

How to Make Your Homepage Flow

By Candice Pardue

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Believe me, you want your visitors to stay as long as possible. This is the only way your site is going to succeed. Your site must be interesting, persuading, and easy to navigate.

First let me tell you a couple of misconceptions about how to design websites.

1. Many people assume that because the internet is so "big" and covers such a vast amount of areas around the world, their website has to be everything to everybody. They design their website for "everybody" in the world and never have a distinct purpose. No purpose and no direction results in no sales! That's a profound statement but so true.

How many websites have you visited that had no purpose, no direction, and no real valuable information that you stayed and surfed around the site a while?

You click to that site only to find twenty links that are all non-related to the site's description nor to each other. A link to the left takes you to a computer store online while a link to the right takes you to a sports website. Five banners straight down the middle of the homepage all going in five different directions. No direction or purpose whatsoever. Even if that company did offer what you were looking for, you probably would not consider that company as an expert or even trustworthy after one glance at the website,

would you?

2. The second misconception is that selling on the web is different or easier than selling offline. I know from experience that sales is sales is sales. Even if your business is on the web, you still must take the same steps to gain a customer's trust as you do offline. Your product will not sell itself, just like your website will not promote itself. You must take the necessary steps to promote your site as well as give a persuading presentation once the visitor arrives.

Now that you know a couple of the most common misconceptions on the web, you can move forward with designing your website with these in mind. Don't worry, if you've already designed your website for "everybody", it's not too late to focus in on your sole purpose. It's far less painful to design your website with your one purpose in mind from the beginning -- and less costly.

Below are 3 important steps you can take while designing your website to insure navigation ease for your visitors:

1. Place your "appealing headline" below any banner or logo at the top of the page. This is the headline that persuades your visitor to continue reading your homepage -- to spark their interest in your product or service. Write your headline to your target customer.

The visitor should have no doubt about what kind of website he/she just entered.

If your purpose is to sell books, your headline should say something about books or a particular book that's very popular. This will insure your "targeted" potential customers that they are at the right site for what they're searching for. Visitors who aren't looking for books really aren't your customers, are they? You're letting them know up front that they're in the wrong website.

The reason for placing your headline below your logo or banner is because

people tend to look at the "picture" first and then begin reading below the picture.

2. Place a scroll bar or navigation bar at the right hand or left hand side of your homepage. A general rule of thumb is to place your scroll bar on the left hand side if your website is information-based and you offer just one to three products. Place your scroll bar on the right hand side if your website is set up like a catalog offering many different products.

The scroll bar provides your visitor with options to move around within your website without crowding the homepage. Your homepage should be an introduction to your website or your product or service, not your entire website. The information should be intriguing to your "target" visitor and lead the visitor to the next page or to your desired response at the bottom of the homepage.

3. Continue your homepage. Write to your visitor in a way that he/she can't wait to go to the next page and continue. But don't stop there -- when your visitor gets to the bottom, be sure to say "Go to the Next Page Here..." or "Continue to Next Page...", something to persuade your visitor to go the next page. The ... always leaves a sense of continuance also!

Implement these three methods while designing your homepage to insure navigation ability for your visitors. Remember, your visitors can only turn into paying customers if you get a chance to make your presentation.

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