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

By C S Wurzberger and Pam Foster

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 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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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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