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An effective website is an extension of your business. The Design Bureau web design focuses on your business goals: Increasing Sales and Profits, Turning Visitors into Customers, Decreasing Operational Costs, Increasing Traffic and Improving Customer Support. Over the years we have developed a five-step process for designing successful and effective websites. Experience has shown that including these requirements in your site dramatically increases the probability of having an effective website. This document is designed to help our clients make clear goals when redesigning or building a new web site.

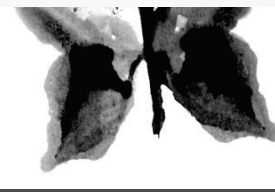
Overview

An Effective Web Site

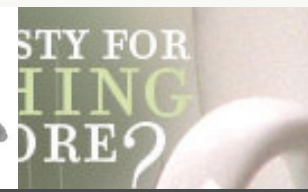
Marketing Machines
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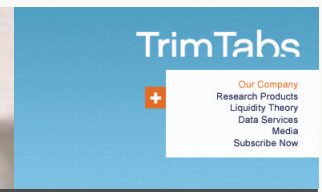
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ParisPrelude.com



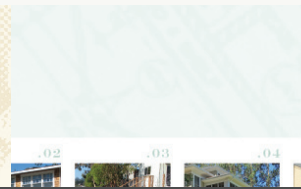
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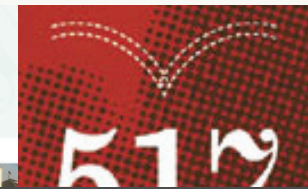
TrimTabs.com



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PRCMarin.com



Levis.com



HomeWise.com



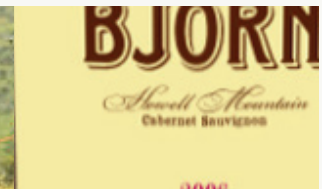
MichaelLaMacchia.com



ASmallWorld.net



TheNorthFace.com



Bjorn.com

Your website is as an extension of your business; every page design should be aligned with your business objectives. We evaluate your current website's design, features and functionality in relationship to your business objectives, and re-design based on our five requirements for effective website design.

Our unique approach:

Alignment We insure your website is aligned with your business goals.

Clear Purpose We design each page of your site with a clear purpose that is clearly communicated to the visitor, and insure each site section is optimized for its primary purpose.

Create Action We insure each section has a clearly defined "preferred action" for a visitor to take, creating actions that move the visitor toward becoming a customer

Relationship-Focused Content We make certain content is focused on creating a relationship with the visitor. Site content should build trust and a positive emotional context (the two ingredients of every relationship.)

Measurement We guide your development of measures that enable you to track the effectiveness of your web site.

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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 design is completed. This 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. Our five requirements for website design are based on the basic principals of continuous improvement and provides the basis for a successful, effective business website.

Alignment Alignment is the process of insuring all processes in your business (including your website) 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, 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.

Alignment is a simple concept. Think about it in terms of walking to the corner store. If your 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 a small probability you will reach your destination; you will 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. How do you create alignment? We look at alignment as a series of cause and effect links.

- Advertising causes store traffic
- Store traffic causes sales
- Sales causes profits

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Our first step in creating a web site design is to ask “What are your business goals?” Once we have your business goals we can begin to develop a set of site goals that are aligned. (IE., 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.

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. 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.

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.

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

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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. A clear purpose allows you to create content that ensures site visitors understand what your site is about. Don't assume your customers will figure it out for themselves; they will probably get it wrong.

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 its 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. 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.

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Creating 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 and 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. 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.

You can not increase the effectiveness of your site if the visitor does nothing. 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.

We understand the need for visitor action. A Transaction Threshold is the point where the incentives for completing an action are greater than the requirements of the site visitor. A transaction threshold is reached each time an action occurs. 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.

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 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. Providing them with the benefits of your products/services is only one of many ways to build on that need.

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. 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.

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Effective Measures Creating an effective web site requires that you track its effectiveness. And, while there are literally thousands of things you could track, there are only a few that you must track, the most important being visitor actions. Measurement allows you to determine the effectiveness of your web page design, methodically improve your site and know if your site is helping you meet your business goals. 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 its effectiveness, you will never know. Effective web sites are not the result of a master web site designer with unequalled creative talents, they are designed using a simple process which includes making changes, measuring the effect of the changes, evaluating that effect and making more changes.

Our 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 just minutes by tracking your abandon rate - the number of people who visit your web site and immediately click the back button.

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How do I know that the re-design increased the effectiveness of our site?

Valid measures is one of our five requirements for success! Most web design companies complete your web site and disappear; our job really starts when the site goes online. Before we begin our re-design, we will work with you to develop valid, business focused measures. During the re-design process we will help you maintain these measurements to create a baseline of where your site was before the re-design.

How will I know the site will continue to be effective?

Without valid tracking there is no way to determine whether or not the effectiveness of your site is increasing. We make sure that you understand how to measure the success of your site. We won't force you to keep the measures but, if you do, you will always have a clear picture of how your site is doing.

Consistently maintaining these measures gives you a base by which all future changes to the site can be compared. If the change increases the success of the site, you keep it. If not, change back and try something else. With effective measurement you always know how your site is doing.

Is this going to increase the number of visitors to my web site?

The cost of getting visitors to your site is higher today than ever and is only going to increase. Getting more visitors to the site is only a small part of the formula of increased success. It does little good to increase the number of visitors to your site if your site is not ready to turn them into customers.

Our methods focus on both aspects of the Marketing Machine: Feeding more visitors into your site and increasing the effectiveness of the site to turn visitors into customers.

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

- Is it pulling its own weight?
- Does it add value to your business?
- 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.

- Discover the relative alignment of your web site with your business goals
- Realize how effective your site is at getting your visitors to act
- Know 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?

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

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This is our blatant statement of purpose. We want you to be our customer, to hire us to design for you a more effective website. We provide this free evaluation for two reasons. The first is to start the process of building a relationship with you. A relationship built on trust, trust that we know how to create effective web sites and trust that we will do what we say. The second reason is that we think it makes more sense to expend the resources on the free evaluation than to spend those resources on hiring and managing a big sales staff.

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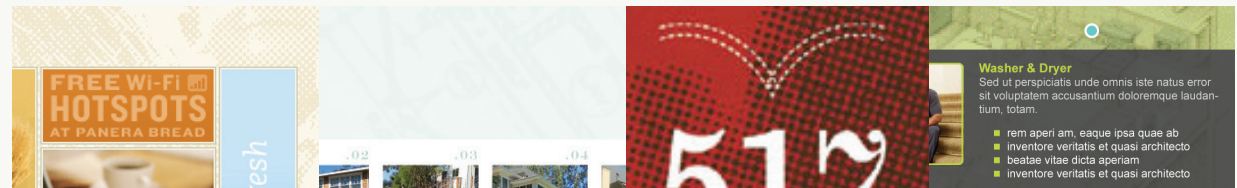


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