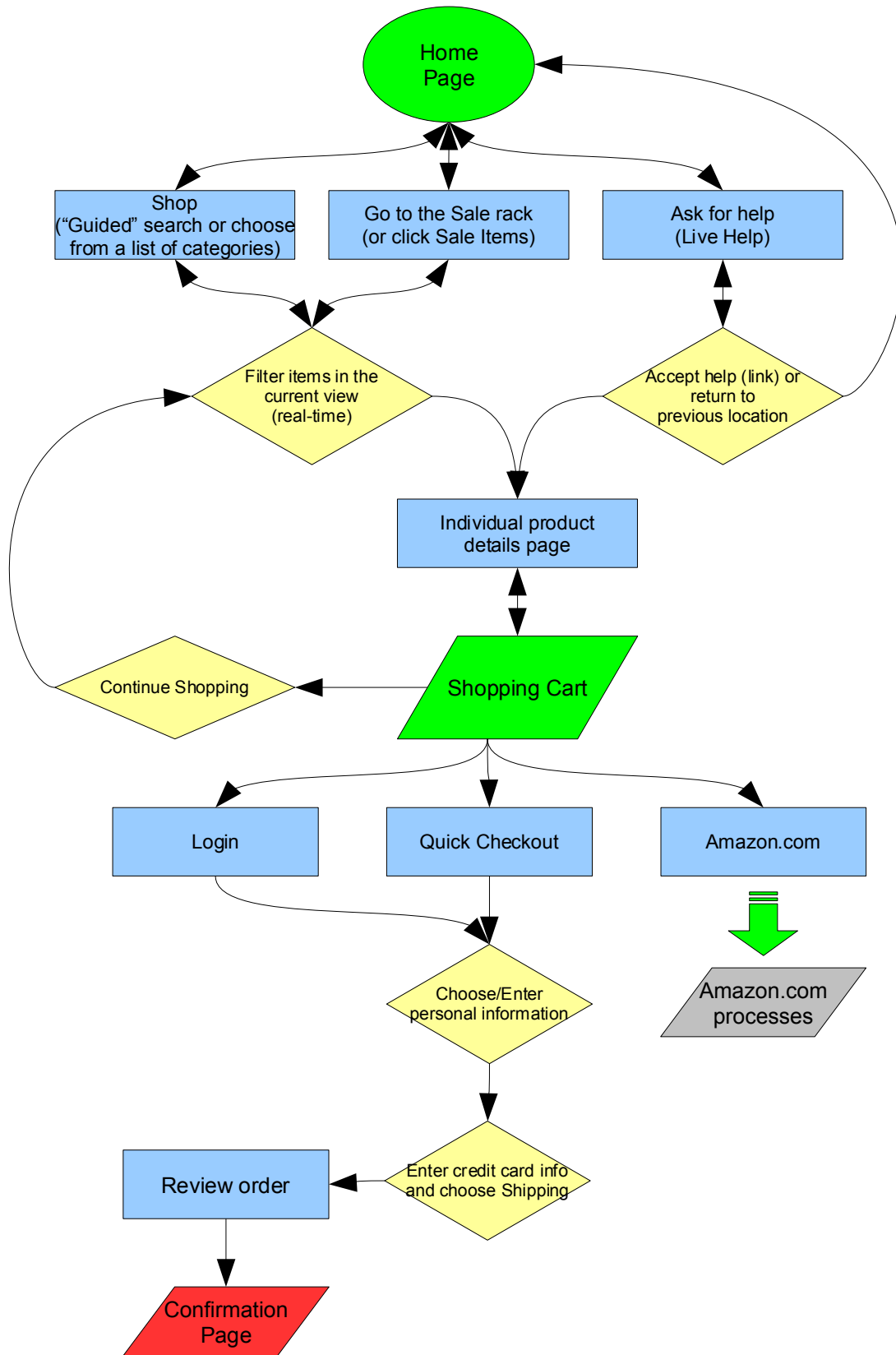
As stated, most people are used to purchasing products in a real store. Walking into a store can be as daunting as visiting a website, but at least most stores are laid-out in a fairly similar fashion. Websites can’t always claim that sort of standardization. This standardization can be described as:

- Enter
- Shop
- Ask? (optional)
- Buy
- Join? (optional)
- Leave

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<sup>30</sup> Here the word “button” is used loosely, as the exact methodology could be something quite different than an actual button. One idea might be an automatic modal that appear each time the home page is loaded. Another option would be to create an interactive “starburst” or sliding panel that slides onto a top corner whenever visitors arrive (et cetera).

