HYPNOTISED YOUR VISITORS

100 WAYS TO

TURN

VISITORS INTO BUYERS

By

http://www.PhoenixFiresale.com

Marketing through website is different and at the same time not very different, in so many ways to other forms of Marketing.

It is different as the medium requirements are different. But it is similar as the principles remain the same and of course the objective is the same – to make people buy…

When Marketing through web you should remember the acronym AIDAS

AIDAS - *Attract, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction*

Your website should be able to fulfill all the words above and you will be able to not only entice surfers to your site but keep them there and make them customer.

In the following pages there are many tips which if followed will help you put up a winner…

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Web site design is more than simply finding a photo you like and a color that works with your logo. It incorporates readability, functionality, usability - all of which boil down to one simple concept: good web site design practices make your web site work for your business.

ONLY AESTHETICS MAY NOT TIC

Most of us think about web site design in terms of our aesthetic preferences, but good web site design incorporates some fundamental elements that will make your web site work for your business and your customers.

ITSALLABOUTREADABILITY – *Its all about readability*

Make "readability" a fundamental part of your web site design If you want a professional-looking web site design that encourages visitors to read about your business, products or services, the first thing to do is to make sure visitors can, in fact, "read". **Stay away from all capitals in your writing and use common fonts that are easy to read.**

LET THE LOGIC PREVAIL

Organize content into logical sections. Make it a snap for visitors to find information.

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BROWSING NOT READING

Incorporate headlines into your web site design. Web users will browse more often than read.

Use headlines and subheadings to give customers a quick idea of what your page has to offer. Someone in a hurry should be able to read your headlines and subheadings to quickly understand what products, services, and benefits they will get. Put your most important phrases in bold letters, too.

BULLETS WILL HIT THE RIGHT PLACE

Include bold words, bullet points, section titles and short paragraphs. The visual experience on a web site is quite different than on a printed page.

NO BACKGROUND NOISE

Never (really, we mean never) use patterned or distracting background images as part of your web site design. Your content will be "lost" in the noise.

EASY ON THE EYES

Eliminate bright background colors with bright text. Make reading easy on the eyes. Basic colors and a white background do best with the many different ways your page will look on different monitors.

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CONSIDER COLOURBLINDS

Good web site design considers colorblind visitors. Certain combinations of colors may be invisible to some of your most potentially valuable customers.

NO GRAPHIC MODE

Consider visitors with graphics turned off (yes, they *can* do that to your beautiful web site design). Use ALT tags to label graphics with descriptive text.

JUST RIGHT FONT

Use an appropriate font size. Find a happy medium between too big and too small.

STRUCTURED APPROACH

Make "Structure" an integral part of Good web site design
It's a good idea to map out the pages of your site; in effect, design the sitemap first.

Find the most logical, most direct way to link your pages to one another. Think like your customers - if you were visiting your site, how would you want to find information? Better yet, get your customers to tell you!

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PLAN BEFORE PLUNGE

Good web site design practices start with good planning. Don't develop a single graphic until you've set up a skeleton site and done some real-world testing to see if the structure makes sense. Sit your employees or customers down and see if they can navigate your site easily and locate information quickly.

BE CONSISTENT

A good web site design will always (yes, we mean always) use navigation consistently. That means that your common navigational elements will be in the same place, and will have the same look on every single page of your site.

STANDARD PRACTICE

Sometimes, good web site design is simply following standard practices. Keep your logo in the upper left hand corner of the page and use it to link from your interior pages back to your home page.

And use common names for things - "home" for home and "about us" for a page about you. If you have a search field, put it prominently near the top of your page. Most people have grown accustomed to these basic web site design principles.

WHEN "MORE" IS NOT ALWAYS "BETTER"

It's a safe bet to say that all businesses want an effective web site. But what's "effective" and what's "excessive"?
When it comes to good web site design, more is not always better.

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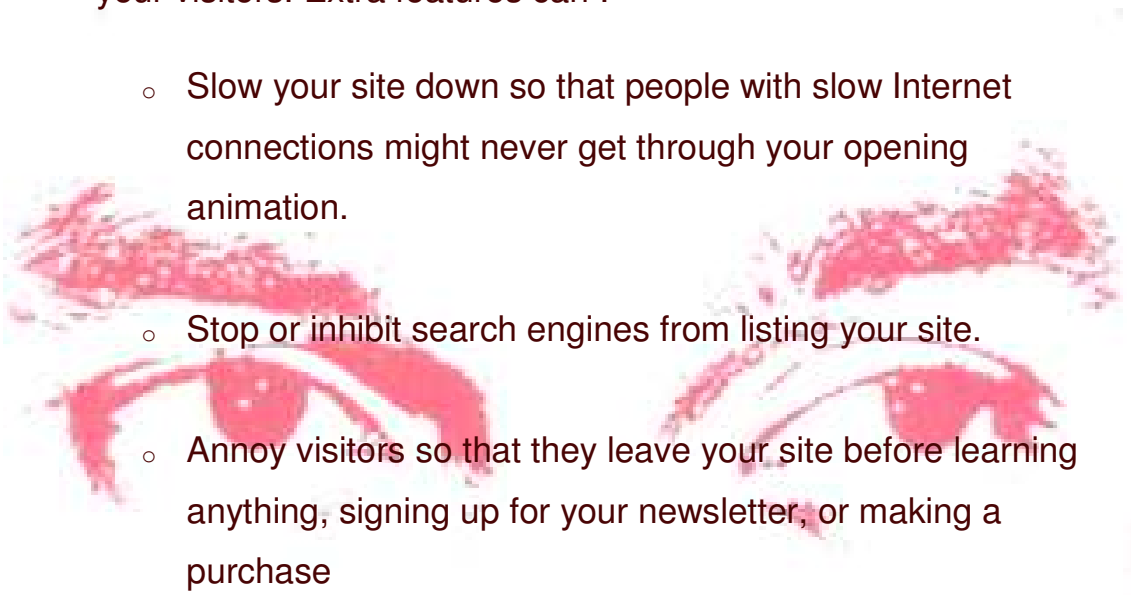
Yes, your site can flash, blink and sing, but there are reasons not to add that extra feature.

By "extra features" we mean things that do not improve your sales, make your business more efficient or advance your goals, but are simply surface enhancements. Music, a twinkling star, graphics that fade in and out.

HAZARDS OF SHOWING OFF TOO MUCH

All of these things may impress you but they may not impress your visitors. Extra features can :



- Slow your site down so that people with slow Internet connections might never get through your opening animation.
- Stop or inhibit search engines from listing your site.
- Annoy visitors so that they leave your site before learning anything, signing up for your newsletter, or making a purchase
- Flashing-blinking-singing things can be distracting, repetitious or detract from the real purpose of your site.

That isn't to say that these elements should never be used. Each has its place and can be an integral part of good web site design.

But any enhancement should advance your business goals, and your animations and music should come equipped with an "off" button.

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Remember, the purpose of a web site is to convert visitors into customers.

