

## 15 tips for designing a successful web site.

(1) The main page of your web site should load in 8 seconds or less with a 56K modem.

According to two surveys, conducted by Forrester Research and Gartner Group, ecommerce sites are losing \$1.1 to \$1.3 billion in revenue each year due to customers click-away caused by slow loading sites. If a page takes too long to load, your potential customer will not wait. Ultimately costing you business.

(2) Make sure you include proper META tags within the HTML of each page of your web site. META tags are HTML code that enable the Search Engines to determine what keywords are relevant to a specific site. About 80 percent of all web site traffic originates from the major Search Engines. It would be a good idea to make sure you've done your homework and fully understand how to optimize your web pages prior to designing your site.

(3) Be cautious when selecting your background and text colors. Busy backgrounds make text difficult to read and draw attention away from the text. Always be consistent with your background theme on each page of your site. Your site should be nicely organized and uniform throughout.

Keep in mind, colors affect your mood and will have an affect on your visitors as well. Bright colors such as yellow and orange, cause you to become more cheerful or happy. Colors such as blue and purple have a calming effect. Dark colors such as brown and black have a depressing effect. A good rule of thumb is to use colors based on the type of effect you're trying to achieve.

(4) Avoid using too many animated graphics. Not only can they be very distracting, but they can also cause your page to look unprofessional. In addition, animated graphics cause your page to load more slowly. Fancy graphics won't make sales.

(5) Your main page should specifically let your visitors know exactly what you're offering. How many times have you visited a site and never figured out exactly what they were selling? If your potential customer can't find your product or service, they definitely won't waste a lot of time looking for it. They'll go on to the next site and probably never return. They're visiting your site for a specific purpose. They want something your site offers. Whether it is information, a product or service.

(6) Try to avoid placing banners at the top of your page. These can instantly take your customers or even be indexed by Search Engine robots. Limit the number of banners on your site to no more than two per page. One is ideal.

(7) Always, include your contact information on each page of your site. In addition, try to reply to all comments and suggestions within 48 hours. This will help promote good business relationships. Your business relationships are the key to your success.

(8) ALWAYS check and double-check your site for spelling and grammatical errors. In addition, make sure your images and links are all working properly. If you have several errors, your site will appear to be unprofessional. If you've been out of school for a while, you may want to refresh your memory.

(9) Design your site to be easily navigated. Place your navigation links together at the top, bottom, left or right side of the page. Use tables to neatly align your links. If you are planning on using graphic buttons to navigate your site, keep in mind, with each graphic you add to your page, it will take that much longer for your page to load. If you

only have a handful of navigational links, using graphic buttons will be fine. If you have over six links, it would be wise to simply use text links to keep your load time down.

(10) If you must use frames, use them sparingly. If frames are not properly used, they can make your site look unprofessional. Avoid making your visitors have to scroll from side to side to view your content. This can be very irritating and cause your visitors to leave. If you must use frames, offer your visitors a choice. Frames versus no frames.

(11) Try to keep the number of clicks required to get from your main page to any other page on your site down to three. Keep in mind, your visitors may enter your site from pages other than your main. Always have good navigational links on every page and place your company logo at the top of each page.

(12) There are thousands of free scripts available on the Internet that will enable you to create all kinds of special effects. You may be tempted to try some of these scripts. However, be very selective and only use a special effect that will add value to your site.

(13) If you're using music on your site, make sure that you do not set it to "autoplay." It can be very distracting.

(14) All web browsers are not created equally. View your site through different browsers and screen resolutions so you will see how your visitors will view your site.

Visit the following site to test your web pages:

[www.NetMechanic.com](http://www.NetMechanic.com) - Provides a variety of free services for your web site including browser compatibility testing, graphic file size reduction, link check, HTML check, load time check, spell check and more.

(15) Continually add new content to your site. Give your visitors a reason to keep coming back.

The best advice I can offer is to keep it simple. The simple, well-designed, professional looking web sites make the sales.