

5 Most Common Web Design Mistakes

By Candice Pardue

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As you're designing your new web site, you'll be tempted with web design ideas that could turn into fatal mistakes. This is especially true if your web site represents your business. Below are five of the most common mistakes to avoid at all costs...

1. Too Many Graphics

Having too many graphics (particularly large graphics), can cause your site to load entirely too slow. Visitors will get impatient and often times click out of your site -- never to return.

SOLUTION: When possible save your graphics as GIF files (gif.htm) rather than JPEG (jpg.htm). Also, reduce your graphic in actual size as much as you can without distorting the graphic or picture.

2. Counters

A visitor counter or hits counter should not be seen on your site unless you have tremendous traffic. The reason for this is visitors really don't want to know which visitor they are, especially if they're visitor number four. There's no benefit to your visitor, nor is there any benefit to you. The only way showing a counter is advantageous is if you've had millions of visitors and wish to display the popularity of your site or would like to attract advertisers with the large numbers. Otherwise, you can use this space for a benefit-packed headline that leads your

visitor to another part of your site.

SOLUTION: Most web hosts offer web statistics that reveal daily visitors, hits, referrers, etc. This feature will let you know how many people are visiting your site without the whole world seeing the information. If you're just starting out, make sure your web host offers this free service.

3. Banners

Limit your banners to the bare necessities. Why? Because banners are graphics that can slow loading time and are a turn-off for many surfers on the internet. For most, "banner" is just another word for "ad" and they avoid clicking on them.

SOLUTION: If you do have a banner or two, place the banner at the very top or bottom of your page. Or you could place a small banner in your sidebar. Most people will look at the first picture they see and then start reading below the picture, so any writing or links that are above the banner may remain unnoticed. Also, the banners on your site should be related to your product or service. Remember, everything on your site should work together to benefit your target customer.

4. Scattered Web Site

When designing your site, make sure it has a pattern that leads your visitor. Get several people (friends or relatives) to visit your site and watch them as they navigate. Notice the places where they stop (as if they're finished) and also links that they click on. Organizing your site to lead visitors is very important whether you're leading them to buy something or just to click and go to another place in your site. Customers are silently begging to be led.

SOLUTION: Take a look at the flow of your site. Design it in a fashion that always continues like this...

Make sure that graphics don't get in the way of your lead. If the visitor stops in the middle of the home page to click on a graphic or banner before getting to your sales page,

they may never return. You've got one chance to get the visitor's attention and keep it. Make the most of it.

5. Generalization

The most effective way of selling on the internet is to personalize your web site to reach your target audience. Many web sites are general and try to reach everybody. The reality is that you can't be everything to everybody. The business owners who are successful on the web normally have very specific products or services that target a niche market.

SOLUTION: Make your site as personal as possible. As you're writing, pretend that you are face to face with the customer. Present your web site in such a way that the visitor feels like he just walked into a store in his hometown. Also, stay focused on your target customer (one who would be interested in "your" product.)

These five mistakes should be avoided at all costs if you want to build an effective and successful web business.

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