

Website Tips

Does your website stink?

When Trent Design creates websites we are not designing them for the client but the end user 'their audience.' If a client can grasp this one concept, it will make their website speak to their target audience better and keep the focus on 'what's in it for them' and ultimately making the website more effective. You also need to have your website look like how big you want to become and how good you want to be, not what you are now.

What makes a well designed website?

There needs to be a there there. (There is no there, there. Gertrude Stein)

1. Design with the end user in mind. (I know I keep repeating myself)

I tell all of my clients that we are designing for their clients not them.

2. Nobody cares about your site.

a. The only reason my web site exists is to solve my customers' problems.

b. What problems does the page I'm looking at solve?

People visit to answer these 4 major questions.

a. They want/need information.

b. They want/need to make a purchase / donation.

c. They want/need to be entertained.

d. They want/need to be part of a community.

IT IS ALL ABOUT SOLVING PEOPLES PROBLEMS.

3. You should be able to look at a home page and figure out what the site is about within 4 seconds.

The mantra is 'do not confuse the end user.'

KISS- Keep it simple stupid

People now have extremely short attention spans due to so much clutter.

4. Don't think your web site is your marketing strategy and the best designed website can not work unless there is a marketing strategy. Your website is only one part of your marketing strategy. If you take orders over the phone, don't get rid of that method. If you're direct mail is working for you, don't stop. If the Yellow Pages are working for you, well, keep using them. It takes strategy and research but try and figure out how your website fits into your marketing plan.

5. Visit and write down the websites that you like and why. Sometimes you wonder if some of the people who get on the 'worst designed website list' have ever been on a great website.

Don't overwhelm your visitor with choices.

Some interesting 'what can you do for me?' type hooks.

Don't drop people in the middle of the website. You need to lead them through from the beginning in a sensible organized and easy to follow manner. Start with the goal and objective in mind.

6. Navigation - we like to use 6-8 top navigation buttons. Ask these questions as you think of someone navigating your website.

Where am I?

Where have I been?

Where can I go next?

Where's the Home Page?

Where's the Home Home Page? The newer websites don't have a home button as the logo is the new home button. (It makes me feel a bit lost)

Navigation must be simple and consistent. Have links based on the end users needs not on your needs.

7. Don't put too much material one page. Don't throw up everything you have and know on one page.

Have a way to update your information and keep it current.

Content rich and relevant information also helps with SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

8. Flash animation - the on-going controversy

Have you heard that flash is not good? Well we think that it should be like chocolate and used sparingly but like good chocolate it adds the wow effect and if done well can grab peoples attention. Although we create searchable full flash sites when that is the best way to reach the target audience.

When using flash:

a. put the skip intro button in

b. give people the option to turn the music off & on if you are using music

c. another option is to have a non-flash html version of the flash area

9. If you don't know how to design - keep it clean and simple so maybe no one will notice and it won't make you look like an amateur - you will look like a very smart minimalist.

10. On the technical side - your website needs to work in all of the browsers. Not everyone is using Internet Explorer More and more people are switching to Firefox/Mozilla and don't forget about Safari.