

The Five Step Process

To Building A Better Website



Determine the feel of your site
Clarify your message
Improve your layout
Improve your typography
Upgrade your imagery

Introduction

Good design has become a vital tool to help your business stand out and stay strong. Good website design isn't just about the look and feel of your site, it's also about how well your customers can interact with it and how well you communicate your message through it.

Your website is often your customers first interaction with your company, so the way it's design (the way it looks and operates) should be one of the highest priorities of your marketing plan. If you take the time to go through the following steps you'll be better in tune with what your customers need from your website and what you're wanting to communicate.

Step 1: Determine The Feel Of Your Site

How do you want your customers to feel about your products and services. If you're selling financial services you probably want them to feel "secure, confident, and optimistic". If you're selling motorcycles you're probably after "excitement, adrenaline, adventure". Just coming up with these key words and ranking them can help guide the design process.

PROCESS **Step 1A**

In the space below, write down how you hope your visitors feel while they're at your website.

Example: motivated,
goal setting,
accomplishing tasks.

PROCESS
Step 1B

Now order your list of feelings from most important to least important.

Example

1. motivated
2. accomplishing tasks
3. goal setting

Step 2: Clarify Your Message

Clarifying your message often involves editing and reducing the quantity of text on your website. That's not to say your site should spare any words that are working to convey your message. It really means you must make sure the words are pulling their weight. Getting a copywriter to assist you is often a good idea.

PROCESS
Step 2

Print the pages of your current website and do some editing. Chances are the content that's there is very necessary but it may need to be broken into more easily readable chunks. Use lists at the top of long pages to show what's to come further down the page.

Step 3: Improve Your Layout

- a) Adding **whitespace** to your pages may be the single biggest thing you can do to improve your layout. Whitespace improves a persons ability to choose the content that's important to them and helps your site appear clearer, better organized, and easier to use.
- b) Add **pullquotes**. Pullquotes highlight certain sentences within your text, and help draw the visitors eye into your message.
- c) Use **breadcrumbs** to show the visitor where they are within your site if you have more than two levels in your sites navigational structure.
- d) Add useful tools and information in **columns**. Tools include user response forms, newsletter signups, and calendars. Information can include testimonials, special offers, and page overviews.
- e) **Lists** used at the top of pages help add whitespace and give your visitor a glimpse of what they'll find on a particular page. They also help to further organize your content making your site easier to use.

PROCESS Step 3

Define some useful features for your site that will also improve the page layout.

Examples

Client testimonials,
pullquotes,
calculators or other tools,
user response forms.

4. Improve Your Typography

Good typography can drive home certain messages that you want your site to convey and add important imagery at the same time. A sentence set off in the right font will get *noticed* and *felt*. Pullquotes within your text draw the user in when a large block of unbroken text might make them leave. Of course the proper use of whitespace within your copy is key.

PROCESS **Highlight one or two sentences on appropriate pages of**
Step 4 **your site that can be used for pullquotes or typography**
 graphics.

5. Upgrade Your Imagery

Good illustration and photography used appropriately can greatly enhance the look of your site. Professional photography and stock photography are at wide ends of the cost spectrum. Of course you'll get just the shots you need from a professional, but if your needs are for more generic photography, like a photo of a lake for instance, you can often find good stock photography for a little over a dollar an image.

PROCESS **Step 5**

Make an imagery plan for your site. List the types of photos and info graphics that you think will help your visitors better understand your products and services.

Example

We used graphics and imagery sparingly on the ID Web and Print website to make the site clear and easy to use. Website development can be a confusing service to buy and we wanted to create a feeling of ease and simplicity. We found photos on istockphoto.com which we often recommend to clients.

Conclusion

Going through these steps should have helped you come to a better realization of what your website could be doing to better serve your visitors and customers. If you choose to use our service we'll take care of some of the steps for you like typography and ideas for content and imagery. Building a better website is in the details and if you take the time to consider them you'll be a step closer to giving your customers exactly what they need when they visit your site.