USE THE RIGHT TECHNIQUE

On the technical side of web site **design**

So far, everything we've mentioned has some visible effect on your web site. But there are other "behind the scenes" design elements that can help to make your web site the best it can be. A good web site design professional will take care to be sure that:

- ✓ **GRAPHICS ARE OPTIMIZED FOR DOWNLOAD.** Visitors should be able to get to your web pages quickly, even on slower Internet connections.
- ✓ **COLORS ARE "WEB SAFE".** Some browsers display a limited color palette. Visitors should be able to view your site in all its glory, whatever their browser.
- ✓ **VISITORS USING LOW RESOLUTION MONITORS CAN SEE YOUR PRIMARY CONTENT WITHOUT SCROLLING.** It's usually best to design for the "least common denominator" so that your most important content is immediately visible on all types of monitors.
- ✓ **YOUR SITE WILL WORK ACROSS MULTIPLE BROWSERS, ON MULTIPLE OPERATING SYSTEMS.** Customers come in a variety of shapes and sizes and so do their web tools. People using a Mac, or IE 5.0 should be able to see your site as well as someone using a PC, or Firefox 1.0.

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PROOF OF THE PUDDING

Include testimonials from your customers and suppliers. Nothing builds trust with customers and prospects like good words about you from people who know you and have done business with you.

OPTIMISE FOR SEARCH ENGINE

Search engines are the number one way of getting visitors to your site. You will want pages that are easily registered by the top search engines like Excite and Yahoo. Search engines are a lot smarter than they used to be.

Most first look at the title of your page (those words that appear in the little box on your browser), then at the page's Meta Tags, and finally at the copy on your page.

If the same keywords appear in all three places, your site gets a high listing.

This means that a customer who searches for you using one of your site's keywords will find you linked in the first 10 to 15 sites the search engine presents.

To see what Meta tags look like, go to any popular site, point your cursor at the page, and click the right mouse button. Choose "view source."

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The Meta tag looks like this:

<meta name="description"
content="a few words that best describe your site, separated, by, commas">
<meta name="keywords"
content="the same keywords listed like this:internet marketing, small business, web site promotion, selling, ezines, home based business, marketing, advertising, email marketing,">

UPDATE OFTEN

Make sure you update your important info often. Search engines, just like customers, check back often to see how your site is progressing. Lots of helpful articles, tips, and a question and answer page will give customers all the information they need. Also include links to other recommended sites like yours. Try to get those sites to add your link as well. Customers will see you as an authority in your field and will appreciate your ability to help them in a variety of ways.

OWN YOUR WEBSITE

Your own domain name will make your business look bigger and your Internet effort more serious. Yourname.com look a lot more impressive than freewebsite.com/10101/yourname.

EASY CONTACT INFO

Don't forget to include all your contact information where customers can easily find it. Include phone, fax, and your regular mailing address.

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Your street address adds credibility to your website and offers. Invite visitors to email you with questions and for more information.

ASSURANCE OF SECURITY

People on the Web like to make purchases with speed and convenience.

Assure customers that their credit card info is secure, safe, and private. Include your fax number, toll free phone number, and mailing address for those who prefer to order via those methods.

FOLLOW-UP

After a customer buys, follow-up with an e-mail confirming the order. Tell the customer the price and when the product will be sent. Many corporations are finding this kind of follow-up is the number one reason customers come back to buy again.

INTERNET YOUR EXTENDED OFFICE

One of the best things about a website is that it can make the Internet your extended staff. This is an invaluable boost if you are a home business of one.

24/7 – 365 DAYS

Your website is there to answer questions at any time of day or night.

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PUT MORE INFO

Your web pages can fill in the additional info that your ad couldn't cover, your sales letter didn't have room for, or you forgot to mention in your telephone conversation.

ADVERTISE YOUR WEB PRESENCE

Include your website and e-mail address on all of your printed and off-line marketing materials. The corporate world spends most of their Internet ad budgets promoting their sites on TV and radio, and in newspapers and magazines. It works. Notice how the company, United Parcel Service (U.P.S.) now features the company website in the same big letters it uses to list its 1-800 number on all of the delivery trucks.

PROPOGATE YOUR WEB-SITE

Put your Internet information on your business cards, invoices, letterhead, and voice mail. Look into advertising your site in affordable and targeted magazine ads, on radio, and in cable TV commercials.

PRESS RELEASE – FREE AD

Get FREE big media promotion. Almost all e-zine, TV, radio, newspaper, and magazine editors accept press releases. Now that most media sources are online, e-mail is the preferred way for them to receive your releases. Your release should be one page long and offer valuable information of interest to the publications' readers. Editors won't print a blatant ad that is not accompanied by newsworthy information.

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SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT THE STEAK.

People don't buy products and services; they buy benefits. The above 2 lines should be engraved in your mind when you are planning an e-commerce site.

TARGET THE BENEFITS

First answer the questions below – as specifically as you can: Who is the target audience for the product? What are the primary benefits to buying it?

VFM

Its all about Value For Money – So specify the benefits in accordance with the target audience on your site.

MENTION WHAT YOU GIVE…

To make the customer feel assured mention warranty, free shipping, fast delivery, or good customer service?

INFOADS

One of the popular and sometimes effective way of marketing is give general relevant content about the product and then use the product features and benefits as part.

The content for eg. can go like… A good ski should have ….describing the feature of the product you want to sell. This technique gives sales pitch in the garb of information – InfoAds

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FREEBEES ET ALL

And nothing persuades shoppers on the verge of buying than extra perks like coupons and discounts. Today, consumers can buy almost anything from a large number of online vendors. Gve them a few extra reasons to buy from you.

QUALITY EXPERIENCE FOR QUALITY PRODUCT

If you're serious about turning your Web site visitors into paying customers, providing a good shopping experience with top-notch customer service is just as important as having a quality product to sell.

How can you ensure that the customers who should be buying from your site actually go through with the purchase? Here are some basic, but important, tips to help you make certain that you're serving your customers in the manner they expect.

MAKE THE CHECKOUT SMOOTH.

Tower Records' Web site was named the top online music retailer in Forrester Research's PowerRankings, based on a survey of the site's customers and unbiased shopping tests. The site leapt from last to first place, and was lauded for, among other things, an above-average checkout process.

DISPLAY CONTACT INFORMATION CLEARLY.

Make sure customers always know how to contact you if they have questions. Ideally, you should have a toll-free number, and a live person should be at the other end. If a live person can't be available day and night, post the hours.

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REWARD CUSTOMERS FOR PURCHASING.

Collect e-mail addresses of your customers and send periodic coupon sales only for them. And be straightforward - don't offer a meager discount that's hardly worth using or try to make up for the lower price by increasing shipping costs.

E-MAIL SPARINGLY.

No one deserves to be spammed by your company less than your customers. Send them e-mail only when the message is a valuable one.

BE CLEAR ABOUT SHIPPING POLICIES.

Anyone should be able to find out how much their shipment is going to cost within a couple of clicks - not when they get to the end of their purchase.

RESPECT PRIVACY - AND SAY SO.

Don't share or sell e-mail addresses with anyone outside your company, and make sure your customers know you don't. Your privacy policy should be clearly stated and readily accessible. According to Forrester, Amazon.com's decision to hide their privacy policy hurt their rankings.

RESPOND TO INQUIRIES.

Part of the reason why Amazon.com dropped behind TowerRecords.com in Forrester's survey was their reported slow response time to customer e-mails. Always acknowledge customer inquiries, even if you can't help them right away.

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BE HONEST.

If you can't help a customer at all, tell them so rather than ignoring their request. They'll remember it.

TEASE FOR ADDITIONAL INFO

The ultimate goal of any web site is to engage a visitor, and enticing him/her to "convert". Depending on your web site, visitor conversion takes many forms: it might be filling out a form for more information, downloading a trial version of your software, requesting a whitepaper or similar actions. What they all have in common is the revealing of additional information by your visitor, an engagement of sorts.

