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How Your Web Site's Graphic Design Can Help More Customers Buy From You

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Have you ever gone to a Web site that had a 30-second Flash video greeting that asked you to “please wait while intro loads?” Have you arrived at a home page to find a mish-mash of confusing text blocks, with no clear direction on where to look for what you need? Or how about that all-black background with purple copy that’s nearly impossible to read? Worst of all, what about those flashing messages with animated monkeys jumping all around?

These problems are the result of poor site design. The “look and feel” of your site, from the customer’s perspective, can make or break the success of your online business.

While it’s very unlikely that you’ll be designing the graphics on your site yourself, it’s important to know about the graphic design considerations that are unique to the Web. Then, when you meet with a skilled Web designer, you can speak his/her language and provide the necessary elements that will drive success.

Details your Web site’s graphic designer needs you to know...

- **About Colors:** There are 256 Web-safe colors available that read properly on any computer monitor. Your designer will make every attempt to match your logo colors with the Web-safe choices, but probably can’t use your Pantone® colors or match them exactly. Check out www.webmonkey.com to view Web-safe colors.
- **About Images:** Images must be provided or created in specific formats for proper display on the Web. The three most common image file formats are .jpg, .gif and .png. (.bmp files offer excellent image resolution or sharpness, but they’ll be too large for the Web.)
 - .jpg files are the best for photos.
 - .gif is the most common type of file for graphic images.
 - .png offers excellent editing capabilities.
- **About File Sizes:** “File size” refers to how much space a file takes up on the server. For your Web pages to load quickly (in 30 seconds or less) and provide customers with instant viewing, small file sizes—of 80 KB or less for the entire page—are best. This topic may come up in your design discussion if you want to feature lots of photos or one huge image file on any given page of your site.

When you meet with a Web graphic designer, be prepared to answer these questions:

1. **What does your current brand look like?** Describe in detail (or attach your Branding Guidelines):
 - Logo:
 - Color palette:
 - Typography (fonts and styles):
 - Imagery (illustration, art):
 - Photography:
 - Other considerations (use of white space, position of elements):
2. **What is the visual tone to be conveyed on your site?** (lighthearted, fun, practical, bright, cheery, serious, authoritative, feminine)
3. **Does your audience already know your brand?**
4. **What do your competitors look like on their sites?**
5. **Do you own digital photographs for your products, services and people? If so, in what size and format?**
6. **Do you own artwork/illustrations?**

These are just some of the ways you can boost your success on the Internet.

To learn more, you'll want to check out the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization, a clear, methodical 7-step approach to increasing Web conversions and sales.

Pam Foster, senior copywriter and online content consultant, is the founder of the ContentClear™ Marketing Method for Web Site Optimization (www.contentclear.com). Her diverse 28-year marketing communications background includes writing and consulting for many types of industries promoting B2C and B2B products and services. She has 13 years of experience in Web content writing and strategy, SEO, and information architecture, as well as direct mail – all for clients such as L.L. Bean, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine, the American Cancer Society, Harper College, AWAI, Downeast Energy and many others.

Pam is co-author of 9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site and several other books under the Internet Jungle Guide brand (www.internetjungleguide.com). She has won 100+ marketing awards including New England DMA (Direct Marketing Association), Web Marketing Association, Telly, and Catalog Age. She is an AWAI Copywriters Wall-of-Fame honoree. Pam works mainly with larger corporate clients, helping them optimize their Web sites to boost conversions and sales. She also offers personal coaching services to copywriters looking to elevate their Web content and client service skills and learn her 7-step Web site optimization method. You can contact Pam at pam@contentclear.com.

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