

Usability Review & Design Recommendations for ThinkPad Visual Tours

IBM Visual Tours are intended to enhance the shop and buy experience on the PCD web site for notebooks, desktops, and workstations. These tours are a nice way to illustrate many of the products' design and technology features, using engaging images and visual effects. However, there are some areas of the visual tour design that should be changed to enhance the usability and overall user experience. This brief document describes these usability design recommendations using the current ThinkPad A Series visual tour as an example.

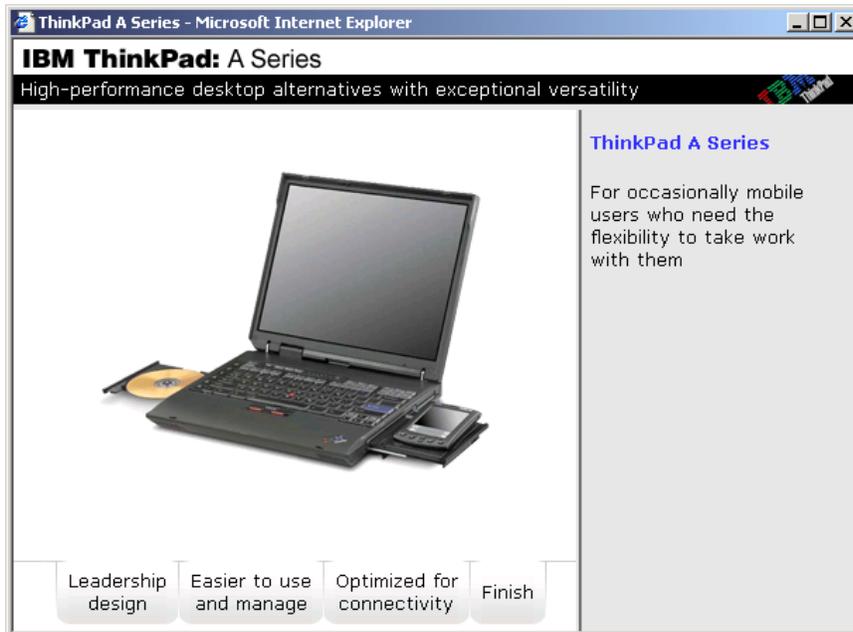


Figure 1. Initial view after animated messages complete.

- Shorten the animated introduction.
- Omit the sound effects or make them more subtle.
- Place the tabs along the top of the content space rather than at the bottom.
- Create an explicit tab for the initial view of the tour, labeled "Overview" or "ThinkPad A Series".
- Expand the width of the tab content space to include the dynamic text (at the right).
- Move the series description from black bar to dynamic text area within the Overview tab, and combine the heading and IBM ThinkPad logo across the top of the window.
- Shorten the tab labels; place text like "Easier to use and manage" within the dynamic text area for each section.
- Make sure each tab label is descriptive of the tab contents (e.g., "Optimized for Connectivity" includes information about security.)
- Increase the default window size (by approximately 50%) to greatly reduce the amount of scrolling of the dynamic text in many subsequent screens (e.g., see Figures 3 and 4 below.)



Figure 2. Leadership Design tab.

- Clearly convey which tab is currently selected (Note: The actual tour, for some reason, does NOT show dotted outline as pictured above); instead of a dotted outline, use more standard tabbed look, with non-selected tabs separated from content space by a continuous line and with different background shade/color.
- The default view of the dynamic text area for each tab should contain words about the current tab, and list the topics covered.
- Allow the user to understand the highlighted hotspots without having to click in each one; use hover help/tool tip info for each circle, or describe the items in the text area with the relationship to each hot spot clearly indicated, or use text labels connected to the circles to let the user know what to expect if the hotspot is clicked.
- Provide previous and next buttons to navigate through topics and subtopics, not forcing the user to drill down and return repeatedly.