ALWAYS ANALYSE

Yet most web sites experience web site conversion rates of a measly one to two percent. Think about it: 98 percent of your hard-earned site visitors leave without a trace (unless you count cookies ;->) Needless to say, even a small improvement in this ratio can have sizeable effects.

BE CONVINCING - VISITOR CONVERSION MATTERS

Start with a solid understanding of your individual target audiences, look at your web site from your visitors' point of view.

Assess the placement of navigation elements, the effectiveness of calls to action, the consistency of your message, and the build-up to the actual conversion point, among other factors.

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AMAZING AMAZON EXPERIENCE

CUSTOMER IS THE KING

Amazon is a keen observer on customer satisfaction, emphasizes on personalizing the shopping experience, and solid back-end technology.

Amazon.com from the beginning has relentlessly focused on providing good customer service, which in turn has generated a high degree of trust and a high sales volume from its clients.Amazon.com has earned its customers' trust by consistently providing secure transactions, having reliable fulfillment and shipping, offering broad product selection, and emphasizing price discounts.

By basing its Web site design decisions on usage data and not necessarily on aesthetics or internal designers' gut instinct, Amazon.com has managed to keep its user interface closely aligned with its ultimate goal, which is turning visitors into buyers

USING PAST RECORDS OF CUSTOMER

Another area in which Amazon.com has excelled is in using past purchasing data to personalize customers' shopping experience, modifying pages on the fly to adjust them to individuals' preferences and interests. It also lets customers post product reviews and lists of suggested shopping items to aide others.

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Search Engine Applications within the site makes use of Amazon.com which from the start, has also worked tirelessly on its Web site's user interface, to continually make navigation more intuitive, and making the overall shopping experience more friendly and personalized.Search Engine constantly notices the Web site's traffic to a high degree and make necessary modifications when it calls for it.

STOP AND GO BUT NO STAYING

After all, what's the use of spending all that time and money on securing top rankings on search engines, setting up a network of affiliates and building a 200-page site if nobody stays once they arrive?

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CONTENT.

It's important to spend a few minutes thinking about how often you really need to update your content. If your site sells reports on housing trends, your visitors may expect new content about the housing market on a fairly regular basis. If you're selling nails and screws, your content probably won't need updating nearly as often.

If your site isn't going to need content changes on a regular basis, think about writing the content yourself. Nobody knows your product as well as you do, so who better to write about it? Of course, you'll want the content to have a strong focus on the features and benefits of your product or service, so here are a few ideas for articles you could post on your site:

- Three ways your product can save your customers time

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- Five ways your product has saved your customers money
- Interesting or unique applications for your product

Ok, ok... I can already hear some of you saying "I'm an entrepreneur--I'm not a writer!" My answer? Why not give it a try? You'll probably surprise yourself. Even if your writing isn't as clear and flowing as something crafted by a professional copywriter, your enthusiasm for your product will go a really long way.

There are a few situations where I would recommend hiring the services of a professional writer. If you simply aren't comfortable writing your own content, then this is definitely the way to go. You'll also probably want to look into the services of a professional if your site is going to require frequent content updates. Writing can be very time-consuming, and as a business owner, you'll need to decide on the most profitable way to spend your time.

Also note: Top-notch copywriters can charge up to $250 per hour, so you won't want to hire one just to proofread your site. A writer, editor or proofreader can be hired for between $17 and $75 per hour.

TELL YOUR VISITORS "WHAT'S NEW."

Let's face it . . . nobody spends even close to as much time hanging around your web site as you do. In fact, your visitors may spend just a few minutes a month at your site, so you'd better be sure their attention is immediately drawn to where you want it.

If you're introducing a new product or service, it's important to make sure your visitors know it's new. Remember, people *scan*

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Web pages, they don't read them. They're more likely to pay attention to an item with a "NEW" icon beside it, or something labeled with the current date.

Unless you label new content as being special or important, your customers have no way of knowing they should bother paying attention to it. But keep in mind that it's just as important to remove those "NEW" labels every so often. Your customers won't be very impressed by a flashing "NEW" banner next to an item about last year's Super Bowl.

Want a great way to tell your customers what's new while building your opt-in e-mail list and customer base at the same time? Offer to e-mail your customers new content on a monthly basis in the form of a newsletter. (You'll want to include information about new products, upcoming specials and current sale-priced items.) Place a box somewhere on your front page with a small blurb explaining that, by entering their e-mail address in the space provided, they'll be e-mailed exciting new content on a monthly basis, along with exclusive offers available only to subscribers.

The best part is, it's *much* easier than you might think to set up this kind of monthly newsletter. You've already got the content, since it's up on web site, so it's just a matter of making a few formatting changes and then mailing it out to your customers.

GET YOUR VISITORS INVOLVED.

It's a proven fact that the more your visitors interact with your site, the more comfortable they become. And the more comfortable they become, the more likely they are to make

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purchases. Here are three tried-and-true ways to get your visitors to interact with your site:

SET UP AN ONLINE SUGGESTION BOX.

This is a great way to get your customers involved with your products or services. Let them suggest products they'd like to see featured, recommend ways to improve your product, or tell you know what they think of your merchandise.

RUN A CONTEST.

Ask your customers to submit a short blurb about why they love your product, and offer a cash or merchandise prize to the weekly or monthly winners. Not only will you be getting your customers involved, you'll be collecting testimonials to post on your site.

CONDUCT AN ONLINE SURVEY.

They'll be able to voice their opinions about your business, and you'll learn a lot about what they like (and don't like) about your products or service.

CHECK ALL OF YOUR CONTENT.

Remember, when we talk about content, we're not just talking about the text on your site. We're talking about every single word, image, link, logo and e-mail address.

One of the most important things you can do to keep your site current (and drive sales) is to rotate your features and specials. Is your best-selling product featured prominently on your site? If

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not, visitors won't find what they came for... and that's costing you profits!

Always keep your catalog up-to-date. Nothing will drive customers away faster than receiving an e-mail from your company saying that the product they ordered yesterday is no longer available. It never ceases to amaze me how often I come across sites with outdated, unavailable products still posted online.

Check all of your links, every last one of them--even that one at the very bottom that links to your privacy policy. If the link through to your "Satisfied Customers" page isn't working, how comfortable is a customer going to be entering their credit card number?

And while you're at it, make sure that anything labeled "Coming Soon" will be actually coming soon. If it's not going to be ready within a week, take it down.

I'd also highly recommend that you go through your site on a computer other than your own. It's amazing what you'll learn. That image that looks so great on your computer may actually be broken when viewed on someone else's! Make sure you take note of how long content and images are taking to come up. If it takes more than 10 seconds for the image of your product to appear, you're probably losing customers by the truckload!

The idea here is to make your visitors comfortable enough to make a purchase from you. There is a direct correlation between how comfortable people are and how likely they are to

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make a purchase. And a site where everything works is a comfortable place to be.

CHECK OUT FREE CONTENT PROVIDERS.

Believe it or not, there are actually a number of places to find content on just about every topic imaginable that you can post on your site at no cost. Of course, the quality of this content varies tremendously, so be sure to choose carefully.

You should be aware that some free content providers will try to take visitors away from your site. You may find, for example, that the news headlines you've posted on your site whisk visitors away as soon as they click on them. Obviously, this is not what you want.

