hAPPenings

May 2018

WEBSITE DESIGN – WHAT NOT TO DO!

There is no doubt that 2018 is the year of going mobile. Mobile internet use is set to outdo desktop and laptop use and therefore, whatever else you do you need to make sure your website is mobile friendly! If you're not, you will be chasing your tail and losing potential sales.

You have approximately 10 seconds to sell your site. If people are going to stick around, they will decide almost instantly. If your website is not customer focused, you will lose them in this 10 second period.

Therefore you need to immediately tell them who you are and what you do. While you have approximately 10 seconds to sell yourself, most people decide within the first .05 seconds – instantly! You should at least have your introduction (clearly stating what you do) in clear view as well as testimonials and awards.

If your website takes longer than three seconds to load, there is every chance people will get bored! People do not like waiting online – at all! Research says that 47% of people expect websites to load within two seconds or less! That's not a lot of room for delay.

Once people are on your site, they need to be able to read it! Therefore, if you're using a fancy font that is difficult to read, you will lose potential clients. As with your message, keep your font clear, easy to read and big enough to see. A Sans Serif font is the most popular – for a reason!

Avoid links that open links in different browsers! This will only promote a bad user experience. Users are freely welcomed to leave your site without the option to easily return (especially on a mobile device). Opening multiple tabs is annoying and time consuming and will destroy the customer experience.

Take a look at your site from a mobile device and check that everything is clear and easily accessible. You might find that things that stand out on a desktop are hidden on a mobile. Likewise, mobile menus work perfectly on mobiles but are not so great on desktops. Make sure you don't hide any text links that help with navigation.

If you've ever tried to click your way through a mobile site where the buttons are teeny tiny, you'll find that it's really difficult to navigate. Therefore, you will end up leaving the site sooner than perhaps you wanted to. Therefore, it's important to remember that buttons for touch screens need
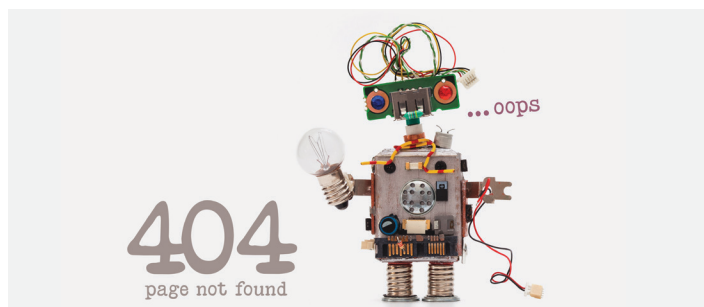
to be easily accessible. Make sure you have enough space for them!

Make sure your website is clear to read. Headings and subheadings help here, as does white space. Avoid cramming your website with text as nothing will a potential relationship more than a one sided confusing conversation! Headings and sub headings are also attractive for search engines. This mark-up is particularly helpful to bots.

Finally, if you have hidden your contact info among a mass of other content, you will be losing business. After a homepage, the next most commonly visited page is the contact us page. You will lose a great deal of business if your contact business is hard to find.

Pioneering Newsbytes

Instagram adds in-app payment feature (quietly)

You may not have noticed, but Instagram has very quietly added an in-app payments feature as a test for some users. The feature allows users to add a credit or debit card and a pin for additional security after which they can make purchases from within Instagram. This is only available on a limited number of accounts at the minute, but if the company decides to expand this in the future, there are countless businesses that will benefit.

WHAT YOU SHOULD INCLUDE ON YOUR HOMEPAGE

Every single time you get a new hit on your website, these new visitors will be instantly judging you, your business and your professionalism. Most people will arrive at your homepage and therefore, you need to ensure that your homepage creates the best impression possible.

The finer details of what should be included on your homepage will vary from industry to industry, however there are a number of must haves for every homepage, regardless of what your business is. These include:

A clear, succinct message
You may be surprised how many people don't include this on their homepage! It is vital that every single visitor knows what you do and you need to ensure that you're telling them clearly so that there is no confusion. If people don't understand exactly what it is you do, they probably won't stick around to try and find out. Set the tone immediately with a concise and strong outline. Include an overview of your services/products as not only is this a good introduction, but it will also rank highly with the search engines.

