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How to Make Sure Your Web Site's Design is Helping, Not Hindering, Your Chances for Online Success

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Have you ever visited a Web site where you can't find what you want? Or it takes more than three clicks to get to the page you need? How about not being able to locate contact information or basic facts? Worst of all, have you ever decided to order a product on a site, but had to jump through all kinds of frustrating hoops to do so, and ultimately gave up?

These problems are all the result of poor site design. And believe us, you don't want these problems to happen to your prospects and customers. Here are some important tips you can use to plan a site design that will help your customers quickly make purchase decisions and hit the "ORDER NOW!" button.

A great site design will clearly outline all the functions and features you need on your site to have the best chance of generating profits. These may include:

- Online brochures
- Interactive forms (fill in and submit)
- Databases for searching
- E-commerce/catalog
- Links and downloads
- Discussion forums

A great site design also determines all the pages (and types of pages) you need on your site, such as:

- Home
- About Us
- Product or Service Overview
- Product Detail Pages
- Testimonials
- Newsletter
- Specification Sheets
- Order Form/Shopping Cart
- FAQ Page
- Press Room
- Event or Sales Promotions/Special Offers
- Special Landing Pages (pages tied to a specific promotion)
- Contact Us

Business sites should always have:

- Full business name, address, phone and e-mail address on every page. This builds trust with your customers. They want to know who you are, where you are and how to contact you.
- Thumbnail (small) pictures that open to a larger window
- All important information no more than two clicks away
- A way for the visitor to always return to the home page

Business sites should try to avoid:

- Sound (talking or music—this is extremely risky and will turn off many visitors)
- Animation (can be too distracting from your important messages)
- Background images (can be too distracting and make your messages hard to read)
- Tiny, hard-to-read text

If your business currently has a site that you consider to be ineffective and you know it needs updating, we urge you to try and remodel it as soon as possible using these guidelines. Why? Because while you may think that no one's really looking at it, every day, a visitor—perhaps even an ideal prospect for your business—could be checking it out and saying, “This business is not right for me.”

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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