The following diagram demonstrates how the processes found at real stores can be translated for the web. While this diagram shares many similarities with the current New Era eCommerce user-flow, there are some definite modifications.



## Entry Points

First, the entry points have been paired down to just three (and only two if a customer never uses Live Help). Here, a customer may choose to pick a category and search for something specific within that category, or find something that is on sale. If those two options fail to yield results, the customer can always ask for help.

As part of the "Shop" entry point, there may also be something similar to the "exposé" section currently being used. This would contain a few major categories in which a customer may enter their shopping experience.

So, either the customer can search within a category or click on a major category to view products.

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If they continue shopping, they should be transported back to the previous product's details page and not the home page...

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Next, unless a customer has been given a specific product link via Live Help, they are presented with a list of products within a certain category. Here, the customer can filter the results to better aid in finding a specific product<sup>31</sup>.

Once a product has been added to the Shopping Cart, a customer can either begin the checkout process, or continue shopping.

If they continue shopping, they should be transported back to the previous product's details page and not the home page (in a store, if a person places an item in their cart, they are not taken back to the entrance of the store).

## Checkout

If the customer decides to checkout, they are given similar choices to what currently exists: Login, Quick Checkout, and Amazon.com.

Now, if the customer logs in (but has not entered any personal information<sup>32</sup>), or the customer decides to use Quick Checkout, they are required to enter their personal information. While most of the information contained on the current form within this process is pertinent, it is advisable that it be paired down to only the essential information needed to complete an online order (additional information, such as demographics, can always be collected via post-purchase surveys<sup>33</sup>).

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Each section should be editable, as it is currently, although each section should be editable inline and should not require the customer to return to any previous pages.

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After entering the billing and shipping information, the customer will be required to choose a shipping method and enter their payment details. These items should both be contained on the same page.

The last page that requires user interaction is the order review page. This page should just be a review of the order, alongside a Submit button. Each section should be editable, as it is currently, although each section should be editable inline and should not require the customer to return to any previous pages.

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<sup>31</sup> This can either be done similarly to how it works now (drop-down menus that filter items to specific criteria), or a "live search" filtering method could be utilized.

<sup>32</sup> This will be explained in further detail in the "New Registration Methodology" section that follows.

<sup>33</sup> Also explained in the "Customer Demographics" section that follows.



## **Confirmation**

Finally, a successful order will display the order details and contain any other important information (most notably a “thank you” message). This page should provide links back to the home page and to the customer’s account page (if they are a registered user).

This page (keeping with the idea that the website is just like an actual store) would also ask unregistered customers if they would like to register for an account. If the answer is yes<sup>34</sup>, they would be transported to the registration page. Registering for an account at this point in the process would retain all of the personal information entered previously so that the customer wouldn’t have to do it again.

## **NEW REGISTRATION METHODOLOGY**

Getting visitors to register for accounts is no easy task for any website. Because of this, the process should be as easy as possible. One method of simplification would be to only ask visitors to choose a username, password, and provide their email address<sup>35</sup>. Once registered the new user can always enter their address and personal information — this should not be required just to register.

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Getting visitors to register for accounts is no easy task for any website.

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### **Registered Purchases**

If a registered user makes a purchase and they have already entered their personal information (either during a past purchase or manually via their user account page), the information should be automatically used during the purchase process. Of course, once the customer is at the Order Review page, they should be able to edit the information (inline) just as the process is described above.

### **Obtaining Personal Information if None Has Been Entered**

If a registered user logs in when making a purchase, obtaining their personal information is easy. Just send the customer through the same process as that which an unregistered customer encounters. Once their personal information is entered, it should be automatically saved into their user account for future use.

