Designing a Better Looking Internet

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Two Basic Approaches to Design

1) The artistic ideal of expressing yourself.
2) The engineering ideal of solving a problem for a customer.

The main goal of your website should be #2, making it easy for your customers to perform useful tasks on your site!

10 User-Friendly Web Design Techniques

- Audience
- Navigation
- Content
- Meta Data
- Consistency
- Colors
- Fonts
- Layout
- Images
- Testing

Audience

Know Your Target Audience

- Who will visit your site?
- What will they want from your site?
- Where will they come from?
- When will they come to your site?
- Why will they come to your site?
- How will they access your site?

Audience (more)

- Most of the public will come to your website to FIND A LAWYER!
- Your site should reflect your audience.
- Site structure should be determined by the tasks your customers want to perform on your site.

Audience (example)

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Navigation

Creating site navigation involves a detailed description of your site structure.

- **Site Maps** (aka flow charts) are the most useful tool in creating successful navigation.
- **Hyperlinks** (or links) are the cornerstone of the web, connecting your pages to each other and also valuable other resources.
- Customers should control navigation.

**Navigation (more)**

**Where am I?**
The current location needs to be shown at two different levels:

1) Relative to the Web as a whole.
   - Your logo should appear at the top of every page, and should link back to your homepage.

2) Relative to the site's structure.
   - Show parts of the site structure and highlight the area where the current page is.
   - Have a clear, unique title for every page.

**Navigation (example)**

**Navigation (and more)**

**Where have I been?**
It's difficult to address this question on the web. Helpful hints:
- Do not disable the "Back" button.
- Do not change standard link colors.

**Where can I go?**
This question should be answered by the visible navigation and links provided on your pages.
- Good site structure will be a major benefit for your site.
- Pull-down menu links and graphic links should only be used for navigation.
Content

- Make strong editorial choices about the hierarchies of your information.
- Content should dominate and come to the surface on every level.
- Make sure there is content on every page.
- Your design should not be decoration, it should convey information.

Content (more)

- No one really reads on the internet.
- Avoid useless or confusing information.
- Make sure content is easy to read.
- Break up information into smaller bits.
- Make content as accessible as possible.
- Make content as simple and clear as possible.

Content (example)

WASHINGTON - President Bush nominated White House counsel Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court on Monday, turning to a lawyer who has never been a judge to replace Sandra Day O'Connor and help reshape the nation's judiciary.

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Meta Data

Meta data is data about data! (Data about your site!)

- This is the information that search engines like Google and Yahoo! use to index your site, similar to a library.
- Information about your site:
  - Title
  - Description
  - Keywords

Meta Data (more)

Title
The title appears as the displayed result from search engines, and also in the title bar of the browser window. This title should match the headline for your page. It will benefit the site to have a unique title for every page.

Description
The description should be roughly 100-words about the content on your pages. A portion of this description will display with search engine results. It will benefit the site to have a unique description for every page.

Keywords
Keywords should include all possible words, and combinations of words, that your customers might type into a search engine looking for a site like yours. It will benefit the site to have unique keywords for every page.
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Consistency

Three types of consistency:

1) Consistency in Presentation
   - Customers should see information and objects in the same logical, visual, or physical way throughout the site.

2) Consistency in Behavior
   - An object should work the same everywhere, i.e. buttons, lists, and menu items should not change within or between websites.

3) Consistency in Interaction Techniques
   - Shortcut keys and mouse techniques should work similarly as other familiar websites.

Consistency (more)

From page to page, you should always be able to tell that you’re on the same site.

If someone gets lost on your site, they may never come back.

- Consistency is a key aspect of usable websites.
- Consistency aids in the formation of habits.
- Consistency reduces customer’s memory load.
Colors

1) The first color is white.
   ✓ **White** is the best background color.

2) The second color is black.
   ✓ **Black** is the best color for text.

3) The third color is red.
   ✓ **Red** is the best accent color.

Colors (more)

- **Blue** is normally reserved for links. Although, any **underlined** words are assumed to be links on the web.
- **Purple** is normally reserved for links that the customer has previously followed.
- Get your design ready in black and white and you’re on the right track.
  - **Yellow is also a good accent color.**
  - Don’t use a lot of different colors.

Colors (example)

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Fonts (aka Typefaces)

- Use fonts that are widely available on most computers, i.e Arial or Times.
- Designs are pulled together with only two or three different fonts.
- The best combination of two fonts is one light and one **bold**. (This works with **colors** too!)
- Type looks better in bigger sizes.
  - Don’t use tiny type.

Fonts (more)

SAN-SERIF FONTS - like this one (Arial), are ideal for the readability of text on the web.

SERIF FONTS - like this one (Times), are ideal for the readability of text in print.

**SPECIALTY FONTS** - like this one (Stencil), are ideal in short doses as headlines or titles. These fonts require that you save your text as an image, since these fonts are not normally installed on all computers.
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**Layout**

Standard layouts consist of:

- A header
- A left navigation bar
- A content area
- A right rail
- A footer

The C-clamp is the header, left bar and footer.

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**Layout (more)**

- White space is your friend.
- Don’t use too much text, too many colors or too many large images.
- Balance is the key.
- Avoid visual clutter.
- Avoid over sizing pages to eliminate horizontal scrolling and reduce vertical scrolling.
- Studies have shown that customers don’t like deviations from the standard layout.

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**Layout (and more)**

Your homepage is the flagship of your site.
It should be designed a little differently than other pages.
Your homepage should:

- Share style with other pages.
- Have a slightly larger logo and more prominent placement of company name.
- Create an entry into your site navigation.
- Have a prominent search feature.
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Images

- Images on the web need not be very high resolution.
- Lower resolution and smaller image sizes reduce the image file size.
- Small files load more quickly.
- Avoid using big, slow graphics, people do not like waiting.

Images (more)

- There are two ideal formats for images on the web.
  - JPG – best for photographs.
  - GIF – best for icons, buttons, backgrounds, and pictures that have less than 32 colors.
- The ideal resolution is 72 dpi (dots per inch).

Images (example)

Images (more)  Images (example)

Testing

Two types of web site testing:

1) Quality Assurance (QA) Testing
   - This involves reading pages, and testing links, images, forms, search features, etc. Making sure everything about your site is functional and working properly.
   - You should always QA test your site before putting it live on the internet to find any typographical errors, broken links, broken images or non-working forms.
Testing (more)

- Usability Testing
  - This is the best way to understand the needs of your customers!
  - This involves recruiting customers, assigning them specific tasks to perform and observing them to find out where problems exist with your site’s structure, navigation, etc.
  - You should always conduct usability tests on your site to make sure your idea of what customers expect is true to reality.
  - When in doubt about a particular design, test it and find out from real customers.

Conclusion

- Your website should be targeted to your audience. They should control navigation.
- Content and consistency are the most important aspects of your website.
- Colors, fonts, images and layout should accent your content.
- Testing your website is very important!
- What did you learn today?

Thank You!

If you have comments or questions, feel free to contact me at LeeC@staff.abanet.org or call (312) 988-5774.

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