THE IMPORTANCE OF WEB DESIGN FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

WEB DESIGN SURVEY RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

People are surfing the web and relying on web sites more than ever to research companies, compare offerings and form opinions about your brand. We set out to measure people’s opinions about web design to see just how much it mattered.

In the spring of 2014 Visible Logic reached out (mostly through Facebook and LinkedIn) and surveyed nearly 200 people to get a cross section of web site users to get their opinions on web design.

The survey results showed overwhelmingly how critical web sites are to prospects as they evaluate whether or not to use your services or buy your product. 87% of respondents said they check out the web site of a new product, service or business. (fig 1)

Expectations are high and will continue to grow as web design and technology become more sophisticated. People expect a business to have a web site that looks professionally designed and is filled with up-to-date, well-organized content.

_A web site, just like any other type of advertising, reflects on the integrity, intelligence and ability of the company. As Forest Gump’s mama said: “Stupid is as stupid does.” I choose not to do business with stupid people._

—William Papp

Additionally, 100% of our respondents admitted to leaving a web site because it was poorly designed or difficult to use.

A well-designed web site can be working to grow your business, or seriously limiting your opportunities. Review our complete survey results to see the most critical elements of a well designed web presence and the benefits of great web design.
IN SHORT: YOUR WEB SITE IS CRITICAL

Consumers are online more than ever, either sitting in front of a computer or on their smartphone or tablet. People use the web to research companies, compare offerings and form opinions about your brand.

According to our survey, nearly everyone checks out a company’s web site to learn about a product, service or business at least some of the time. And a strong majority *almost always* does so. In fact, only 1% of our respondents admitted to rarely checking out a company’s web site. *(Fig. 1)*

“We live in the digital age and companies must have a digital presence. The reality that all companies face, is that potential customers will judge them by their digital presence. To not spend time/money on your digital presence is to give your competitors an easy advantage. And no business can afford to do that.”

—Bob Langworthy

It goes beyond just checking out your site. The quality of your web site is either enticing them or detracting them from doing business with you and your company. When researching products and services, 96% admit that the web site affects who they choose. *(Fig. 2)*

Expectations are high and will continue to grow as web design and technology become more sophisticated. Every single one of our respondents admitted to leaving a web site because it was poorly designed or difficult to use—don’t let it be yours! *(Fig. 3)*

Now that you realize the power of your web site, what are the most important pieces to consider and improve on?
MOST IMPORTANT: NAVIGATION AND ORGANIZATION

By far the most important factor in web site design is the feeling that “I can easily find what I’m looking for.” Of all the questions we asked, this had the highest number of respondents—95%—stating it was very important.

95% said: “I can easily find what I’m looking for” is very important on a web site.

It is essential that the navigation be easy to use and intuitive. People who cannot find what they are looking for are very quick to leave and you’ve probably lost your prospect for good.

Interestingly, sitemaps were not considered as critical. While 67% thought they were very or somewhat important, 33% were neutral or thought they were not important. This thought was summarized by one participant:

“From my experience, a well engineered navigation structure and an effective search tool negate the functionality of a site map for visitors except search engine crawlers.”

—Seth Dresser

During the web design process, care needs to be taken to evaluate how to organize your content and how the navigational system will look.

Spend some time analyzing your traffic, it may help you understand typical paths through your web site and ensure that key information is easy to find.
WEB SITES BUILD OR ERODE TRUST

Web sites are often the first impression for a company. Prospects check out your web sites to validate whether or not they want to pursue working with you and your business.

Having a professionally designed site builds confidence and trust in your business; a poorly designed or out of date site reflects negatively on you and decreases trust. Hiring a professional web designer should be considered critical to any web design or redesign project.

Even if you don’t rely on search traffic to build your business, your web site may be more important that you think. Our survey shows that it is frequently the critical component that either confirms that someone wants to buy from you, or drives them away.

In ways that are not clearly conscious, a great web site builds my confidence, inspires my trust, and engages me. It sells the company, and seduces me.

—Renae Gregoire

All links on your site should be current and working. While this seems elementary, it is easy for details like this to get out of date. As a web site owner, don’t overlook basic maintenance and updates.

In fact, 91% of respondents admitted to frequently or sometimes leaving a site because of typos or link errors. This type of action reflects frustration with a poorly working site, or a reaction to an unprofessional online presence. Many people equate typos with sloppy work, and these small mistakes create a very strong, negative impression for some web site readers.
DESIGN AND BRANDING

Web sites are a combination of technology and art. And while evaluating aesthetics is challenging, it should not be overlooked. 89% of respondents feel that it is important that a web site be aesthetically pleasing. (fig. 7)

Amazingly, only 4 respondents total felt that aesthetics were not important!

