

10 Best-Practice Essentials for Your Next Web Redesign

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1.) A Look and Feel That Reflects Your Brand

Your web site is increasingly the first impression your company makes. Do customers know they've found the right URL? Does your home page build emotional impact while reinforcing your brand image? What kind of first impression are you making? This is a job interview; don't underdress.

2.) Clear Navigation

Does your site navigation skillfully show customers where they are, where they can go, and how to get there? The best navigation simply works, without requiring extra thought (though achieving this does take extra planning, user-testing and careful design).

3.) Visual Hierarchy

Does everything on your site, from navigation to page layout, quickly show customers what's most important? Balance key elements including color, contrast, typography, and page layout to drive visitors directly to what they're looking for.

4.) Concise, Easy-to-Scan Text

Web users expect their information broken down into bite-sized chunks. Is your copy brief, organized, audience-appropriate, and consistent in tone? Don't tire reader's eyes with small type, brash color combinations and wide columns. Summarize paragraph content in the first sentence, and use subheads and bullet points where possible.

5.) Differentiation and Sales Messaging

Your site is a 24-hour stand-in for your sales team, customer service staff, and PR team, so your site's messaging must reinforce your brand position and points of differentiation. Sell your uniqueness! Engage your audience by focusing the experience around *their* needs, not yours.

6.) Search Engine Visibility

Search engines only index what they can see: plain text and specially-coded META tags. If your site's content is buried within an attractive graphic or Flash movie, it's probably invisible to search engines. Determine the search words and key phrases you need to target and make sure your site is optimized for them.

7.) Modular, Template-Driven Design

Even if your site doesn't need a back-end database or sophisticated development environment, your site can and should share layout, style and navigation elements from page to page. Modular, template-driven design ensures visual consistency while reducing development and maintenance costs.

8.) Standards and ADA Sec. 508 Accessibility

Are you at risk of losing your government accounts to competitors with ADA-compliant sites, or alienating your disabled customers? Using standards-compliant XHTML and CSS also makes it easier to update the look of your site, port content to next-generation mobile devices, and more!

9.) Communication and Data Collection

Why waste a perfect opportunity to communicate with customers and collect data? Add forms to your contact pages. Let customers order online. Track web site visits and search engine traffic. Ask visitors to sign up for your newsletter. Make your web site an interactive experience!

10.) Fresh, Relevant Content

Is the copyright date on your site two years old? If your last newsletter was posted last summer and your latest press release announces a new executive who's since retired, it's time to freshen things up. Search engines and customers alike reward relevant, freshly-updated sites with repeat visits.