

Free Edition



# Building Websites

## The RIGHT Way

By Tsipi & David Gibor

**Dreams** Designers



## INTRODUCTION

Every business owner today knows that he must put up a website, otherwise he will not be taken seriously by his potential customers. There are many website designers out-there who will gladly help business owners in placing a website online. However, in many cases business owners don't understand that the idea is not just to put up any type of page on the web, but to effectively use the Internet to grow their business! We have seen many business owners which are tempted to choose a low offer from some novice designer which results in a poor website, which leaves a bad impression on their potential customers. Alternatively we have seen people pay top \$\$ for super flashy and slick designs, which are very beautiful and cool visually – yet do not bring the expect results = customers!

DreamsDesigners.com is a different type of provider. Our team is focused on achieving success on the Internet, and not only getting accredited for a "cool" design. We combine years of experience in the online world, and in most cases, can guess what can work, and what won't. The following E-book was written to educate our customers in the various considerations that are been taken into account when a website is developed by the DreamsDesigners.com team. If you read carefully this E-book, you will be able to understand some of the concepts behind good web design, which will eventually lead to more business

Enjoy,

*Tsipi Gibor & David Gibor*

<http://www.DreamsDesigners.com>



# CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

**Chapter 1: Good Design Practices .....3**

The Importance of A Good Design .....3

Good Design Practices.....4

Improve Usability of Your Website .....5

Make It Easy To Buy From Your Site.....5

**Chapter 2: Search Engine Friendly Websites .....7**

Reducing Load Time Through Image Optimization .....7

Search Engine Friendly Pages.....8

The Importance of a Sitemap.....9

Pros and Cons of Flash-based Sites .....10

**Chapter 3: The Art Of Conversions.....12**

Ways To Improve Sales Through Your Website .....12

5 Ways to Keep Visitors Coming Back to your website.....13

Building Your Mailing List with Downloads .....14



## CHAPTER 1

# GOOD DESIGN PRACTICES

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD DESIGN

Your website is the hub of your online business; it is the virtual representation of your company whether your company exists physically or not. When you are doing business online, people cannot see you physically like how they could if they were dealing with an offline company. Hence, people do judge you by your covers. This is where a good design comes in .

Imagine if you are running an offline company. Would you allow your salespersons to be dressed in shabby or casual clothes when they are dealing with your customers? By making your staff wear professionally, you are telling your customers that you do care about quality. This works simply because first impressions matter.

Similarly, the same case is with your website. If your website is put together shabbily and looks like a 5 minute "quick fix", you are literally shouting to your visitors that you are not professional and you do not care for quality .



On the opposite, if you have a totally professional looking website layout, you are giving your visitors the perception that you have given meticulous attention to every detail and you care about professionalism. You are organised, focused and you really mean business .

On the other hand, you should also have anything related to your company well designed. From business cards to letterheads to promotional brochures, every little bit matters. This is because as you grow your business, these items become the face of your business. Once again, think of the "salesperson dressed shabbily" analogy, and you will get my point.

## GOOD DESIGN PRACTICES

Your website is where your business resides -- it's like the headquarter of an offline company. Hence, it is important to practise good design principles to make sure your site reaches out to the maximum number of visitors and sells to as many people as possible.

Make sure you have clear directions on the navigation of your website. The navigation menu should be uncluttered and concise so that visitors know how to navigate around your website without confusion.

Reduce the number of images on your website. They make your site load very slowly and more often than not they are very unnecessary. If you think any image is essential on your site, make sure you optimize them using image editing programs so that they have a minimum file size.

Keep your text paragraphs at a reasonable length. If a paragraph is too long, you should split it into separate paragraphs so that the text blocks will not be too big. This is important because a block of text that is too large will deter visitors from reading your content.

Make sure your website complies to web standards at [www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org) and make sure they are cross-browser compatible. If your website looks great in Internet Explorer but breaks horribly in Firefox and Opera, you will lose out on a lot of prospective visitors.

Avoid using scripting languages on your site unless it is absolutely necessary. Use scripting languages to handle or manipulate data, not to create visual effects on your website. Heavy scripts will slow down the loading time of your site and even crash some browsers. Also, scripts are not supported across all browsers, so some visitors might miss important information because of that.

Use CSS to style your page content because they save a lot of work by styling all elements on your website in one go.



## IMPROVE USABILITY OF YOUR WEBSITE

No matter how brilliant your website design is, if it is hard to reach the content of your site then your site is as useful as an empty shell. Here are some tips to improve the usability of your website to ensure it serves its functions optimally.

