10 Tips for a Better Website

Written by: Merle :Ezine Ad Auction

There are just some things that need to be included in every website. If you integrate these tips into your site your visitors will "thank you" for it later:

1) Navigation: Keep it simple (KISS), and make sure it's consistent from page to page. No matter where you place your menu bar -- either at the top or down the side -- always include a small text menu at the bottom of every page. If you're one of those people easily impressed with Flash, don't design your navigation with it. There are still some people who don't have or want the plug-in, so they won't be able to navigate your site. Besides, search engine spiders can't read it, so won't be able to spider the individual pages of your site if the navigation is done in Flash.

2) Privacy Policy: With all of the concern over privacy on the Web if you collect any type of information from your visitors (even if it's just an email address) you need to include a privacy policy. There are many online templates that will help you to create one easily. Once made, post a link to it on every page of your site.

3) Contact Information: Nothing drives me more insane than having to search through an entire website just to send the owner an email. Post your contact info at the bottom of every page of your site, along with your email address. Don't make me fill out a whole form when I just want to send a simple comment. Include your email address, hotlinked and ready to go.

4) Logos & Graphics: Please keep your graphics down to a reasonable size. No one wants to wait two minutes while your huge, beautiful logo loads onto the screen. If you must use a lot of graphics to get your point across, I've got one word for you: Compression.

5) Fonts: Remember if you stray from using the standard fonts that everyone has installed on their computers (such as Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman) the viewer won't see your fonts as intended. Your users' computers will display your site in their default fonts. Stick to standards. If you must have a certain font used you'll have to turn it into a graphic to maintain its look.

6) Make It Sticky: Include interactive features if possible, such as live news feeds. Check out http://www.moreover.com for tons of news feed topics you can paste into your site for free. Use chat rooms, discussion boards, etc. You want to create a sense of community where people will want to return.

7) Newsletter: If you're going to have a website you need to offer a newsletter, even if it's strictly going to be about sale items, specials or site updates. You need to start collecting a list of your visitors' email addresses so you can keep in touch with them. Ezines help to keep your site fresh in the client's mind and helps to establish trust and credibility. For more on how to start your own ezine see *http://www.ezineuniversity.com*

The Shops on Steeles & 404, 2900 Steeles Avenue E., Suite 207, Thornhill, Ontario. L3T 4X1

Phone: 905.881-6257   .   Fax: 416.352.1501   .   Email: jacques@liwanpo.com

8) Browsers: You'd be amazed at how differently your website appears in different browsers. Make sure you take a peek at your site in Netscape and Internet Explorer. Recent stats show IE has about 80% of the market share, but you'll still want to make sure the other 20% can view your site without any problems.

9) Resolution: This is a highly debatable subject. "What resolution should I design for?" The norm these days seems to be 800X600 although there are still a small number of people limping along in 640X480. Look at your site in different resolutions to get an idea of what I'm talking about. If you don't mind letting the small majority scroll right and left, I say go with 800X600 (that's what I do) and it still looks acceptable to those surfing in mega resolutions of 1024 and higher.

10) Index Page: This may seem like a given, but I'm going to mention it anyway. On the very first page of your site (the homepage) the first paragraph should answer the "5 W's"; basically telling them who you are and what you're offering. You'd be amazed at the number of websites that leave this out; making me think "what do these people do, and what's in it for me?" You need to answer these questions and do it fast. Surfers are a very impatient group. Stop them before they click away.

If you remember the above 10 pointers when putting together your next website, you'll create a winning site that visitors will want to return to, and not run away from in frustration.

The Shops on Steeles & 404, 2900 Steeles Avenue E., Suite 207, Thornhill, Ontario. L3T 4X1

Phone: 905.881-6257 . Fax: 416.352.1501 . Email: jacques@liwanpo.com