If you want to look into free content for your site, here are a few good places to start:

- FreeSticky
- World Wide Information Outlet
- Web-Source.net
  - IdeaMarketers.com

NEVER THROW ANYTHING AWAY.

Want to know an almost effortless way to make your site 50 percent more useful to visitors? Archive your content. A study by online usability guru Jakob Nielsen showed that an archive of past content increases a site's usefulness by about 50 percent. And since you've already produced the content, it's no hassle to simply index all those articles in an archive. And, believe me, your customers will be glad you did.

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As your archive grows, you'll add credibility to your business, because your customers will be able to see how long you've been around. With all those extra pages, your customers should be hanging out at your site a little longer--making them more comfortable and more likely to buy.

LOOK, LISTEN AND LEARN.

So now that you've spent all this time getting your site as current as it should be, you need to find out what kind of impact you've made. Of course, if you've done everything right, you'll start seeing results right where it counts--in your bankbook!

There are, however, a few other great ways to judge the success of all your hard work. Invest some time in going through your server logs (provided by your Web host), and see how much time people are actually spending looking at your content. If, for whatever reason, people aren't using your "Weekly Updates" page, you probably shouldn't waste too much time writing content for it.

The online suggestion box that you set up is also a great way to measure the usefulness of your content. If nobody EVER comments on your "Monthly News" section, it's probably not worth your while to slave over it at the beginning of every month.

Having fresh content isn't about having today's news headlines scrolling across the top of your homepage. As always, keep your eye on the bottom line and ask yourself, "Is this content helping my sales"? If the answer is yes, you know you're on the right track.

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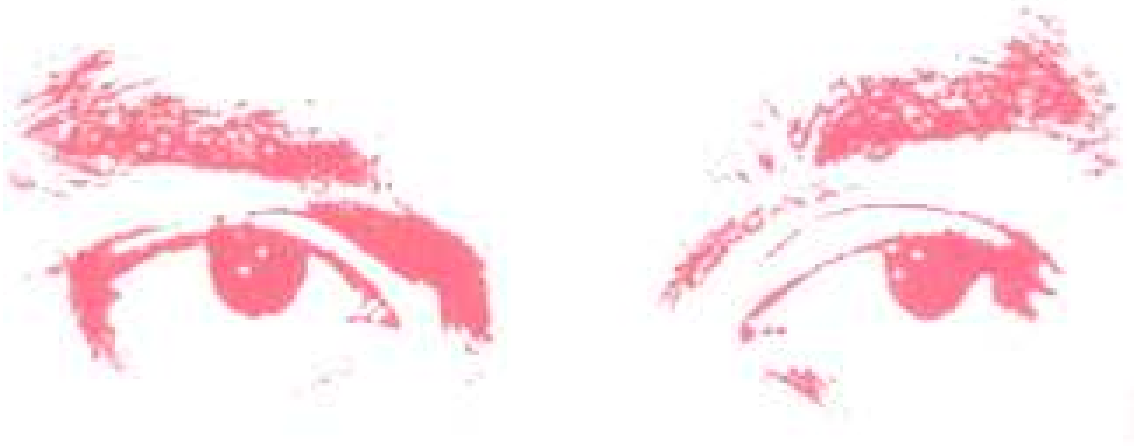
Remember: Marketing a product online means that your site is probably the only way your customers will ever interact with you. What you have posted on your site will speak volumes about the kind of company you're running: A site with relevant and current information will deliver instant credibility to you and your products.

Keep your site current and your content relevant, and your visitors will start spending more time there. And the longer they stay, the more dramatic the impact will be on your profits!



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WEBSITE ALLIGNED TO YOUR BUINESS OBJECTIVES

To Design an effective web site you need to look at your web site as an extension of your business and insuring that every web page design is aligned with your business objectives.

Creating a successful website is not a simple process. You cannot simply create a graphic design, write some copy, put it all online and expect success. Creating a successful website is a process that continues even after the initial website design is completed. This process requires a critical view of business and marketing processes and a design approach based on giving your website the features, functionality and content necessary to allow it to be successful.

ALIGNMENT

Alignment is the process of insuring that all processes in your business (including your web site) are aligned with your business goals. Simply put, you must make sure that each section of your web site works toward meeting at least one of your business goals. This is the basis for every section of your site and everything drives from it. Without alignment, it's impossible to have an effective web site. Even if it works great, it's not going to be much help to your business.

CLEAR PURPOSE

Once you have alignment, each section of the web site must have a purpose that is clearly understood by the site visitor. Purpose is the foundation of each site section. Purpose defines the look and feel (graphic design) and the content of the section. Having a clear purpose helps you create this content

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and it helps the site visitor understand what your site is about. Make sure your web site clearly defines its purpose. Don't let your customers try to figure it out for themselves. They will probably get it wrong.

CREATE ACTION

Every web designer will agree that navigation is one of the most important aspects of good web design. However, most designers view navigation as only the links and buttons that allow people to find information they are looking for. The true importance of navigation is insuring that the site visitor knows what is expected… what action is required. This is NOT the traditional "direct marketing" call to action. Rather, it is insuring that the "purpose" of the site section is clear and that the correct action (the action you want them to take) is clearly defined. In other words, if you want the customer to contact you, make it obvious and simple. The vast majority of site visitors appreciate knowing what is expected. They enjoy having a path to follow. Even those who consider themselves free thinkers and prefer finding their own way appreciate it when the information they are trying to locate is clearly defined. You cannot increase the effectiveness of your web site if the visitor does nothing.

RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED CONTENT

A relationship is required for any transaction to occur. In the physical world this relationship is taken for granted. Someone walks into your business, talks to a sales person, experiences the environment and makes a purchase. In the virtual world there is no person to help create a relationship. In fact, the

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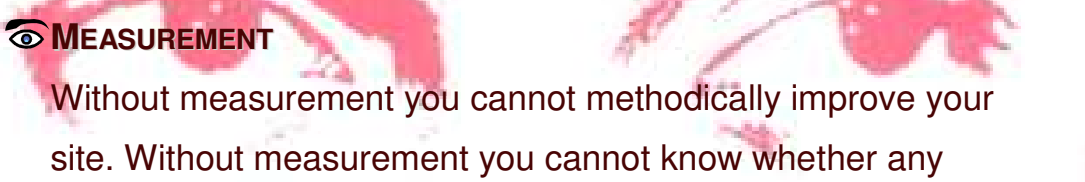
virtual world is the home of non-relationship where a user can wander anonymously around your site, purposefully avoiding the creation of any relationship. This makes it absolutely necessary to focus your content on creating and enhancing a relationship… a connection between the site and the user.

Relationships are based on two criteria… trust and emotional context. A person must trust your business and they must feel good about doing business with you (positive emotional context). While their perceived level of need for your products/services has an effect on the emotional context, your content must work to build on that need by providing positive emotional support for that need. Providing them with the benefits of your products/services is only one of many ways to build on that need.



MEASUREMENT

Without measurement you cannot methodically improve your site. Without measurement you cannot know whether any change to your site improved or hurt the effectiveness of your site. How do you know you're getting better if you don't keep score? Effective measurement tells you if your web site is helping you meet your business goals.

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ALIGNING

your web site with your business goals

Alignment is the process of getting everything going in the same direction.

Alignment is a simple concept. Think about it in terms of walking to the corner store. If you left foot is going north and your right foot is going south, you are going to have a hard time reaching the store. If the store is north of you and both feet are going south there is still a small probability that you will reach the store. You will just have to walk around the world to get there. When all aspects of a complex situation or organization are in alignment, the path is easy to follow.