Social media links
In order to succeed at online marketing, you need people to follow and engage with you on social media. Therefore you must have the appropriate buttons on your home page - linking directly to your social media pages! Increasing your social media following will increase the amount of visitors to your site on a regular basis.

Easy navigation
The navigation of your site must be easy to understand and clear – especially for first time users. It's important that visitors arrive onto your site and can easily follow where they need to go for the information/products/services they require. You need to make sure that the pages of your website that are frequented the most are prominent on your home page.

Contact Information
Take a minute to think about how frustrated you get when you reach a site and need to contact somebody but have to trawl through pages before you find any contact information. Do not make it difficult for people to get hold of you through your website. People like to work with people. MSPs generally have phone numbers prominent on their homepage and this is vital if much of your business is conducted locally and over the phone. However, don't forget an email address and street address/map and consider a live chat option if this is feasible for your company.

Client Testimonials
It is no hidden fact that consumers trust online reviews and testimonials. Therefore, if you have a selection of them - post them up on your homepage in full view of new visitors and capitalize on them! Testimonials build trust and give confidence to new clients.

Blog snippets
For many businesses, their online content strategy begins and ends with their blog. If your blog is the focal point of your communication, be sure to include it on your homepage. Encourage people to visit it by highlighting it on your homepage. Your blog content usually conveys important messages, useful information and is a good way to introduce your brand to prospective clients.

Clear call-to-action (s)
You need to make sure you have clear call to actions so that each visitor knows exactly what they need to do next. You can have more than one on your homepage (such as 'call us for a quote today' or 'subscribe to our blog') but it is really important that you take time to consider what it is you actually want them to do.

Good quality, real photos
While stock images are easy to get hold of and generally do the job you require of them, nothing says 'trust us' and gives you more credibility than photos of your actual business and actual team members. People will be able to tell what they can expect from your photos as you; however make sure they're high quality as the better the quality, the more professional you will look.

Video
While video is not a must-have, it's a great option. A short (3-minute) introductory video explaining who you are and what your business does is one of the most effective ways of engaging a user.

Award/certifications/associations
Make sure you put all of these on display as industry recognition gives you great credibility. As with testimonials, awards, certifications, and associations prove that you're not just blowing your own trumpet, you actually deserve all the recognition.

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7 KEY WEBSITE DESIGN FEATURES NOT TO IGNORE!

If you have a business, you should have a website - there is no excuse not to have one in this day and age. However, as we all should all know by now, a badly designed one is almost more harmful than not having one. So, if you don't hand over the design reigns to a professional, this article will discuss the most important design features for every type of website. By following these simple pointers, you should be able to create an aesthetically pleasing website.

The 7 core design features are:
Balance
Grid
Graphics
Font
Color
White space
Connection

Balance
Balance, as you might have guessed, is about making sure your design is not 'overloaded' with detail on one side but that information and graphics are distributed correctly around the site. Whether your design is symmetrical or not, the balance must be right.

Grid
Closely linked to balance, grids are your rulers to help you put compartmentalize your design into columns or rows or boxes. The golden rule with web design is the Rule of Thirds - which for example is why sidebars are often about one-third of the width of the page.

Graphics
A good website design doesn't need fancy graphics, but poor graphics will have a negative impact on the website as a whole. Graphics add to the visual message you are trying to portray and therefore need to relate to the content, not be too obtrusive and not negate from your intended message in any way.

Font
The font is one of the most difficult and complex of design features to get right. This is because while it is fixed in print, the font is dynamic when it is online. The appearance depends on browsers, platforms of the user as well as the availability of the font. If you want to ensure the text is clear and can be read by all users, it is advisable to include font stacks. These will allow you to define a fallback font – so if the font is missing from the user's computer, it will look for the next one in line. This will change the design for some users, but at least the font will be clear to read. The main thing to remember when it comes to fonts is that print and web fonts are not the same! You will never have complete control over your web font.

