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

By C S Wurzberger and Pam Foster

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 attend the three-part Web development seminars that Score offers.

You will also want to get your hands on the new Internet Jungle Guide book, *9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site: Your complete guide to navigating the Web development jungle and launching a site that sells!* This mini-course and workbook will help you launch a site that truly attracts prospects and customers who are ready to make purchases!

You can order this book online at www.internetjungleguide.com. *The Internet Jungle Guide is a division of Premiere Visions, LLC.*

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C S is an accomplished Internet strategist, usability expert, seminar and workshop leader, and Search Engine Optimization specialist. She has extensive experience in all aspects of Web site development for small-to-mid-size businesses, with a specialized focus on retail and wholesale companies. She also plays a leadership role in several business development organizations, and frequently presents seminars and workshops throughout the U. S.

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Pam is a senior copywriter and sales catalyst who specializes in writing marketing copy for the Web and traditional media. Using her diverse 25-year background, she's uniquely strategic and results-driven, helping clients reach their target audiences and achieve their sales and lead-generation goals. She has extensive experience in writing Web content, online marketing campaigns and e-newsletters.

The national SCORE Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small business nationwide. SCORE Portland is one of 389 chapters throughout the United States, with over 11,000 volunteers nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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