The same is true in business. If you want to reach your business goals everything in your company must be aligned with those goals. Creating alignment in your web site design requires that you know how your web site is aligned with your business goals. Without this, your web development is hit-or-miss at best.

How do you create alignment?

We look at alignment as a series of cause and effect links. (For more information on cause and effect and alignment, **Advertising causes store traffic**

- **Store traffic causes sales**
- **Sales causes profits**

Our first step in creating a web site design is to ask "What are your business goals?"

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Once we have your business goals we can begin to develop a set of site goals that are aligned. (i.e. if site goals are met you will be closer to meeting your business goals)

As we go through the web development process we are constantly asking "How does this help meet the goals of the site and of the business?"... We constantly follow the cause and effect of each section of the site to it's primary business goal.

WHAT DOES THIS DO FOR MY BUSINESS?

Focusing on alignment means that, once the site is complete, we should have a direct cause and effect link from each site section to your primary business goals. Simply put, the site is doing the things that will help you meet your business goals.

If you have a site that is 100% effective at getting visitors to do something that does not ultimately have an effect on your business goals, the site is still 0% effective.

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN I EXPECT TO SEE?

Results vary from site to site and depend upon exactly what actions you want the visitor to take and the strength of your content to create a relationship, provide incentives and encourage actions.

However, accurate and on-going measures allow you to determine how effective your site is. They also allow you to gauge the relative effect of any changes you make to the site. You will be able to see if the change increased or decreased the effectiveness.

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Alignment simply insures that to whatever extent your site IS effective, it will be effective at helping you meet your business goals.

EFFECTIVE CONTENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOAL

It's difficult to successfully complete a task if you don't know what you are supposed to be doing.

Web surfers are people and typically not very tolerant of poorly designed web sites. In fact, the evidence indicates that most surfers spend 80% of their time on 20% of the sites they visit. Four out of five web sites get little more than a cursory look before they disappear behind the "back" button.

Each section of your web site design must have an obvious purpose that is easily and quickly understood by the site visitor. No one wants to be confused. While a certain percentage of the web population are incurable problem solvers and will take the time to try to figure out why a section exists, most site visitors will simply click the back button.

As we go through our site design process we look at every section of the site and define it's primary purpose. We use this purpose to guide the development of content for the section.

Understanding the motivation of each site section allows us to concentrate site content on what the section is supposed to accomplish. This enables us to focus each section on defining the preferred action of the visitor.

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If your web site design is not creating action it cannot be effective.

Clearly defined purpose and preferred action helps visitors know what to expect and provides a logical and emotional progression to the entire site.

This simplicity makes it easier for site visitors to make the appropriate decisions. It also means less confusion which leads to fewer abandoned visits.

Reaching the Transaction Threshold

This is true in your store, working with a customer over the phone or on your web site.

This makes it absolutely critical that your web site design encourages action. The action can be as simple as clicking a button or as complex as completing an online order.

The goal of each web page design must be to provide the necessary incentives to entice the site visitor to take action. This should be the major goal of your website development and your web designer.

You can have the most beautiful site on the web, the greatest products, the best service and unbeatable prices but if you cannot entice the visitor to take some action it is all wasted effort.

Unfortunately, for most web site designs, the preferred action is hitting the back button. It is imperative to create web page designs that clearly define their purpose AND the preferred action.

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The design and content of each web page should focus on enticing the visitor to take the *appropriate* action that will meet the defined purpose of the page.

We use our understanding of creating and tracking actions to help define:

- **the actions your site should encourage**
- **the incentives necessary to create the action**
- **the measures for tracking the effectiveness of our work.**

BUILDING ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

Transactions are possible only where a relationship exists.

Everything in your web site affects the relationship between your business and the visitor. The level of this relationship is often the deciding factor in any action taken by the visitor.

Relationships develop based on two simple concepts; trust and emotional context. The visitor must have a certain level of trust for a transaction to take place; trust that you will live up to your word. Emotional context is the sum total of the emotional interaction with your web site (and your business if they have done business with you before). The more positive the emotional context of their experiences, the more likely they are to enter into a transaction.

By it's very nature, your web site is a cold, calculating representation of your business. This makes it absolutely mandatory to provide proof that the user can trust you and to create as positive an emotional context as possible.

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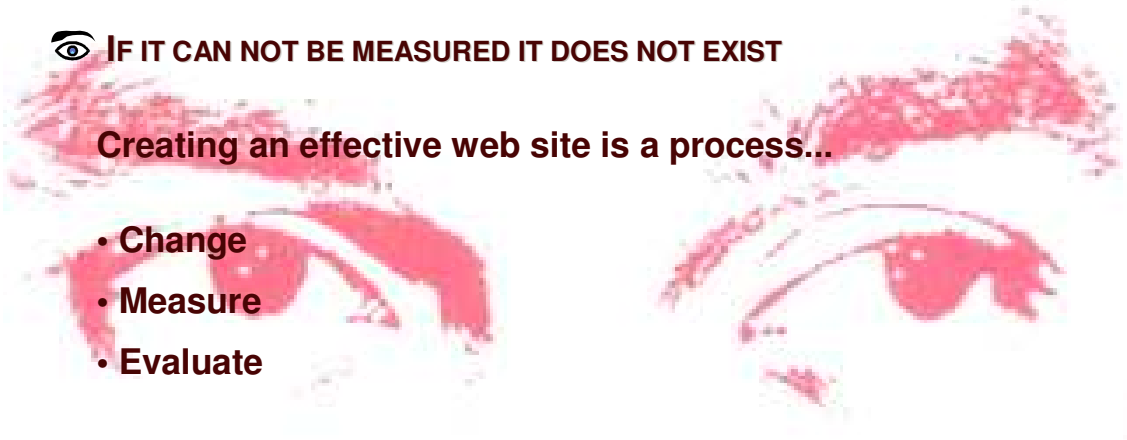
Relationship (trust and emotional context) are created through the professionalism of your site design, the simplicity of the navigation, the viability and consistency of your content and even the colors you choose.

This is one of the most difficult aspects of web design if you focus on *trying to create a relationship*. It becomes much simpler when you focus your web site design on alignment with your business goals, an obvious purpose for each site section and creating visitor action. Creating content with this in mind makes it much easier to focus on providing the enticements necessary to create the preferred actions.



IF IT CAN NOT BE MEASURED IT DOES NOT EXIST

Creating an effective web site is a process...

- **Change**
- **Measure**
- **Evaluate**

You may have the most effective web site in the history of the Internet but if you are not measuring it's effectiveness you will never know.

Effective web sites are not the result of a master web site designer with unequaled creative talents. Effective web site designs are created using a simple process which includes making changes, measuring the effect of the changes, evaluating that effect and making more changes.

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Creating an effective web site requires that you track it's effectiveness. And, while there are literally thousands of things you could track there are only a few that you must track. The most important are visitor actions.

Our web site design process insures that you are tracking the RIGHT measures. Measures that will tell you beyond a doubt how effective your web site is.

You can pay a consultant to do a focus group of "pretend" visitors to find out what they think...

Or you can keep a few simple measures and find out what your visitors DO.

There are thousands of marketing consultants that will provide focus groups and surveys to tell you how well your site is being received by your site visitors. We can tell you the same thing in minutes by tracking your *abandon rate*... the number of people who visit your web site and immediately click the back button.