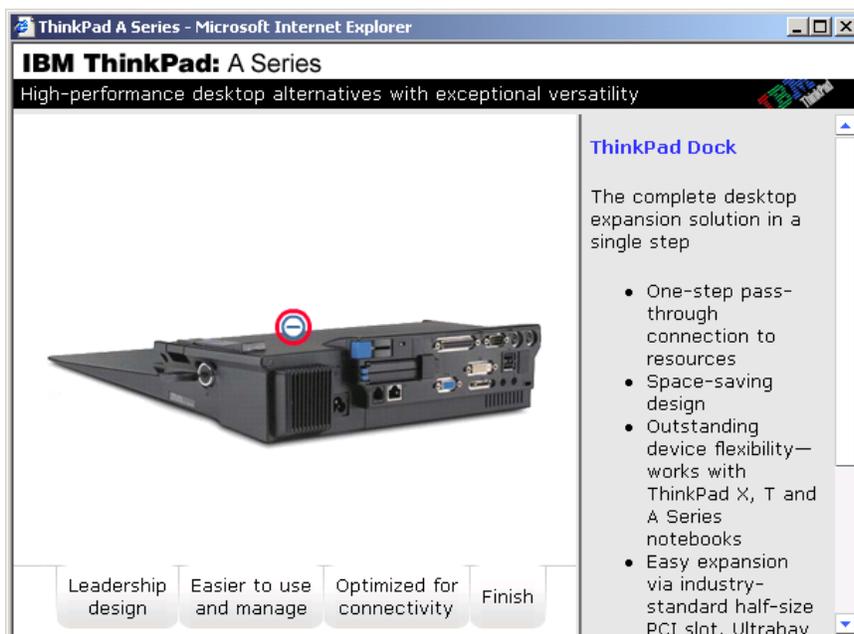


Figure 3. Detail from right-most circle (dock) on main Leadership Design tab.

- Slightly increase the default window size to reduce the need for scrolling to read the text (as pictured in Figure 4 below.)



Figure 4. Window with larger default size to avoid scrolling.



Figure 5. 'Easier to use and manage' tab (again, the actual tour does NOT show a dotted outline).

- Make sure subtopics relate to tab topic; e.g., information on the ultrabay might be more appropriately included in the “Leadership design” than “Easier to use and manage.”
- The results of clicking the circles are not consistent. Usually, the overview is replaced by a detailed view, and a circle with a minus sign is provided as a path back. In some cases, the details are shown in close-up overlaying the current overview (see Figure 6 below.) This latter approach is good in that the user does not have to exit the close-up before continuing, but the inconsistency is distracting. This could be solved by consistently providing the user with a next button (as mentioned previously) to simply step through the topics and subtopics. This should not prevent jumping to specific topics, and should be accompanied by a previous button.



Figure 6. Details close-up on ThinkPad key (within the “Easier to use and manage” tab.)



Figure 7. “Optimized for connectivity” tab.

- As mentioned previously, the label of the tab should convey the topic's contents; this section contains information on both connectivity and security (see Figure 8 below), so the label might better read "Connectivity & Security."
- Again, the default view of this tab should have text describing at a high level (even a simple bulleted list of topics would do) the contents of the current section.



Figure 8. Security information (within "Optimized for connectivity" tab.)

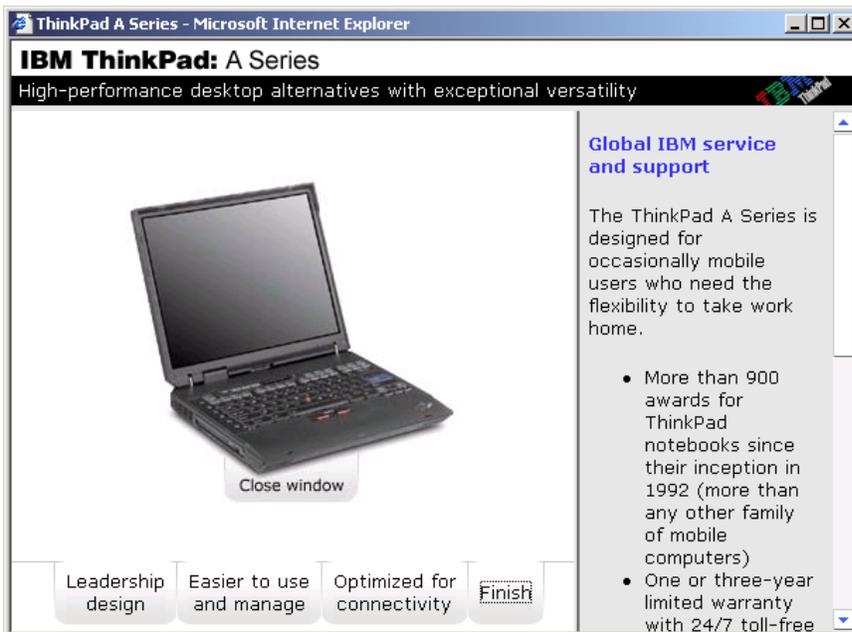


Figure 9. "Finish" tab.

- The tab is labeled "Finish", but the heading in the text area is labeled "Global IBM service and support." The tab label should convey an indication of the section's contents. Either re-label the tab to service & support and remove the concluding comments about the series (these comments might

be better in the initial view of the tour as introductory remarks about the series), or create a separate tab for service & support and leave concluding remarks about the series on the Finish tab.