Color
Some colors go well together, others don't – this is a very simple fact of life. While experts have theories and a great deal of knowledge, for most people, choosing the color scheme comes down to common sense and liking what you see. Take some time to research other sites and see what you like and what you don't like and find out which colors work well together. Then, the best advice is to pick two or three base colors and use tints and shades of these colors when an expanded palette is required. There is no way you will be able to please everyone with your chosen color scheme, so just try to complement the message you are trying to convey with your color scheme.

White Space
White space is essentially all about what's not there. It will allow certain elements to stand out and will avoid your copy looking too cramped and will help with the readability. It is crucial to include white space in your design otherwise everything will simply look too cluttered. Less is usually more!

Concord and consistency
It is vital to ensure that your website has both concord and consistency as these demonstrate professionalism. A design should always be consistent in its use of colors, fonts and icons because without it, all unity is lost. Concord is the way that every element of your site fits together – does everything contribute to one harmonious message? Without it, it will be very difficult to create a good design. These two design points bind all of the other six together and without this 'glue', the design will fall apart. For example, you may have a beautiful color scheme and eye-catching fonts but your graphics may let you down and therefore, your overall design will fail.

BOOST YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Do you feel like your website is somewhat stagnant and needing an update? Did you build it a few years ago and now you feel like you're out of the loop? If you answered yes to either or both of these questions, we can help you! This article will tell you how you can ensure your website is working with you!

Go Mobile
In the last couple of years, we have seen a surge in mobile internet users. Gone are the days the only people to surf the internet were those who owned computers. This means that it has become essential for your site to be mobile/tablet friendly. If it is not, you could be losing out on a great deal of business! It is also advisable to have an app. Mobile users tend to rely on apps rather than browser searches.

Regularly update content
There is no question that the most effective websites are those which frequently add new content. This not only gives visitors a reason to return, but also ranks highly with Google and other search engines. Make sure the content you produce is of a good quality however. Badly written pieces filled to the brim with keywords will put people and search engines off. Blogs are a great way to add content and if you sell services/products, promotions and sales are a good way to entice customers.

Use social media
Social media is vital for every business. It allows your customers to easily interact with you and it is a great platform to promote your brand. You don't have to choose every single social media option, but one or two that suit your business are a must. Facebook is an obvious choice and works well for many, Twitter is good for short quick updates, LinkedIn is good for business connections, YouTube for videos (such as 'How To' and demonstrations) and Instagram is great for those who would like to sell their products visually. You will need to add linked buttons to your website and you can also link your feeds directly to your website. Invite customers to engage with you.

Remove anything superfluous or annoying
Take time to go through your website and look for anything that needs an application launch such as PDF attachments. DO they work? Do you need them? DO they take a long time to load? If you find they take too long, it is worth considering adding them to your site as text. Opening applications and attachments from mobiles can be time consuming. The customer experience is the most important thing for your site and people want information at their fingertips in a blink of an eye. If they have to wait for download after download, chances are they'll close your site/app and won't reopen it.

Keep it simple
Following on from the last point, it is really important to keep your site as simple and clutter-free as possible. The aim of your website is to get visitors to the content they seek and your call to action as quickly as possible. Simplicity is the best way to achieve that. Keep the focus on the content and lead them to where you would like them to end up.

Here at Pioneering Programmers, we have an expert web design team who can offer the whole package from design to content and management. For more information, call us on: **972-924-5456.**

Pioneering Newsbytes

YouTube has 1.8 billion registered users!

According to CEO Susan Wojcicki, 1.8 billion people are now registered users are watching videos on the platform each month. This however also means that it is now even more important than ever to monitor content – especially for kids – and make sure that the site develops safely and securely. There are plans in place to make it safer, such as hiring 10,000 moderators, and Wojcicki has insisted that safety is the only way forward as it's 'critical that we're on the right side of history'.

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