

E-Travel
Web Traveler Module Help
Information Requirements

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Date Created: 11/22/98
Last Modified: 12/1/98

Executive Summary

There are two main audiences for Web Traveler Help—Travelers and Travel Arrangers. These audiences may require different amounts of information, based on their computer skills and knowledge of the travel industry. Therefore, Web Traveler Help needs to be easy for all levels of users to understand and easy for advanced users to scan to find the information that they need.

Requirements in prior documents stated that the eTravel Web Traveler module be easy to use. To accomplish this goal, the Web Traveler module was to include context-sensitive Help, easy to understand error messages and instructions, and a user manual. The current Web Traveler module does not include this information.

It is recommended that context-sensitive Help be included in the Web Traveler module, using as much of the current engineering as possible, without sacrificing usability. In addition, error messages and on-screen instructions should be rewritten to meet the original requirements. On-screen text should be evaluated, and possibly reformatted to make the text easier to read and understand.

Establishment of Need

Currently, the Help available to Web Traveler users is inadequate. The 3.5 release does not include context-sensitive Help, which is a must-have.

Summary of History and Requirements

Currently, the ETRAVEL Web Traveler module does not meet the original requirements.

The Web Traveler module:

- does not contain context-sensitive Help.
- does not return meaningful error messages or provide instructions with error messages.
- does not provide the Traveler with a conventional user manual. However, release 3.5 will provide the Traveler with the *Traveler Quick Reference Guide* that can be thought of as a user manual. In addition, a traditional user manual is not feasible for this audience. Please see the previous section “Organization, Style, and Format.”
- does not ask users for required information, nor does the Web Traveler differentiate essential information from non-essential information.
- does not employ the services of a dedicated graphic designer.
- does not always explain information in layman’s terms.

Specific Needs

The areas that have received the least attention are the error messages and on-screen text and instructions. The current error messages usually do not indicate what went wrong, nor do they indicate what a user can do, if anything, to correct the problem. The back-end of our product is complex. However, we do not want our users to know that. We should make sure that error messages are clear. They should indicate what happened and whether the error has a workaround. If the error does not have a workaround, then the message should indicate where the user can go for assistance.

On-screen text is inconsistent. In certain circumstances, different terms are used to name the same concept. Capitalization is inconsistent. While this isn't necessarily going to confuse a user, it does make our product look less professional. There are few on-screen instructions, and what does appear is in a format that may be unreadable (small, italics type). On-screen instructions are not generally displayed in context. For example, on the Air page, there is a box that contains "Trip Tips." These tips are out of date and they do not provide information where a user needs it. A user will not remember the information that is presented on the first page of the product, when the information there documents something that won't happen until step ten of a procedure.

Goals

Context-sensitive Help will:

- Enable eTravel to meet the base requirement of including context-sensitive Help in the Web Traveler module.
- Provide Travelers with the information that they need to complete any task at hand.
- Explain tasks in layman's terms.
- Include only procedural, task-based information.
- Enable Travelers to find information that they need to complete their tasks within a specified amount of time.
- Be available from all pages in the product.

Error messages will:

- Provide clear, meaningful explanations of the situations in which error messages occur.
- Include instructions as to how to complete the specified task, or, if the task cannot be completed, indicate why the task cannot be completed and what to do next.
- Be written in layman's terms.

On-screen instructions will:

- Differentiate between essential (required) and non-essential information.
- Be written concisely and legibly.
- Be displayed in context, on prominent places on the screen.
- Explain product pages in layman's terms.

On-screen text will:

- Differentiate between essential (required) and non-essential information.
- Be consistent from page to page.
- Be written concisely.
- Explain fields and text boxes in layman's terms.

Design Recommendations

To implement context-sensitive Help, eTravel should:

1. Remove the **Help** link from the main **Navigation** menu and the menu on the Preferences page. Put the **Help** link on each page, in the leftmost corner of the main frame.
2. Display context-sensitive Help in a new window that contains a link back to the Web Traveler module. This window should be sized so that users with low screen resolutions can easily use context-sensitive Help.
3. Create a new navigation scheme, in which Travelers can go back to the topic that they were just reading. Include a **Search** button with full search capabilities and a **Contents** button that goes to a table of contents.