## **CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS**

A great place to ask customers for information that goes beyond that of the order process is on a registered user’s account page. Provide a link to a short survey and ask only registered users.

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<sup>34</sup> Via a button, or checkbox, etc.

<sup>35</sup> This is also a good place to ask registrants if they would like to join a mailing list, if applicable.

# Technology Considerations

## *Honing Access & Usability*

### **CURRENTLY USED TECHNOLOGY**

The items listed below are technologies that are currently utilized on the New Era website. This section describes the current use of the technologies. Further recommendations can be found in the following section, "Recommendations."

#### **ADOBE FLASH**

Currently, the New Era home page relies on using Adobe Flash<sup>36</sup> for both the "Exposé" Section and the "Sliding Content" Section.

#### **JAVASCRIPT**

A number of Javascript effects used on the New Era website do not work cross-browser. While this doesn't critically injure any major functionality, it creates the appearance of shoddy workmanship.

#### **POPUP WINDOWS**

There are a few areas within the New Era website where popup windows are used. One notable area is in viewing larger photos and variations of products.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

# Recommendations

## *How To Create a Smooth User-Experience for Everyone*

### **FIX LIST OVERVIEW**

While the product purchasing process on the New Era website isn't broken, it would benefit from some enhancement. Most importantly, all of the various bugs — especially the lack of working email functionality and the registration issues — must be fixed. Next, simplifying the procedural flow so that there are not so many steps involved would greatly improve the natural user-experience. Last, working to smooth out some of the technology quirks (Flash, Javascript issues, etc.) is recommended.

The following items are listed in order of importance and will impact every area of user-experience within the website.

#### **1. Website Bugs**

No website is completely bug free, but certain functional and aesthetic bugs must be dealt with to ensure a seamless user-experience.

##### *Website Email Functionality*

As noted above, website functionality on the New Era website is broken at best. Fixing any and all email functionality is crucial for clean user-experience that instills a feeling of trust in every customer. Currently, the inability to receive order confirmation emails is a major blocker that will drive customers away.

##### *User Registration Functionality*

Registering as a user of the New Era website works, although major issues did arise. Registration was attempted twice because of this. After initial registration, everything appeared to work fine. Upon attempting to login at a later date, the user account would not work. Password retrieval was tried, although no email was ever received. Registration was attempted again (with the exact same personal information) and it worked (i.e., the system did not recognize that the account already existed). Because of this, it can be believed that the first registration never worked even though logging into that account did work after registration and no error was triggered when password retrieval was tried.

##### *Button Functionality*

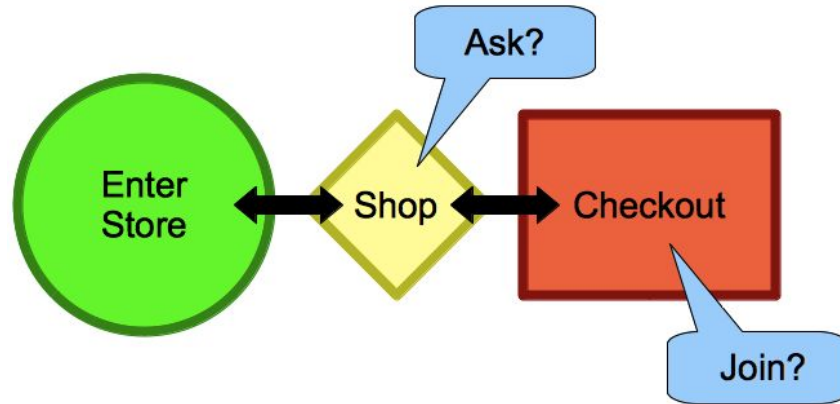
The rollover states of several buttons throughout the website were nonexistent. This might seem like a minor issue, but each of these buttons appeared to be inoperable because of it. This is an easy fix that should be implemented as soon as possible.

#### **2. Website Design & Flow**

Sometimes the "little things" are the ones that will make customers most uneasy. Taking the time to create a cohesive experience where everything looks similar and acts like it is supposed to go a long way. Don't consider the little things insignificant to a customer's overall user-experience.

