

How effectively is your website working for you?

Top 10 tips for improving the usability of your website

Win users' confidence in your site

When a user comes to the homepage they have a number of questions, such as: What is this site for? Which company is it from? Can I trust the company? You must answer each of these questions explicitly if users are to have confidence in the site. This is particularly the case with brands that users are not familiar with from either the online or offline world.

Communicate the scope of the site from the homepage

Users rarely read explanatory text, so this is a poor means of communicating scope. You should use other interface elements to communicate these messages instead: a prominent navigation bar, rollover navigation, a tag line etc.

Provide a clear call to action from the homepage

Homepages that are very complicated look 'busy' to users. This can cause a user to feel overwhelmed with information, especially when there is no clear call to action. However, be careful not to undersell the content of the site, very simple pages can give the impression of paucity of content.

Place critical content above the fold

Users often tend to miss links, logos and other content on the homepage if it appears below the fold (i.e. the user has to scroll to view the content). really is) and warranty (returns policies, support, feedback and contact options).

Use a prominent and consistent navigation bar

Both left hand and horizontal navigation bars are usually well understood by users, provided that they are prominent and behave in a predictable way.

Keep search as simple as possible and text entry fields to a minimum

From offline form filling experience, users feel compelled to fill in as many boxes as possible in online forms – this commonly causes an over-specified and unsuccessful search.

Avoid virtual 'blind spots'

Users generally pay less attention to the top-right and bottom-left areas of a web page, and will often not notice links or content in these areas. Blind spots are also created by visual elements on the page – for example large blocks of colour near the top of a page are taken to be banners and ads, and users ignore links and content placed within or above them.

Structure and prioritise content according to the target users' needs

Web sites that are not structured around the needs of their users will be time consuming and frustrating to use. Gathering requirements from users when developing a web site or when making significant changes is central to providing an offering that is useful and usable.

Grow trust in the site quickly

If users do not trust a site they will not interact with it for long – and they will not share core information with it or purchase from it. Trust can be grown by reputation (translate real-world print or bricks-and-mortar brand value), promise (privacy policies and information on who the site really is) and warranty (returns policies, support, feedback and contact options).

Keep advertising relevant and minimise distraction

Advertising that distracts users from their task always frustrates. Distracting advertising is most problematic when users are at a low level in a site and focused on a task (e.g. reading a news story). Flashing advertising or advertising that cannot be scrolled off-screen (e.g. when in frames) is particularly distracting.

Website Health Check report

Reed Business Insight offer a Website Health Check report aimed at Marketing and Web Professionals who need to measure how effectively their website is performing against their business objectives.

The report is an ideal first step if you want to review how healthy your website is or if you are about to make changes to the design of your website.

What does the report contain?

Our 30 page report provides expert recommendations to support your strategy for the commercial success of your website:

- User experience feedback on navigation, functionality, site structure, ease of use & labelling
- SEO feedback to help you improve your website's search engine ranking
- Design recommendations to give your site better visual appeal & user interaction with your content

To see a Website Health Check report, please go to: <http://tinyurl.com/mkyxm8>

To book your Website Health Check report, or to find out more, please contact:

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