These alternatives present the best solution for Web Traveler module users and for the engineering staff. For examples, please see Appendix One: Illustrations, illustrations 7-12.

Technical Considerations

The engineer currently in charge of Help estimates that removing the **Help** link from the main **Navigation** menu and the menu on the Preferences page, and then putting the **Help** link on each page will take about ½ an hour.

Because the current online Help is displayed in a separate window, there will only need to be minimal modifications to the current JavaScript function to display context-sensitive Help in a new window. It will be slightly more difficult to manage a link back to the Web Traveler module. The aforementioned engineer is looking into this possibility.

Currently, online Help has the capability to go back to the previous topic and to the table of contents. Minimal modifications to this structure will need to be made. The larger issue is a search engine. A true search engine may take quite a bit of time; so much so that some companies opt to do away with search entirely. If at all possible, we should find a publicly available search engine and implement it.

Error messages pose a unique problem in that the engineers themselves do not always know what is causing the problem. In some cases, the eTravel application does not “know” what is causing a problem. Clearly, error messages need to be investigated further. As an interim solution, error messages that can be rewritten should be rewritten.

It may not be a high priority to change on-screen instructions and on-screen text. While the effort to complete these tasks is minimal, there are many other tasks of much higher priority that need to be accomplished. A solution needs to be found; perhaps the technical writer could modify actual pages or HTML.

Conclusion

The Help that is currently provided with the Web Traveler module does not meet our users’ needs. Context-sensitive Help, error messages, on-screen instructions, and on-screen text need to be redesigned and rewritten according to the requirements set forth in this document. Once this is accomplished, the Help provided with the Web Traveler module should meet our users’ needs for information.

Illustrations

Illustration 1: The Current Air Page

The screenshot shows the 'E-Travel' website's 'Air' page. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the E-Travel logo and menu items: Menu, Itinerary, **Air**, Hotel, Car, and Agent Note. Below the navigation bar are search fields for Origin, Depart Date, Time (set to 8 am), and Class (set to Coach). There is a checkbox for 'Round Trip' and a 'Schedules' button. A 'Destination' field is located below the Origin field. To the left of the 'TRIP TIPS' box is a compass icon with 'E-TRAVEL' written on it. The 'TRIP TIPS' box contains the following instructions:

1. Begin planning your trip by selecting "Air", "Hotel", or "Car" from the menu bar above.
2. After you have chosen flights, a "Shop for Prices and Options" button will be displayed. Click this to display the price of your planned itinerary.
3. On the pricing display, click "Book" to reserve your flights.
4. After you have booked your flights, you may choose a seat by clicking on "Choose" on your flight itinerary.

Illustration 2: The Proposed Air Page

The screenshot shows the proposed 'E-Travel' website's 'Air' page. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the E-Travel logo and menu items: Menu, Itinerary, **Air**, Hotel, Car, and Agent Note. A 'Help' link is added to the left of the search fields. The search fields for Origin, Depart Date, Time (set to 8 am), and Class (set to Coach) are present, along with a 'Round Trip' checkbox and a 'Schedules' button. A 'Destination' field is located below the Origin field. To the left of the 'TRIP TIPS' box is a compass icon with 'E-TRAVEL' written on it. The 'TRIP TIPS' box contains the following instructions:

1. You must enter your credit card information on the Preferences page before booking a trip. Click the Menu link, and then click the Preferences link.
2. E-Travel recommends that you make your Air reservations first. Click the Air link.
3. You can make reservations in any order, and you can book any combination of Air, Hotel, and Car reservations.

Illustration 3: The Current Change Password Page



 **Change Password**

Confirm current password, then enter and confirm new password.

Enter current password:

Enter new password:

Confirm new password:

Illustration 4: The Proposed Change Password Page



 [Help](#)

E-TRAVEL **Change Password**

Trip Planning
Business Trip
Personal Trip
Repeat Trip
Pending Trips
Previous Trips
Supervisor
Preferences

Information
Password Policy

To change your password, type in your current password, type in your new password, and then re-type your new password. When you are done, click OK.

Current Password:

New Password:

Confirm Password:

Illustration 5: The Current Help Window



Illustration 6: The Proposed Context-sensitive Help Window