## Design for the Customer, Not the Products

Keep in mind that the primary reason that an eCommerce-based website exists to allow customers to find and purchase products, not to make a way for companies to catalog as many products as possible in one place. Simplifying the flow from entry to sale is crucial and the concepts above should be strongly considered. Remember to think of the website as if it were a physical retail store. Imagine walking in, looking for a specific item, and then taking it to the checkout counter to purchase. This is exactly how the website should function.



## Forms

All forms that require user input should look and work the same throughout the website. It is recommended that all forms use the same style sheet and be styled on a grid <sup>37</sup>for easier usability.

Contact Us	
Name:	<input type="text"/> <small>required</small>
Email:	<input type="text"/> <small>required</small>
Account type:	Gold <input type="radio"/> Silver <input type="radio"/> Bronze <input type="radio"/> None <input checked="" type="radio"/> <small>required</small>
General subject:	Support <input type="button" value="v"/> <small>required</small>
My account is unavailable:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Send"/>	

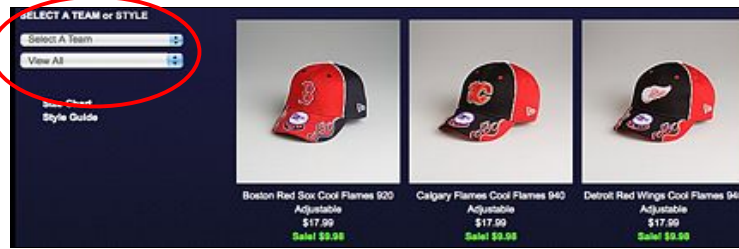
**(Background grid only shown to display layout methodology.)**

## Product Grid Views

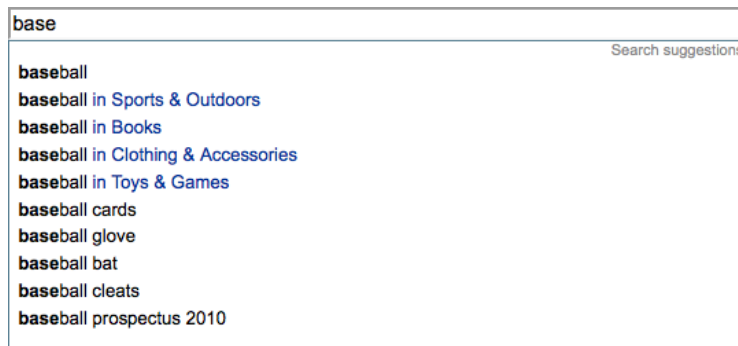
Almost all of the entry point methods described previously allow customers to view a select grouping of products in a *grid view*. This view actually works very well and it makes it easy to see how many items exist within any specific category. To make this even easier, two recommendations can be made: don't randomize the grid view results (people are used to being able to come back to a view that looks the same as the last time they saw it); include a filtering method on every grid view (even search results).

<sup>37</sup> Reynolds, Garr. 2005. From golden mean to "rule of thirds." Presentation Zen. [http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2005/08/from\\_golden\\_mea.html](http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2005/08/from_golden_mea.html).

**Current  
Filtering  
Method**



The current filtering method works well, but it could be improved. Using an auto-completing, real-time search is one suggestion. These are becoming more and more popular among Web 2.0 eCommerce sites. Consider the following real-time search tool on Amazon.com.



### *Consistent Naming Conventions*

One very important aspect that is easy to fix would be the inconsistencies in naming throughout the site. During the product purchasing process, this can be seen in a few different places. This is most notable with the Shopping Cart/Shopping Bag issue described before. Simply traversing the purchasing process, making note of any naming inconsistencies, will help to fix these issues. Additional assessment is required to find each item of discrepancy.

### *Descriptive Naming Standards*

As noted, finding a button called "PURCHASE HERE," was confusing as compared with finding a button called, "Add To Cart" (when that's what really happens when the button is clicked). This might also apply to renaming buttons such as "Continue" to "Go To Next Step," etc. Additional research is required to list and recommend a new naming convention.

