

EbusinessToGo.com Presents:

Basic Web Design Checklist

This report will give you an overview of what elements make up an effective Web design in the current age of marketing. The criteria have not been arranged in a tight structure of rules and guidelines, but rather a loose and candid discussion.

The truth is too many companies build a Web presence and totally overdo the visual elements while falling short on the content and basic usability. If your intention is to create profits you need to understand that stunning graphics are just the beginning, and that in fact a successful Web presence relies more on powerful content and intelligent structure than anything else.

With that thought in mind you should read through the following articles:

Article One - Seven Crucial Elements of a Successful Web Presence

There is more to an effective website than great looking graphics. In fact there are seven crucial elements every site needs to maximize profits.

1. Balanced Visual Appeal – Of course your site needs to have a clean, attractive design. The Web is a visual medium and an ugly website is often the kiss of death.

But your graphics should not distract attention from your marketing message. If your site is an online video game or movie promotion of course it's ok to have a full-blown flash intro and loads of cutting-edge animations, but if you are marketing a more traditional product or service you should avoid going overboard on the visual presentation.

Also a visitor should not have side scroll to view your entire page. This adds a sluggish feel to the browsing experience and should be avoided if at all possible.

2. Awareness of the 60 Second Rule – It's safe to assume the average Web surfer will give your site a **maximum** of 60 seconds of their time unless you actively compel them to stay longer.

For this reason, the area above the fold is the most important part of any page your visitor might land on. When I say 'above the fold' I am referring to anything that is visible before your prospect has to scroll down the page.

You should use this area to relay your most important message. You might leverage a well-crafted header graphic, a killer headline, or an audio greeting that

plays as soon as the page is loaded to pull your visitor into your marketing message.

3. Easy Navigation – Give your visitor clear navigational options so they don't get lost. Nobody likes being on a Web page with no idea of how to get back to the page they just came from or where to find the main menu.

You can take this a step further by actually directing prospects where you want them to go. You might have a flashing Click Here button above the fold on your main page that takes a visitor to your portfolio or service display page, for instance. Or in the case of a direct response site you can leave your visitor only two options: order your product/opt-in to your newsletter or leave your site.

4. Quality Content – A strong and informative message is not only what your target market is looking for as they scour the Web in search of your product or service, it's what the major search engines will use when ranking your site in the search results.

It's a great idea to present yourself or your company in a personal and inviting manner. Most people want to do business with other people, and not some nameless entity.

5. Pre-Qualification – Your website should answer many of the common questions and overcome the most typical objections posed by your target market. When this is handled correctly you are able to weed out potentially problematic customers and pull only the best fit clients into your profit funnel. This is obvious enough in the case of a direct response sales letter site.

But even if your business is in the service arena (landscaping, home inspection, wedding planning, etc.) pre-qualification is a must. By providing detailed information on your scope of service, and even including a FAQ page on your site, you can begin the pre-sell product and "warm up" your prospects before a personal meeting or phone conversation ever takes place.

6. A Lead Capture Device To Set The Stage For Follow-Up Marketing – Research shows the average Web prospect needs to see an offer up to seven times before deciding to take action. If you let a visitor leave your site without collecting their contact information for a follow-up campaign, it might be your competition that finally ends up closing the sale.

You might offer a monthly newsletter, a discount club subscription, a sample product, or a free course as the incentive for your prospects to opt-in to your mailing list. These are just a few examples.

In fact there are a slew of different ways to collect your visitors contact info in an ethical, mutually beneficial way. The key is to offer some real value in exchange for the subscription.

7. Findability – It's pretty hard to profit from a website that your target market can't find. It takes a lot of active promotion to drive traffic to your site, and this should be viewed as an ongoing process.

While the above statement is abundantly obvious to website owners in the business opportunity niche, a lot of traditional business owners fall into the trap of thinking an active site will automatically be available to the citizens of cyberspace.

Article marketing, link building, blogging, e-zine ads, viral marketing strategies, displaying your domain in all of your offline advertising, and joint venture promotions are all examples of effective promotion strategies. Of course a sound tutorial on this aspect of Web marketing could fill an entire manual, but no discussion of website design is fully complete without at least a mention of the need for constant promotion.

Make sure your site meets the entire above curriculum, and you will have yourself a great foundation for profitable web marketing.

Article Two - Building a *Real* Web Presence

An anonymous Internet marketer has very little chance of success in today's highly competitive industry. There are thousands of affiliates and webmasters promoting similar, if not identical, products and services everywhere we look. If you are to make any money in this business, you need to put yourself on the map right away and announce your presence with confidence and professionalism.

You don't need just a website, you need a site that tells everyone exactly who you are and what you have to offer.

In the maze of hype, automation, and information overload that Internet surfers call home, people are looking for the "human factor". We want to connect with a real person, and not just a slick looking website with lots of flashy menu options.

I know it can be difficult to form an original concept for your first site, and here's my advice:

Don't worry about coming up with some amazing innovation right off the bat. Just start with your personality.

You want people to get used to seeing your name, your personal photo, and the logo image for your website. The more often people see these things, the more

likely they are to eventually have a closer look at what you have to offer. Also, keeping your name and image in front of as many people as possible will create a sense of familiarity for you among these people. This is the concept of branding that the world's most successful companies use every day.