“Poor websites show that a company is out of touch—I prefer working with a business that is in sync with current trends because I would imagine that their business model, products and services are also up to speed with current expectations and my needs as a customer.”

—Kate Baum

Professional designers can ensure that you get the right look and feel to represent your brand by carefully selecting the typography, imagery, layout, color palette and the myriad of details to create a well designed site.

Branding is the connection that a viewer makes between a web site and the company as a whole. 81% of respondents felt it is important that the web design match the company branding. (fig. 8) There should be a clear visual connection between your web site and other elements of your brand identity.

The wrong photos can also take a toll. 87% people agree that “Bad stock photos make you look cheap.” Before adding just another photo, make sure that it adds to your message and works cohesively with your brand identity.

87% agree: “Bad stock photos make you look cheap.”
OPTIMIZATION

Users also become frustrated by slow sites. Our attention spans are shrinking, plus more of us are using mobile phones to access web sites. Mobile devices connecting to web sites often suffer from a brief delay, and load times may be even slower if the site is being accessed by cell signal rather than Wi Fi connection.

Almost everyone admits to leaving a web site because it was too slow to load. (Only 1 respondent said never!). [fig. 9]

Good design is important in every aspect of a company. The company brand should reflect who they are and what they do while making the customer feel like they can be trusted. This feeling should be carried through every aspect of the business including the website design. ... If a site isn’t easily navigable or takes too long to load chances are the person is going to go elsewhere very quickly. ...You have 15-30 seconds to make a lasting impression on your customers with your website.

—Alex

Should your web site be mobile optimized or built using a responsive design technique? Compared to other items, this is not as critical: only 38% of our respondents said that it was very important that a site be optimized for their device. [fig. 10]

However, you need to view this data in context with the entire survey. If your competitors are offering their content in a format that is optimized for smartphones and tablets, and you don’t, you’re sure to come up short as prospects compare your sites and build opinions about your brands.
THE BOTTOM LINE

Does all this matter? It does.

80% of respondents have chosen one product, service or company over a competitor because it had a better web site. You may not even be aware of it, but it’s likely you’ve lost a sale if you have a poorly designed or poorly functioning web site.

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In today’s web-focused economy, your web site must at minimum be easy to use, free of typos and broken links, and be aesthetically pleasing. If you’re willing to go beyond that, creating a stunning web site can catapult your business to further success: An exceptional web site will get 89% of people to take a second look at a company. (fig. 11)

Good web design and solid web functionality created for how human beings use the web are intrinsically linked and when the two are working well it really does build a company’s brand.

—Kristin Maija Peterson

You need to invest in your web site. 96% of our respondents believe that it should be a priority for businesses to invest resources to update their web site. (fig. 12)

A web site is not something that can be created once and you’re done. Keeping your web site is good shape can take two forms: the first is routine maintenance such as updating content and fixing broken links; the second involves redesigning all or part of the web site.

Create processes and set budgets for ongoing maintenance of your site.

Additionally, expect that you will be doing web site redesigns every few years. Changes in your own business, technology upgrades, and design trends all drive web site changes.
ABOUT THE SURVEY

As the owner of a design firm specializing in web site design, I am struck by at how many poorly designed web sites are out there. I find myself cringing at the poor design, confusing content and general unprofessionalism of so many web sites. But I wondered, as a design professional, if I was overly sensitive to this. So I set out to connect with all sorts of professionals to get their feedback.

Respondents were asked to focus on web sites that are created for businesses to showcase a product or service. They should not consider e-commerce sites, application sites such as Facebook, or other types of web sites.

The survey was created in February–March, 2014. It was conducted online and 181 survey results were tabulated.

ABOUT VISIBLE LOGIC

Visible Logic is a branding agency that works with local, national and international businesses to help them build compelling identities and use content-based marketing to connect with their ideal clients.

Visible Logic creates complete branding systems backed by research on the competitors, audience and marketplace. Key deliverables including naming, logo design, web sites, printed marketing materials and electronic or traditionally printed books.

We specialize in working with organizations that offer complex products or services—especially technology-based products, software companies, and B2B startups—creating marketing campaigns that clearly demonstrate the benefits of your brand. Our full service marketing team has proven experience in web site design and development, content development, digital marketing, sales lead generation, public relations, social media and more.