### **3. Using Technology Wisely**

It was already advised that certain elements (Adobe Flash, Javascript, etc.) be reassessed in order to deem whether or not their functionality is important to the overall user-experience. Animation and interactivity are good ideas only when they add to that experience.

### *Home Page Flash*

Most of the "effects" that are utilized on the current New Era website (especially the home page) could be accomplished without the use of Adobe Flash. While these fancy effects have a certain appeal, those visitors who do not have the correct version of Adobe Flash Player installed on their computers will suffer a very degraded user-experience<sup>38</sup>. Today, Flash has wide market penetration<sup>39</sup>, but assuring that each customer has

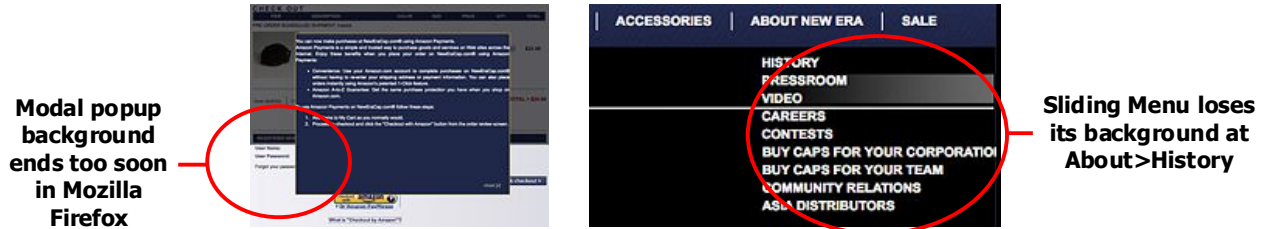
<sup>38</sup> Just having an earlier version of Flash installed created some very awkward interactivity, where elements had to be clicked before they were usable.

<sup>39</sup> Adobe. 2009. Flash Player Version Penetration. [http://www.adobe.com/products/player\\_census/flashplayer/version\\_penetration.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/player_census/flashplayer/version_penetration.html)

the correct version can be difficult. Likewise, it takes extra work (and code) to detect whether or not Flash is actually turned on in someone's web browser. Refactoring some of these functionalities with Javascript — or even static HTML — is highly recommended. This doesn't mean that Flash must be eradicated from the entire website (i.e., using it in the company history section does not impede the product purchasing process). But, removing it from any portion of the website in which finding products is involved is crucial.

### Consistent Javascript

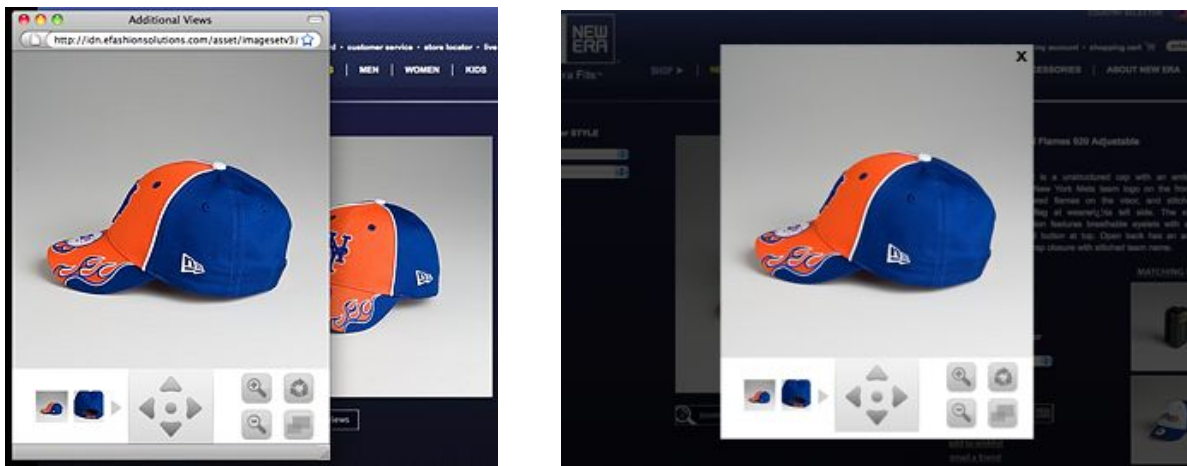
Using an industry standard, cross-browser Javascript framework<sup>40</sup> would benefit the New Era website. This would help to solve some cross-browser issues, as shown below.