The first method is to make sure the typography of your content is suitable. If you have large blocks of text, make sure to use CSS to space out the lines accordingly. The longer a single line of text is, the greater the line-height of each line should be. Also, make sure the font size of your text is big enough to read easily. Some sites have 10-pixel-tall text in Verdana font; while that may look neat and tidy, you have to really strain your eyes to read the actual text.

Make it easy for visitors to find content that they want on your site. If you have thousands of articles on your site and a certain visitor wants to find one single article from that pile, you have to provide a feasible means to enable visitors to do that without hassle. Be it an SQL-driven database search engine or just a glossary or index of articles that you have, providing such a feature will make sure your visitors can use your site with ease.

Ensure that your site loads fast if you do not want to lose visitors. Most internet users will leave a website if it doesn't load completely within 15 seconds, so make sure the crème de la crème of your website is delivered to the visitors as soon as possible to retain their attention.

Last of all, test each and every link on your site before it goes online. There is nothing more effective in tarnishing your professional image than broken links, so be very careful about that.

## MAKE IT EASY TO BUY FROM YOUR SITE

Convincing your prospects to purchase from you is a hard job, but have you ever thought that you're making the process twice as difficult for both parties if your prospects are convinced but don't know how to buy from you? No matter how good you are at convincing your prospects, they won't buy if they find the process cumbersome.

First, you will want to check that people can find your order form easily and hassle-free. You can write a clear, concise paragraph to direct your prospects to your order form so that you can minimize the chances



of them getting lost. You can also reduce the chances of losing prospects by putting a prominent link to your order page from every other page on your site.

Also, do you offer multiple payment options? Some people may feel comfortable paying via Paypal, some may only want to pay with their credit card and others might want to send a cheque. The more options you offer, the better your chances of covering your prospects' desired payment method. After all, it wouldn't make any sense to sell hard to a prospect only to find that they won't be able to pay you when they want to.

On the other hand, you will want to prove that you are a credible merchant. Is your order form secured using encryption technology? You would want to look into SSL for this. You can also offer a money back guarantee so that people will feel confident about buying from you. How about after sales support? Who do they contact when they have problems after purchasing?

Alternatively, you can add customer testimonials, your contact information, address, and so on to boost your prospects' confidence. Make them feel safe about buying something from you, a total stranger to them on the other end of the Internet.

As a conclusion, it would be very pitiful if you sold hard and sold well to a prospect and something goes wrong when he or she is ready to pay. Eliminate any chances of that to maximize your profits!



## CHAPTER 2

# SEARCH ENGINE

# FRIENDLY WEBSITES

## REDUCING LOAD TIME THROUGH IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

Even though more and more Internet users switch to broadband every year, a large portion of the web's population is still running on good old dialup connections. It is therefore unwise to count them out of the equation when you're designing your website, and a very major consideration we have to make for dialup users is the loading time of your website.

Generally, all the text on your website will be loaded in a very short time even on a dialup connection. The culprit of slow-loading sites is mainly large images on your website, and it is very important to strike a delicate balance between using just enough images to attract your users and not to bog down the overall loading time of your site.

You should also go to a greater length and optimize every image on your site to make sure it loads in the least time possible. What I really mean is to use image editing software to remove unnecessary information on your images, and thereby effectively reducing the file size of your image without affecting its appearance.

If you own Photoshop, it will be obvious to you that when you save an image as a JPEG file, a dialog box appears and lets you choose the "quality" of the JPEG image -- normally a setting of 8 to 10 is good enough as it will preserve the quality of your image while saving it at a small file size. If you do not have





Photoshop, there are many free image compressors online that you can download and use to reduce your image's file size.

On the other hand, you can opt to save your images in PNG format to get the best quality at the least file size. You can also save your images in GIF format -- the image editing software clips away all the color information not used in your image, hence giving you the smallest file size possible. However, saving in GIF format will often compromise the appearance of your image, so make your choice wisely!

## SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY PAGES

There is no point in building a website unless there are visitors coming in. A major source of traffic for most sites on the Internet is search engines like Google, Yahoo!, MSN, Altavista and so on. Hence, by designing a search engine friendly site, you will be able to rank easily in search engines and obtain more visitors.

Major search engines use programs called crawlers or robots to index websites to list on their search result pages. They follow links to a page, reads the content of the page and record it in their own database, pulling up the listing as people search for it.

If you want to make your site indexed easily, you should avoid using frames on your website. Frames will only confuse search engine robots and they might even abandon your site because of that. Moreover, frames make it difficult for users to bookmark a specific page on your site without using long, complicated scripts.