On a planet inhabited by well over 6 billion people, you are unique. Sure, your interests and many of your personality traits are shared by numerous other people, and you have no doubt met folks with whom you have a great deal in common. But there are plenty of things that set you apart from the crowd. Being you, and expressing yourself honestly, is the key to building a powerful web presence.

Article Three - Bells And Whistles. Does Your Site Really Need Them?

Current graphics technology is awesome, and I love a good video game. But market testing has proven websites that go overboard with graphic design and special effects actually convert far fewer sales than sites with clean, attractive layouts that do not interfere with the most important element – the content!

I hate it when I come to a site looking for a product or service and I can't get past the streaming video intro. I also hate it when a fat audio file loads on every page I navigate, or when the flash elements and high-tech animations make it hard to find the order button.

Believe it or not I'm saying this as a professional web designer. And guess what?

According to multiple independent studies the average Internet consumer agrees with me!

It's a fact – sites with too many bells and whistles will actually drive your customers away before they have a chance to soak up your offer or at least subscribe to your opt-in list. As a rule, I don't even recommend flash as a viable media for direct response marketing.

Look at some of the most productive retail sites in any niche and you'll find clean, appealing graphics. But these visual creatives will not overshadow the most important element of all... the site's content!

Unless you are marketing a video game, a movie, or sophisticated animation software/design service, it's the content that generates sales and not the bells and whistles that turn your site into a digital carnival.

Don't get me wrong, both audio and video elements can have a tremendous impact on your conversions; but not if these features are presented in place of quality sales copy and plenty of solid consumer information.

High-tech design solutions should be applied in a way that compliments your content. Your marketing message should never be upstaged by visual theatrics or dazzling sound effects unless you're in the business of selling such effects to site owners who don't know any better.

Regardless of how far technology advances it is highly unlikely the average consumer will ever stop demanding quality content prior to his or her purchase of your product or service. So lead with your message and let the special effects blend in and compliment your content delivery.

Keep the balance between graphic design and strong copy, and your visitors will be far more likely to stick around and give you the chance to close the deal.

Article Four - Pre Qualifying Your Audience

A lot of people design their business websites to make direct sales. That's great, but in some cases such an approach is not appropriate.

For example a small service-oriented business like a landscaping company or computer repair service is more likely to use a website as a prospecting tool. Likewise, many network marketers are using their websites to build their contact list or promote some type of free e-zine.

If you are using the web to gather leads for your business, it is crucial that your site is a very clear representation of what you have to offer a prospective customer. This will save you loads of time and frustration in the long run, and will result in higher backend conversions.

It's best to seek a business relationship only with those people who want specifically what you have to offer.

There may be hundreds of people selling the same product or service as you. But it's a safe bet that you are not 100% identical to all of your competitors.

Perhaps you charge slightly more or slightly less for a particular product. Or maybe you have a radically different approach to rendering a given service.

Give your prospects as much information as possible about how you operate, what you charge, how they can expect to be treated, what you are unwilling to do in terms of scope of service, etc. Ideally, you want to capture clients who are a great fit for your individual business philosophy.

If you are intentionally vague with your promotional copy, you might end up doing business with people who don't like you or your methods of operation. Of course this is going to happen sometimes regardless of what you do, but you can

eliminate a lot of the headaches associated with poor-fit clients by pre-qualifying your audience.

BONUS Article - What Blogging Can Do For Your Business

Any business model can benefit from adding a web log to their domain.

There is certainly nothing new about the concept of blogging, and yet many business owners and Internet entrepreneurs don't seem to grasp the power of this simple strategy. This is evidenced by the fact that many business websites do not include a blog.

If you run a business site, but do not currently have a blog, there is a great chance that you are leaving money on the table. Regardless of what kind of business you are in, a dynamic and interactive web log will improve customer response and add profits to your bottom line.

Consider this:

When you use a web log as the platform for your newsletter or ezine, you can post each of your promotions to the web, and then invite your subscribers to your blog to view your most recent update. When readers follow the link from your email to your latest blog post, they will not only have the opportunity to respond to the current promotion, they will be able to browse your blog and take action on offers you made last week, last month, even last year.

Quite often when I mail my list about my latest blog post, I end up making new sales on a promotion I did some time ago. And since my blog is linked to all of my other web sites, it's easy for me to generate traffic for multiple products and services with just one mailing.

And blogging is a great way to generate new web traffic for your domain. By setting your blog software to 'ping' search and directory portals each time you make a post, you can alert a large number of people about your new content with the single click of a button.

Also, search engines are more likely to spider your site on a regular basis if you update your content frequently. With blog software, making changes to the text on your web pages is as simple as sending an email; you just fill in a subject line and post body, and then click 'submit'.

You can even configure your blog so readers are able to leave comments and questions about your articles. They don't have to take the time to send you an email, they can just click on the comments link and post their feedback right there on the spot. This is one of the easiest ways possible to encourage productive interaction among your prospects and customers.

Blogging requires no special technical knowledge. Sure there is an advanced side to this marketing strategy, but just adding a web log to your domain and making posts on a regular basis can improve your traffic flow and customer response tremendously.

Conclusion

I hope the content of this report has given you some new insights to bear in mind when building your Website, hiring someone to build it for you, or purchasing a quality pre-built site. As I'm sure you now know, there is a great deal more to consider than just nice graphics when your primary goal is to generate revenue.

Thanks for reading, and let us know if you need anything else.

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