### Product Detail Popup Windows

Implementing a new method for showing increased product details (additional views, zooming, etc.), would help the New Era user-experience. It is advised that these items all be placed into Javascript (or other) modal boxes that don't require opening an additional browser window. Consider the following example.

#### Current Popup vs. Modal Popup



### AJAX

It is fairly easy to "AJAXify" a website so that pages load dynamically without the need for the browser window to refresh<sup>41</sup>. While it is not a major detriment to leave the website as is (in fact, much of the website appears to load content via AJAX, although switching between product categories reloads the entire browser window), something as simple as this would create a faster, smoother, experience.

<sup>40</sup> There are several options such as jQuery, Prototype, EXT JS, etc.

<sup>41</sup> McLellen, Drew. 2005. Very Dynamic Web Interfaces. <http://www.xml.com/pub/a/2005/02/09/xml-http-request.html>.

# Conclusion

## *Summary of Fixables*

### CRUCIAL ITEMS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

#### 1. Website Bugs

This items<sup>42</sup> alone would increase the usability and user-experience of the website drastically.

#### 2. Website Design & Flow

Allowing customers to easily access and purchase products is key. Create a cohesive look, descriptive language, and as few entry points as possible.

#### 3. Using Technology Wisely

Eye candy is only as affective as it is usable. If a technology only exists to "wow" the customer, remove it.

New Era has an amazing set of products and they are known for quality around the globe. The web presence in which those products are sold should reflect the same quality and workmanship. Taking these few steps in improving the experience each customer that comes to the website has will not only support New Era's reputation, but sell more products.

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New Era has an amazing set of products and they are known for quality around the globe.

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<sup>42</sup> Please see the Appendix on page 22.

# Appendix

## Bug List

### TOP 10 BLOCKERS

In order of importance:

1. **Security Issues:** Any forms that require sensitive information (credit card info, etc.) should be secure. Specifically, the current credit card field is a regular text field that will retain a “memory” of any credit card numbers entered (i.e., reentering the first number from the same card number will show the entire number). *(Footnote 20, page 8.)*
2. **Form Processing Issues:** Currently, if a form is submitted before all of the required fields are completed, not all of the current info is retained. *(Footnote 19, page 8.)*
3. **User Registration:** Registering for an account on New Era should work. Period. This goes for the registration process, confirmation emails, password retrieval, etc. *(Footnote 21, page 8.)*
4. **Website Communications:** All website email functionality needs to be fixed as soon as possible. Purchase confirmations and invoices must be sent to the customer as soon as a purchase is complete. Also, choosing to participate in website marketing (mailing lists, etc.) or not should be tested to make sure the processes are working<sup>43</sup>. *(Footnote 26, page 9.)*
5. **Button Rollover States:** All buttons should appear to work throughout the site. Rollover states are important, as they indicate that buttons are usable. *(Footnote 13, page 7 and Footnote 16, page 8.)*
6. **Button Functionality:** Clicking a button more than once should not cause issues for the customer. *(Footnote 20, page 8.)*
7. **Search Results:** Search results don't currently, and must, include an adequate Filtering Method. Likewise, several search tests concluded in results that didn't always include everything that was actually contained within certain categories when viewed manually. *(Footnote 7, page 4.)*
8. **Descriptive Information:** Each page within the purchasing process should be clearly titled, contain descriptive subheadings (if needed), and indicate exactly where the customer is. *(Footnote 25, page 9.)*
9. **Inline Help Modals:** Modal dialog boxes throughout the website do not completely work in Mozilla Firefox. *(Footnote 12, page 7.)*
10. **Continue Shopping:** Clicking “Continue Shopping” should send customers back to the previous product details, or the category in which they chose the product — not the home page. *(Footnote 9, page 6.)*

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<sup>43</sup> As stated previously, a mailing list email was received even after declining the offer.