

Ux

USER EXPERIENCE

Making Your Website Flow

When designing your website it's easy to get lost in the fancy designs and flash graphics paying little attention to how your website is navigated.

However, this is a crucial aspect of creating a successful and pleasant user experience.

Before designing your website, or handing it over to a designer, sit down and think about your audience: What do they want to see? What are they coming to your website for? What do they want to know? And how easy should it be for them to find what they are looking for?

Those answers may not be what you think. How often do you go to your company website? How often do you navigate through each page looking for a price or product? Most business owners forget when having a site designed that they are not the end-user – design for the visitors, not the CEO.

To guarantee repeat visitors do your research, ask your regular customers what they go to your website for – or if you don't already have a website ask your customers what they would like to see on your website.

Then give them what they want!

Help your website flow:

Keep everything 1-2 clicks away.

Provide a SEARCH function.

Create a descriptive sitemap.

Use plain language. Don't say 'Our Curriculum Vitae' if you can say 'About Us'.

Keep your navigation consistent.

Provide navigation at the bottom of each page.

Customize your 404 page in case someone gets lost.

Monitor your page visit statistics; make often visited pages a focus on the front page.

Provide a feedback option.



2. Custom 404

Learn how to create a custom 404 page to better help your visitors.



3. Site Maps

Learn about site maps and how to make yours a resource.



4. Navigation

How and where should you display your navigation?

Making Your Content Flow

In addition to designing your website in such a way that the pages are easily found and the site is easily

navigated it is important that your content flow naturally for those wandering through your pages.

You may need to consult with a

professional copywriter to ensure that your content reads well and can be catalogued correctly by search engines to help bring more visitors.



WEB STANDARDS AND DESIGN

If you want to learn more about web standards, 508 accessibility compliance, CSS design, and designing for a better user experience for your visitors and providing accessible content you may be interested in attending one of the no-fee twice-monthly Web Standards and Design Meetings hosted by Danielle Favreau of **Discretion Designs**.

This group focuses on how we as designers can design better websites providing a smoother and more accessible experience for website visitors.

This group meets at the Saint Louis Bread Co. in Brentwood at 7 PM on the first Thursday and the third Wednesday of each month.

For more information contact Danielle Favreau directly at 314-225-5881.



Custom 404:

Provide your users with direction when they get lost on your website.

You're visiting a website and oops!

Something went wrong. Did you do it? Was it the website? How do you figure out what went wrong?

If you're like most users you'll just hit your back button and try again. But what if it keeps happening and you aren't sure why? That's where a custom Error 404 page comes in.

The most effective Error 404 page will state firstly that something has gone amiss – without pointing blame. "We're sorry, we must have misplaced that page, maybe these can help..."

Secondly it should help you find what you were looking for. You can do this by providing a link to the site map, to the home page, and a search box.

What should your Error 404 page look like? Keep it simple.

Include your standard navigation, your logo, and footer so people know

they are still on your website and can find their way back to something familiar easily.

Make sure the options are laid out

in the order that will be most helpful for your site. For example a product site might want a site search first, whereas an informational site may want to link to the site map first.

What's even better than an Error 404 page is having an easily navigated and well documented website. If your users can find what they need in a click or two they have less chance of getting lost and leaving your website.

50% of web based sales are lost because visitors can't find the content they are looking for.



5 WAYS TO GET MORE VISITORS

1 Provide plenty of helpful links and information to make your website a resource that people return to.

2 Make it easy to find things at your site; people will come back because they know their way around.

3 Update your content often, daily if necessary. Do this with news items, a blog, or photo galleries.

4 Publish a newsletter for your company and send it out on a regular basis: monthly or quarterly.

5 Update your website's design to stay with the times and to best represent your company and brand.

Site Maps:

Do you know every page that's on your website? Your site map should.

If you're reading a manual and you want to find something fast how do you do it? If you're like most people you either go to the Table of Contents or the Index – or both – and within seconds you're at the information you want. A Site Map serves as a Table of Contents and Index for your website allowing your visitors to find what they need fast.

The main purpose of a Site Map is to provide a single page that has a link to every item on your website: every page, article, blog entry, etc.

This page does double duty: it allows your users to quickly and easily see what you have to offer and to find whatever they're looking for within one click of any page on the website, and it provides a list of what you have to offer to search engines so searchers can find your website when appropriate.

But, your Site Map shouldn't just be a bunch of words and links; if possible you should have short descriptions of each link and what people will find when they click it.

Don't forget to update your Site Map every time you add a new page to your website, a new article or when the focus of a page changes. It's important to keep your site map updated so search engines and visitors have the most up to date information about what you offer.

YOUR WEBSITE'S TRAFFIC: WHICH NUMBER MATTERS MORE?

There are two ways to count how many people visit your website: by hits and by unique visitors. Hits are counted each time your website is visited, regardless of who is visiting. Unique visitors are

only counted once on their first visit. Which is more accurate? The latter. Why? Because that tells you if people keep returning and how many new people are finding your website.



Navigation

Top, left, bottom, different for each page, which is best? Well, it depends on your website and its content.

Most people are used to left navigation but that doesn't mean it's ideal for all websites.

Before you decide, consider the types of products you have, the number of pages and categories. For websites with a static number of pages, such as a small business informational website, top navigation is most appropriate. Whereas with an ecommerce site left side navigation is better because you can expand your list without impacting the design of the page.

That said, remember to always include basic navigation at the bottom of every page.



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