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"Web Design with the Small Business in Mind"

Web Usability - What the Public Says

Excerpts from University of California, Davis Extension Course - *Writing for the Web*

"A good print design is usually a lousy Web design"
--- Jakob Nielsen, nationally known usability expert

General Concepts

- Most folks (82 %) use an 800x600 resolution screen
- Most folks (79 %) scan the page only - looking for key words they are seeking

Thoughts about Design

- Design is part of on-line content, inseparable from the words themselves.
- Ideal design uses 50 percent white space!
- Ideal type size on the Web is 12 to 14 points
- Should be a 30K graphic limit per page
- Should take less than 10 seconds to download a page

How Folks Read the Web

There are three types of Web users:

1. Those who would rather be watching TV - look to the Web for entertainment - like game sites and audiovisual "jolts"
2. Those who want information they can apply - searching for something. They are impatient and critical
3. Those who read on the Web - looking for books on line or white papers (rare folks)

Web visitors work in two stages:

- They first SCAN to find what they are looking for, reading mostly headlines, subtitles and links
- Then they READ when they have found the "destination" page with the information they were seeking

Eye tracking shows that readers look at:

- Headlines
- Summaries
- Captions
- Pull quotes

*But they ignore graphic elements! (*that's what eye tracking says….)

Physiological Facts

- Reading at a computer screen is 25 percent slower than the printed page

- Reading on the Web is physiologically different than reading from a printed page.
- The eye blinks only 5x a minute when reading the screen and 12-20x a minute when reading print.
- Print readers move from left to right on the page
- Web readers see the center first, the left side next, and the right side last

What Folks Hate about the Web

Web visitor pet peeves:
- Too many fonts and colors
- Too much clutter
- Slow downloads
- Pop-up windows

Writing Tips
- **Have each topic/section cover only one subject**
- **Have each subtopic/subnav cover only one idea**
- **Be cautious of adding too many links within written text.**
- **Links are mental "noise" that cause the reader to stop and think**
- **Readers hate mission statements - they ignore them**
- **Readers hate "corporate speak" but respond to easy, conversational text that uses the active voice**

Fewer Words - How Few?
- Each subject you cover in text should be less than 1,000 words. 700 are ideal.
- A paragraph should have no more than three sentences
- A block of text should be no more than 75 words long
- A line of text - across the screen - should contain eight to 15 words, no more or less.

Breaking Up the Information
- Lists should contain seven items - plus or minus two - anything else confuses the reader
- There are only a few ways to categorize information:
    - Alphabetically
    - By time
    - By category
    - By location
    - By magnitude

- To assist with scanning a page, you can add color or bold to certain key words (even if they are not links).

Proofreading Your Web Pages
- Proofreading is essential to perception of quality!!!
- When proofreading material for the Web, print it out and proof hard copy
- Look especially at:
    - All headings, subheads and navigation titles
    - All calls to action
    - E-mail subject lines
    - Service descriptions
    - Forms
    - Link titles