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Web Hosting.

10 Design Tips for Improving Your Website

When you do a website design, especially an e-commerce site, you want people to visit often, for reasonably long periods of time, and to make purchases. To do this, you must make your site easy to use.

Here are 10 tips for making your site customer-friendly:

Online forms are often necessary and useful for placing an order or setting up accounts. But try to make your forms flexible by limiting the number of required fields. Also, make errors easy to find and correct. If users have incorrectly entered a phone number, they shouldn't need to complete the entire form again. Just have them correct the portion with the error, which should be highlighted to make the mistake obvious. Include a "Help" link in case customers run into problems while filling out a form. It's just not worthwhile to people to take time to figure out how to make something work on your site when there are 5 million other sites to visit.	
Display your products, descriptions, and prices prominently. If you're going to talk about a product your company sells, explain how to order it. Many Web sites are guilty of not fully disclosing product and pricing information or making it clear how to buy their products. Even if you are not yet prepared to process transactions online, you can let customers know how to buy your products by including a telephone number or retail location where they can complete a purchase, or a date when the product will become available online.	
Browser preferences allow users to turn off graphics if they choose, and those who are using older browsers may not have the ability to view all images. So provide text links or alternative text tags in addition to graphics, including navigational buttons or bars.	
There are many reasons for asking visitors to register at your Web site, but don't put your registration form on the first page. Show your content first; demonstrate that registration has its rewards before you ask visitors to spend their time on it.	
By definition, Web documents change over time. Either your pages are useful to people (in which case you need not apologize for them) or they're not - in which case, you aren't ready to show them to the world and shouldn't be making them public.	
Avoid designing for a certain browser or trying to force a certain look. Some Web authors make extensive use of elaborate formatting tricks in a determined effort to coerce a client program into creating a specific visual rendering. These pages look good when viewed with the author's browser of choice, but look bad in most or all other browsers.	
Web users are impatient. Don't force visitors to wait through JavaScript-enabled introductions or QuickTime movies before they can enter your site. Always provide a "Skip" or "Stop" button when using these elements.	
Study after study shows that most people don't read on the Web. They scan content for information that is relevant. Facilitate this process by breaking up text with headings and subheadings. Use text links that allow readers to jump from section to section. Don't expect people to scroll to find information on your site.	
Always offer your customers a way out of a page. This could mean including a link to the main page on every page. Users are becoming increasingly accustomed to a navigation bar that links to all the sections of a site, and company logos that act as a navigation link to the home page. You can also offer text links on each page for going to "Top of page" or "Back."	

If they don't add functionality, don't use graphics, animation, movies, sounds, and so on. Only use these features if they enhance your customers' experience. Product photos are often valuable additions to your site, but you might want to minimize the delays they could cause in load times by using thumbnail (small) images. You can link these thumbnail images to larger, more detailed images for customers who are interested in having a closer look. You can even include technology that allows viewers to zoom in on features or rotate the view of the product.

Limit the number of images on each page for faster load times. If pages or files will take some time to download, it's best to forewarn your customers by noting the file size next to the link to them. If anything, users have less patience for state-of-the-art technology these days as the Web becomes dominated by new users, and the upgrade speeds for new browsers and plug-ins decline.

**Provide a Clear
Path for
Customers to
Make a Purchase**

**Make Your Forms
Flexible**

**Provide a Text
Option**

**Don't Assume That
Everyone Uses the
Same Browser**

Facilitate Scanning

**Delay
Registration**

**Avoid "Under
Construction"
Signs**

**Keep Your Pages
Fast-Loading**

**Avoid
Overusing
Graphics,
Animation, and**

**Avoid Dead-
End Pages**