Do not present important information in Flash movies or in images. Search engine robots can only read text on your source code so if you present important words in Flash movies and images rather than textual form, your search engine ranking will be affected dramatically.

Use meta tags accordingly on each and every page of your site so that search engine robots know at first glance what that particular page is about and whether or not to index it. By using meta tags, you are making the search engine robot's job easier so they will crawl and index your site more frequently.

Stop using wrong HTML tags like <font> to style your page. Use CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) instead because they are more effective and efficient. By using CSS, you can eliminate redundant HTML tags and make your pages much lighter and faster to load.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF A SITEMAP

A sitemap is often considered redundant in the process of building a website, and that is indeed the fact if you made a sitemap for the sake of having one. By highlighting the importance of having a well constructed sitemap, you will be able to tailor your own sitemap to suit your own needs.

### 1) Navigation purposes

A sitemap literally acts as a map of your site. If your visitors browses your site and gets lost between the thousands of pages on your site, they can always refer to your sitemap to see where they are, and navigate through your pages with the utmost ease.

### 2) Conveying your site's theme

When your visitors load up your sitemap, they will get the gist of your site within a very short amount of time. There is no need to get the "big picture" of your site by reading through each page, and by doing that you will be saving your visitors' time.

### 3) Site optimization purposes

When you create a sitemap, you are actually creating a single page which contains links to every single page on your site. Imagine what happens when search engine robots hit this page -- they will follow the links on the sitemap and naturally every single page of your site gets indexed by search engines! It is also for this purpose that a link to the sitemap has to be placed prominently on the front page of your website.

### 4) Organization and relevance

A sitemap enables you to have a complete bird's eye view of your site structure, and whenever you need to add new content or new sections, you will be able to take the existing hierarchy into consideration just by glancing at the sitemap. As a result, you will have a perfectly organized site with everything sorted according to their relevance.

From the above reasons, it is most important to implement a sitemap for website projects with a considerable size. Through this way, you will be able to keep your website easily accessible and neatly organized for everyone.



## PROS AND CONS OF FLASH-BASED SITES

Flash-based sites have been a craze since the past few years, and as Macromedia compiles more and more great features into Flash, we can only predict there will be more and more flash sites around the Internet. However, Flash based sites have been disputed to be bloated and unnecessary. Where exactly do we draw the line? Here's a simple breakdown.

### THE GOOD:

#### INTERACTIVITY

Flash's Actionscript opens up a vast field of possibilities. Programmers and designers have used Flash to create interactive features ranging from very lively feedback forms to attractive Flash-based games. This whole new level of interactivity will always leave visitors coming back for more.

#### A STANDARDIZED SITE

With Flash, you do not have to worry about cross-browser compatibility. No more woes over how a certain css code displays differently in Internet Explorer, Firefox and Opera. When you position your site elements in Flash, they will always appear as they are as long as the user has Flash Player installed.

#### BETTER EXPRESSION THROUGH ANIMATION

In Flash, one can make use of its animating features to convey a message in a much more efficient and effective way. Flash is a lightweight option for animation because it is vector based (and hence smaller file sizes) as opposed to real "movie files" that are raster based and hence much larger in size.

### THE BAD AND THE UGLY...

#### THE FLASH PLAYER

People have to download the Flash player in advance before they can view Flash movies, so by using Flash your visitor range will decrease considerably because not everyone will be willing to download the Flash player just to view your site. You'll also have to put in additional work in redirecting the user to the Flash download page if he or she doesn't have the player installed.

#### SITE OPTIMIZATION

If your content was presented in Flash, most search engines wouldn't be able to index your content. Hence, you will not be able to rank well in search engines and there will be less traffic heading to your site.

#### LOADING TIME

Users have to wait longer than usual to load Flash content compared to regular text and images, and some visitors might just lose their patience and click the Back button. The longer your Flash takes to load, the more you risk losing visitors.



The best way to go is to use Flash only when you absolutely need the interactivity and motion that comes with it. Otherwise, use a mixture of Flash and HTML or use pure text if your site is purely to present simple textual and graphical information.



## CHAPTER 3

# THE ART OF CONVERSIONS

### WAYS TO IMPROVE SALES THROUGH YOUR WEBSITE

Anyone who has been marketing online knows that the lifeblood of a business is the traffic of a site. More visitors equal more sales. However, here are some ways that you can tweak your sites with to improve sales without the need to get more visitors.