An effective web site is measured in it's ability to help you meet your business goals. And the only way your web site can accomplish this is to provide the necessary enticement to get your site visitors to take actions... to do things.

Measuring those actions will provide you with the vast majority of information you need to continually improve the effectiveness of your web site.

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Test the effectiveness of your web site!

What is this?

In the last 30 days 2.36 percent of visitors to this page requested a site evaluation.

Do you wonder if your web site is worth the trouble and expense?

- Is it pulling it's own weight?
- Does it add value to your business?
- Is it doing everything you think it should?
- Are you getting visitors but sales aren't increasing?
- Are you getting any visitors at all?

ISN'T IT TIME YOU KNEW FOR SURE?

Our web site effectiveness test measures the relative potential of your web site to help you meet your business goals.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE WEB SITE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW?

Our effectiveness test looks at your site as an extension of your business. The process illustrates the relative alignment of your web site with your business goals. It also illustrates how your site design, measures and goals are aligned.

- Find out the relative alignment of your web site with your business goals
- Find out how effective your site is at getting your visitors to act

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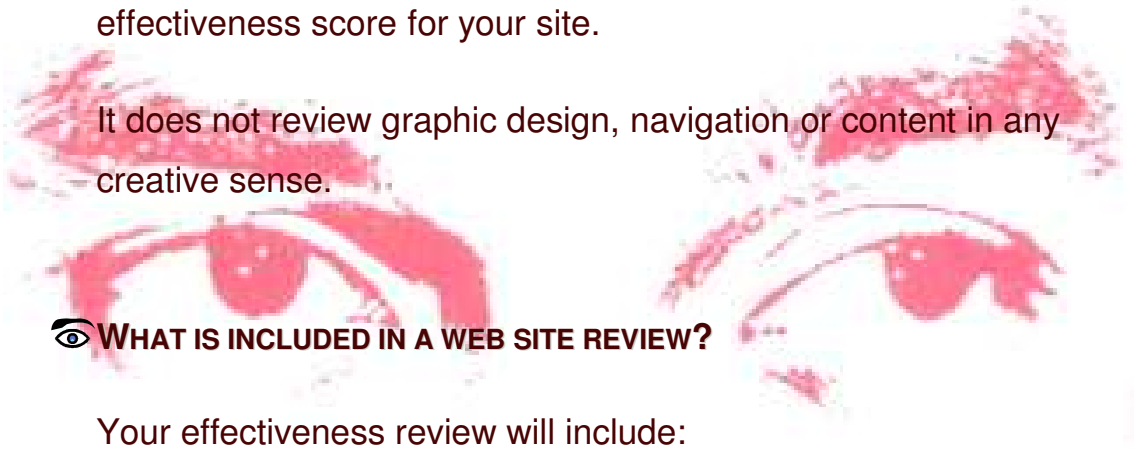
- Find out how well your current measures reflect the effectiveness of your site

HOW DOES THE WEB SITE EFFECTIVENESS TEST WORK?

We use a series of comparisons that measure how well the different sections of your site align with your business goals. These comparisons are relatively objective based on the information you provide and a close look at your current web site.

We assign values to each section based on our criteria for an effective web site. These values provide us with a relative effectiveness score for your site.

It does not review graphic design, navigation or content in any creative sense.



WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A WEB SITE REVIEW?

Your effectiveness review will include:

- A goals alignment chart that indicates how well your site goals and your business goals align.
- A site alignment chart that indicates how well your site sections align with your site goals, business goals and your current effectiveness measures.
- An action incentive chart that indicates how well your site sections are focused on producing appropriate visitor actions.

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- A key word position report that gives you a look at how well your primary key words are represented in the major search engines.

Methodology for defining a website design

On the whole, designing a website has little in common with any other creative process. In an attempt to help simplify and clarify the process we have produced the following guidelines on what you need to look at when considering a design for your business website.

MAKE LIST OF CLEAR BUSINESS GOALS

Make a list of your business / organization goals: Business websites should NOT be classified as advertising, marketing or information sites unless that is their intended purpose. Business websites should, in fact, be extensions of your business. Your business website should be focused on positively affecting your business goals.

MAKE LIST OF YOUR WEBSITE GOALS

Using your business goals as a basis, make a list of the goals for your website:

To design an effective and successful website requires that you consider what you want the website to accomplish. These website goals should align with your business goals. For instance, if your business goal is to increase sales one of your site goals may be to increase the number of people requesting

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information or the number of people who email you. If your business goal is to reduce the cost of customer support a site goal may be to increase the number of people using your online, automated self-support site.

DEFINE FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONALITY

Your website goals will lead you to a list of the main sections of your website. Your site goals should also help you define the features and functionality of each section. Remember alignment…you want your site sections to align with your site goals…and your site goals to align with your business goals. You also need to define the preferred action you want the site visitor to take in each primary page (or section) of the site. The default action for every site visitor is clicking the back button. If you want them to do otherwise you need to provide adequate incentive for them to do so. For example, if your site goal is to increase the number of people using your online, automated self-support site that site section needs to provide the necessary information, navigation and search functions to allow visitors to easily find the information they need.

MAKE A LIST OF POPULAR AND COMMON KEYWORDS

Create a list of keywords that visitors may use to find your website. Search engine optimization MUST be planned from site inception. You do not want to even begin to create website content with out taking into account how search engines are going to find, index and rank your site. If you have not conducted your own in-depth keyword research you need to have the research completed before you begin to create ANY

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content.

E-COMMERCE

If you search randomly through the web you will begin to notice something interesting. Just about every site you visit is an e-commerce site. They are all selling something and they all have a shopping cart. They all can take orders over the web. If you are a small business and you don't have an e-commerce site this should give you pause. Annual web sales are growing at double digit rates with no indication of slowing down. Is your physical business doing that well over the last few years?

The Internet landscape is now inundated with e-commerce sites. Unfortunately there is little to distinguish one from another. E-commerce functionality may be becoming the norm but most sites have a long way to go to set themselves apart. If you want to succeed in the new Internet gold rush you need to focus your website design on basic business principals.

How do you design a business focused website? Simple, you start with business basics.

However, if you really want to make your business web site successful you need to. Competition on the web is much greater than it is on your block. Next year it will be even greater.

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DEFINE YOUR BUSINESS GOALS:

There is a lot of easily accessible information and books on defining your business goals. However, most small businesses do not have a problem with the process. "Make a profit" generally covers it nicely. If you decide to go further there are a few things you want to be cautious of.

You don't want goals that are too vague. The goal has to be measurable. "Making a profit" is measurable but it may not be succinct enough because it doesn't define what "profit" is. If you earn a buck-fifty, would you consider that ample profit? A better goal would be to "make a monthly profit of $1000.00" or "maintain a profit margin of 10% of gross sales". You don't want to set your goal at "sell $100,000.00 per month" because selling $100,000.00 per month does not guarantee a profit. The more precise your goal the easier it is to measure whether or not you are reaching your goals.

You don't want to define strategies or tactics instead of goals. Strategies are your plans for meeting your goals. Tactics define are the things you will do to act on your strategies. "Increase Internet sales to $5000.00 per month" should not be a business goal. It is a strategy to help you meet your business goal. "Offer discounts for Internet purchases" should not be a business goal. It is a tactic. (Don't you love the war terms?)

