

Does Your Website Work?

After you've completed a website, don't look at it. Leave it for a couple of weeks, then come back, pretend you are a potential customer and ask yourself these 10 questions.

Does your text sound hype-filled and salesy? People hate to feel like they are being sold. Sure, they want to buy. But they don't want to buy from someone who sounds like a used car salesman. They need to trust a website, and they will trust a website that gives them concise, honest, and unbiased information. There is never any reason for a double exclamation mark!! AND RARELY IS THERE A RIGHT TIME FOR ALL CAPS. You're excited about your products (or at least you should be), so let your natural enthusiasm show. Don't try to dress it up with overused sales jargon.

Count the number of times you said "we" in your text rather than "you." Did you use the word "we" more than you used the word "you"? People don't care about we. A common mistake of first-time website content creators is that they tend to want to talk about themselves. We offer _____. We are the only company that _____. We have unparalleled _____. Sound familiar? But what people really want to know what's in it for them. Start a few sentences with "you" and you'll be surprised how much more likely people will be to buy.

If I had never been to this site before, would I know where to click to buy? The action your potential customer should take should be clear from the homepage. Never, ever let your customer get lost looking for the "buy now" button.

If I was visiting this site for the first time, would I know what it was selling and would I be able to find what I need? A visitor should know what you're selling and how they can benefit from it by the second line, preferably by the first. Don't babble. Get to the point. Once a visitor knows what you're selling, he should be able to find the answer to any additional questions within just a few clicks. And remember, just because he can get to the information in a few clicks doesn't mean he will be able to find the information in just a few clicks. Make sure your navigation is straightforward and consistent throughout the site.

If I read my navigation for the first time, would it be clear what information is behind each link? Your navigation should be conventional and easy to understand. Don't label your products page "goodies" or "wares" unless you have a darn good reason.

Are my prices displayed? Do NOT expect the customer to call you for prices. Always always always always display prices. Always. If it has to be custom quoted, display example quotes, display hourly rates, display ranges of rates for example jobs, but display something.

Does it look like the website creator paid attention to detail? Check your details. Check each link. Run the spell check. Check your website on different screen resolutions. Check your website in different browsers. Make sure the text font, color and size is consistent on all web pages. Pay attention to little things, like text wrapping around graphics in a less-than-conventional manner, or too much space at the bottom of a page, or your text running farther down the page than your navigation bar. Little things can spell the difference between a clean, professional looking website and a sloppy looking one. If you aren't being a perfectionist about your website, then people will assume that you won't be a perfectionist in your business, either.

Can I glance at the headers, scan the page and get the gist? Research had shown time and time again that readers on the web do not read. They scan. They scan headers and first lines of paragraphs. Only if they see something that catches their interest, will they read deeper. Do not expect every line of your text to be read, but write every line as if it will be read.

Did I build my website with my user (and not myself or my company) in mind? If you did, then your user will probably never realize it. And that's a good thing. The website should feel smooth to him, natural. He should navigate through the site almost as if it were second nature, like a favorite pair of blue jeans.

Is the order process simple, straightforward and fast? Once the client has decided to buy, the process should take no longer than a couple of minutes. Don't ask him for any information that you do not directly need to complete his order. Keep it short, sweet and super simple.

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