The first method is to weave in your personal touch in your sales message. Nobody wants to be sold to by a total stranger, but many people will buy what their close friends recommend to them. If you can convince your audience that you are a personal friend who has their best interest at heart, they will be convinced to buy your products. Remember to speak to an individual in your salesletter, not to your whole audience.

The second method is to publish testimonials and comments from your customers. A good idea would be to publish both good and bad comments; that way prospects will be really convinced that these testimonials are real. When prospects see testimonials on your website, they will have the confidence to buy from you because human beings follow the herd mentality; when others have bought and proven it authentic, they will jump on the bandwagon and buy too.

Use visual representations for the problems and solutions that your product offers. Not everyone will read your text copy from the head to the tail, but most people will pay attention to images on your website.



Offer quality bonuses to accompany the product. When you offer bonuses that complement your product, your prospects will feel it's a very good deal and it would be stupid to miss it. Be sure to state the monetary value of your bonuses so that people will be even more compelled to grab your good bargain.

Lastly, ask for the sale! Many people entice their prospects with the benefits of their product, sell to them with stories of how it has solved many problems, even offered killer bonuses but forget to ask for the sale. Give a clear instruction on how to buy your product (e.g. "click the button to buy now!").

## 5 WAYS TO KEEP VISITORS COMING BACK TO YOUR WEBSITE

A lot of successful websites depend on returning visitors to account for a major part of their traffic. Returning visitors are easier to convert into paying customers because the more often they return to a site, the more trust they have in that site. The credibility issue just melts away. Hence, keep your visitors coming back to your site with the following methods:

### 1) Start a forum, chatroom or shoutbox

When you start a forum, chatroom or shoutbox, you are providing your visitors a place to voice their opinions and interact with their peers -- all of them are visitors of your site. As conversations build up, a sense of community will also follow and your visitors will come back to your site almost religiously every day.

### 2) Start a web log (blog)

Keep an online journal, or more commonly known as a blog, on your site and keep it updated with latest news about yourself. Human beings are curious creatures and they will keep their eyes glued to the monitor if you post fresh news frequently. You will also build up your credibility as you are proving to them that there is also a real life person behind the website.

### 3) Carry out polls or surveys

Polls and surveys are other forms of interaction that you should definitely consider adding to your site. They provide a quick way for visitors to voice their opinions and to get involved in your website. Be sure to publish polls or surveys that are strongly relevant to the target market of your website to keep them interested to find out about the results.

### 4) Hold puzzles, quizzes and games



Just imagine how many office workers procrastinate at work every day, and you will be able to gauge how many people will keep visiting your site if you provide a very interesting or addicting way of entertainment. You can also hold competitions to award the high score winner to keep people trying continuously to earn the prize.

## 5) Update frequently with fresh content

Update your site frequently with fresh content so that every time your visitors come back, they will have something to read on your site. This is the most widely known and most effective method of attracting returning visitors, but this is also the least carried out one because of the laziness of webmasters. No one will want to browse a site that looks the same over ten years, so keep your site updated with fresh bites!

## BUILDING YOUR MAILING LIST WITH DOWNLOADS

A mailing list is the lifeblood of your online business. The old adage "the money is in the list" cannot be true enough -- if you had a targeted list of prospects to contact each time you have a new product, you will be able to save a lot of effort by marketing it to your existing list of targeted prospects.

You can actually build up a targeted list of prospects that are interested in your products by offering a relevant download on your website. For example, let's take a look at a very good example -- apple.com. When you download the free iTunes and Quicktime software from their site, they will ask you to fill in an optional name and email form so that they can send you offers on songs that you can purchase via -- guess where -- iTunes!

In reality, you do not need to offer such a "heavyweight" download such as a full-feature software like iTunes. You can attract prospects equally well with some quality freebies such as a simple report, a free wallpaper, and so on. The important thing is that your download offers enough value for the prospect to be willing to give away his/her own email address to get it.

However, slapping together a simple download and putting a link on your website won't be enough to attract qualified prospects. You will have to do some homework in order for your lead-generating mechanism to work well for you.

First of all, you must place your download form prominently on your website. Preferably, dedicate a page to it and link to that page from every other page of your website. That way, there is no way your visitors cannot find the download page, and when they do, you'll get some of them converted into your prospects!

Also, you have to put a little effort into promoting your download. Explain and elaborate on the values of the download, and why your visitors should download it. You might think why would anyone want to pass



on a freebie, but most of your visitors would be too lazy to take the effort to download it because most of their downloads just sit on the hard-disk collecting virtual dust. It is hence important to show your visitors why they should download your freebie.