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YOUR UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (USP)

Establish your competitive advantages and disadvantages: What are you good at? The answer is not reasonable price, excellent customer service and / or fast delivery. Today (especially over the Internet) these are a given. Everyone has them. You need to look at the "value added" services you provide. What do you do better than your competition? What do you do worse than your competition?

DEFINE YOUR CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS

Customer expectation today are high. They expect excellent service, quick response and reasonable prices from everyone they do business with. The difference between buying from you or from your competitor is based on those "value added" services that are provided. If your customer doesn't like driving to town to shop, having an Internet site to buy from is an added value that make make the difference.

DEFINE YOUR INTERNET GOALS:

One strategy for helping you meet your business goals is using the Internet. You will need to clearly define the goals for your Internet site. These goals should be aligned with your business goals. Alignment is a cause and effect relationship. This means that if your site goal is achieved the probability is high that it will positively affect your business goal. The higher the probability the closer the alignment between goals.

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DEFINE YOUR INTERNET STRATEGIES

Your Internet strategies define how you will meet your goals. A strategy may be "provide the biggest selection" or "provide the easiest web ordering process". In other words, "our goal is to create (a dollar amount) in sales on the web and we will do that by offering the widest selection of products available anywhere." Your strategies will almost always come as a result of looking at your competitive advantages and disadvantages compared with customer expectations.

Now you can start designing your business website. And you can rest assured that your design is focused on your business because we started with your business goals and worked toward the business web site design. Your strategies should drive your site graphic, navigation and feature development.

GET PROFESSIONAL DESIGNER

If you are not comfortable with this process either do a little reading or select a web designer that understands this part of the business website design process. They will be able to help you through the process and make sure that the web site you end up with is focused on your business goals.

BALANCE OF FORM AND MATTER

Many businesses put a great deal of emphasis on website graphics and on creating a visually interesting site, but many sites don't have enough text. Informative text is reassuring to visitors and it gives search engines something to crawl. So,

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where should you start? Let's look at five things you can accomplish with text.

ESTABLISH YOUR POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

Why would a customer choose to buy from you rather than from one of the many other businesses just like yours? If you bristle at the idea that any business could be "just like yours", you've found something important to communicate on your site.

You don't need to disparage your competition - this isn't necessary, or in most cases, even advisable. Instead, tell visitors about what makes your approach to the business unique. If you specialize in a certain area or approach, tell them how - and why. Establishing your points of difference helps your visitors become more informed buyers of the services or products you offer.

SATISFY THEIR NEED TO KNOW

Studies have shown that searchers often use the web to do basic research first, only later going back to convert on the site or look up your business. To the extent that you anticipate and answer research questions, you give your visitors exactly what they are looking for and begin to earn their trust and loyalty.

To create this content, ask yourself, "What would I need to know if I were in the market for this product or service"? Then, think of different ways to present the information. To help your visitors see how your service could benefit them,

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consider adding one or more case studies to your site, each of which describes how a customer was able to solve a problem and overcome challenges with the help of your service or product. You might also add a "Frequently Asked Questions" page. Such an FAQ page can be a powerful marketing tool that raises the questions that you think customers ought to ask.

Sometimes, just by raising an issue and providing information, you will be able to establish a point of difference. As visitors research other sites, they may look for more information on issues, benefits, and features that that they learned about on your site. If a competitor's site doesn't adequately address something that they have become interested in, you will have gained a little bit of an edge.

WRITE ARTICLES AND SHOW YOUR AUTHORITY

You may not consider yourself an expert in your field, but you probably know a great deal more than you give yourself credit for. Chances are that visitors will appreciate any advice you care to give. Writing articles related to your business and publishing them on your site can put you in the enviable situation of being perceived as an authority.

Consider asking visitors for their email address in return for access to your articles. You'll build a targeted contact list that allows you to create an ongoing relationship with qualified prospects, send special offers, and continue to provide useful information.

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INCREASE YOUR VISABILITY

To a search engine, the best sites consist of many HTML files, each one text rich. If one of your articles mentions a topic for which you have more information, embed links to the extra information like this: "learn about painting with oil-based paint." Then, on the page with the extra information, make sure that you have a <title> tag with the appropriate title, in this case, "Painting with Oil-based Paint". This helps search engines to index your content, which in turn can help give you some visibility.

Even more important, you'll find that other sites like to link to pages with useful information. Having lots of sites pointing to your articles on art techniques will help artists find your online art store and can improve your natural (unpaid) search engine rankings.

LEARN WHAT IS INTERESTING TO YOUR VISITORS

One of the great things about adding a lot of text based information to your site is that you can find out which topics and issues are most interesting to your visitors. In Google Analytics, the Top Content report (under Content Performance in the Content Optimization section) shows you how many visits to your site resulted in pageviews of each page and the average amount of time that visitors spent on the page.

The Content by Titles report shows the same information, but aggregated by page title. So, if you have an article with

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several pages of content, and each page has the same <title> tag, the pie chart will show the percentage of total visits and total pageviews that relate to the article.

You can also look at the Site Overlay (under Navigational Analysis in the Content Optimization section) for any page to see which links visitors click on the most. This gives you an idea of what's most interesting to visitors, given the fixed set of choices on any particular page.

Try to improve your content mix using what you learn from these reports. By keeping an eye on what the analytics are telling you, you'll learn more about your visitors and be able to provide just the information they are looking for.

MAKE YOUR VISITORS STAY LONGER

So, you've refined your keywords, optimized your bids, and written AdWords text ads that pull in tons of targeted clicks, but after looking at your Google Analytics reports, you realize that your landing page has a bounce rate of 91%.

Which means that 91% of the users coming to your site are quickly glancing around and leaving, deciding immediately that this site isn't for them.

With a bounce rate like that, it's time to optimize your landing page to keep people on your site longer. But, how do you know what changes to make?

One of the easiest, low-tech ways to make users stick around and look at your products or services is to catch their attention with an engaging headline.

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Recent research suggests that users decide to stay or leave your site in 8 seconds or less, and headlines are the one piece of copy that users will actually scan in that short amount of time.

That makes your headline a key piece of real estate on your site. So, writing headlines that engage users is going to be an important part of your landing page optimization plan.

Here are five tips for writing headlines that will pull user attention.

INCLUDE YOUR PAID KEYWORD IN THE HEADLINE

And as close to the beginning of the headline as you can. When users land on your site after clicking on a text ad or organic listing, they're a bit nervous.

They have a good idea of what they're looking for, and hope that your site will deliver it, but they're a bit skeptical. And they have a good reason to be; there are a lot of junky sites out there that don't deliver.

Putting the keyword in the headline provides split-second assurance to visitors that they are in the right place. It will make them relax a bit and be more receptive to your message.

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DON'T SOUND LIKE AN AD

The average American is bombarded with thousands of advertising messages per day and our brains have developed sophisticated filters to keep most of those messages out.

Sometimes, the best way to get past that filter is to not sound like an ad. Instead of sounding like an overbearing salesperson, try to sound like a friend delivering valuable information.

For example, instead of:

Fabulous Skin Cream that Makes a Difference!

Try

5 Ways to Reduce Wrinkles in 30 Days.

Highlight benefits rather than features.

Instead of rattling off the cold facts about your product or service, think about what problem your product or service will solve for your user.

Instead of

E-mail with up to 2GB of Storage

Try

Never Throw Another E-mail Away

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MAKE HEADLINES LOOK EASY TO READ.

When our eyes are moving fast looking for something particular, we tend to ignore copy that looks like it will take too much effort to read.

So, make your headline as simple and direct as possible.

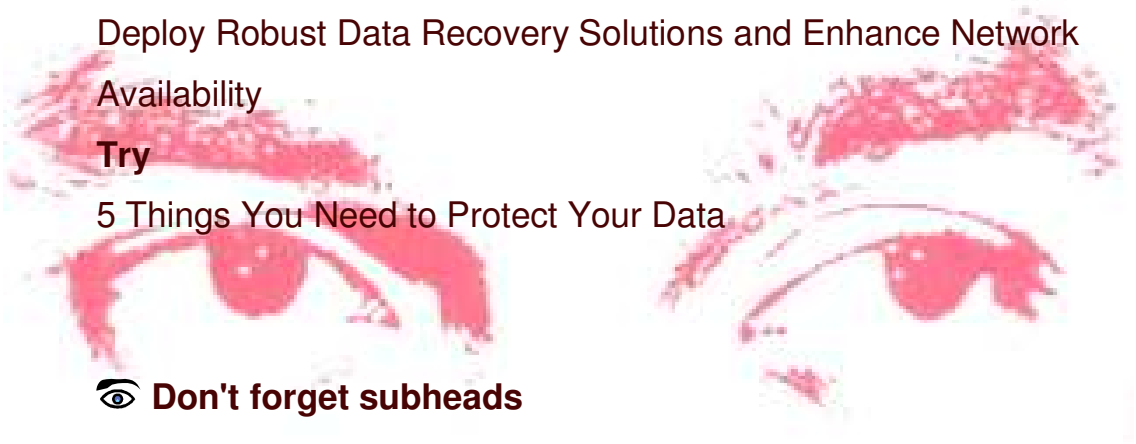
Instead of using 3- and 4-syllable Latinate words whose meaning is not obvious at a glance, try using choppier, punchier Anglo-Saxon words.

For example, instead of

Deploy Robust Data Recovery Solutions and Enhance Network Availability

Try

5 Things You Need to Protect Your Data



Don't forget subheads

Subheads are another easy way to quickly offer more information about your product. Similar to headlines, they're usually a piece of text users will be likely to scan.

Let's say you're an e-tailer and your landing page is a specific product page, with the product name serving as the page's headline. A subhead that offers visitors a quick preview of product benefits saves them the trouble of digging benefits out of user reviews and product descriptions that are often visually buried on the page.

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Instead of

Unwired Skoba™ Computer Satchel

Try

Unwired Skoba™ Computer Satchel

Patented protection system cushions your laptop with shock-absorbing, air-filled pouches.

ALSO

Try testing different headlines to see which ones minimize bounce rates and result in the most clickthroughs to conversion. For example, you might set up different versions of the same landing page and send visitors at random to the different versions. You could then compare the bounce rates for each of your landing page versions. You might also review the Top Content report to see how long people stayed on each version of the landing page. And, you can review the Site Overlay for each of these pages to see exactly where the visitors are clicking and how frequently those clicks resulted in an eventual conversion.

GOOD DESCRIPTIONS HELP YOU CONVERT VISITORS INTO BUYERS

All kind of merchants sign up here at tradebit. I watch them and give hints or try to figure out, why some have good sales and others do not.

Well, I have done that for quite some time now and I see one thing, that could be a common rule for all merchants, no matter if they are here or on their own little ecommerce

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platform out on the net:

SHOW THEM WHAT YOU HAVE

If you want to convert your visitors into sales, **you have to** show them, what they will get! We record much better sales on products with descriptive pictures and high quality previews. Especially the music and sound files need to be presented with additional information. Potential buyers want to know, what they gonna get!

We record tripple or higher conversion rates on products which have good descriptions compared to single files with just a sentence or two.

All studies on the market tell us: Internet buyers in average are a bit smarter than the average buyer in a brick and mortar shop. Act like that and do not underestimate your clients!

For sound: add previews or lo-fi versions, same for music.
For books: add excerpts and cover pictures. It really pays off!

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USE SSL CERTIFICATES TO CONVERT VISITORS TO CUSTOMERS

"An essential trust indicator users now expect to see"

Independent tests have revealed that web retailers who implement **visible security indicators** experience far **lower cart abandonment rates**. Visitors concerned about the privacy and security of there personal information need to trust that their details will stay confidential. - **No one buys from a salesman they do not trust.**

Winning the trust of visitors as quickly as possible is more successful if you allow them to walk a familiar path. Many consumers will already have experienced the purchasing processes offered by bigger brand names. **All the major brands, without exception, use High Assurance SSL** to secure the personal information of their customers.

Using SSL certificates and trust indicators wisely allows proven web based sales techniques such as **AIDAS** - *Attract, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction* to be implemented. Once consumers have taken Action (A) by clicking on your beautifully crafted 'Buy Now' or 'Order Now' button ensure that they are Satisfied with the result - do not give visitors the opportunity to suffer from '**Buyers Remorse**' and abandon the process. Ensure the deployment of specific trust indicators at key points in the purchase process - subtle yet effective ways to convert visitors to customers.

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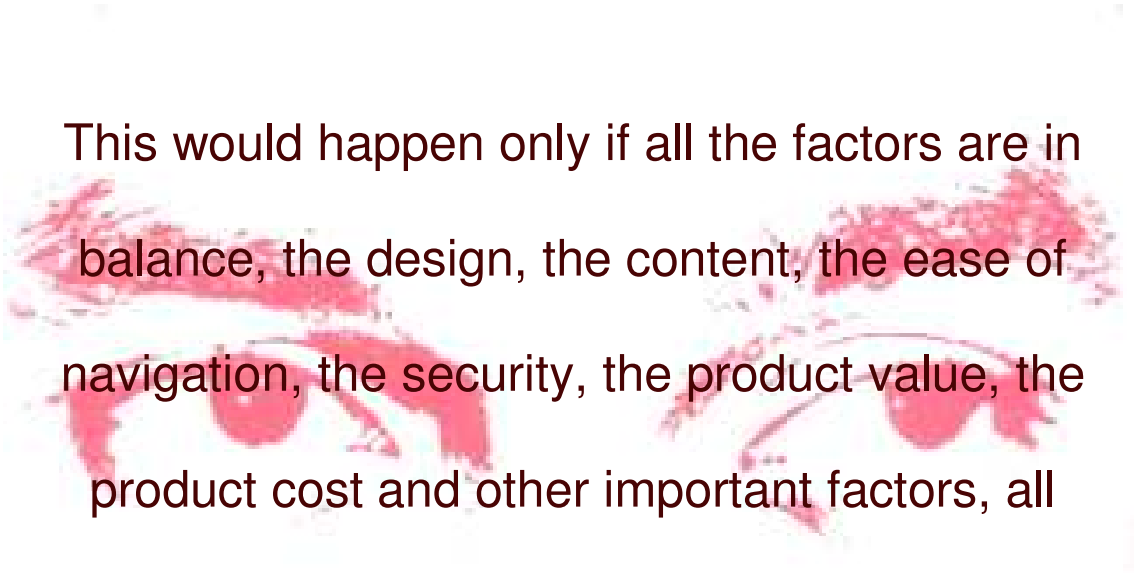
Creatively mesmerize visitors so that they do not leave without buying.



This would happen only if all the factors are in balance, the design, the content, the ease of navigation, the security, the product value, the product cost and other important factors, all gel with each other to hypnotize the visitor and make him want to buy the product.

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