Website Audit Report

for

XYZ & Associates

Successfulweb.com

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EXAMPLE REPORT

This is an example of an actual client report, however, a vast amount of links to tutorials, premium content, case studies and video e-training modules have been eliminated. A few links to premium content remain by way of examples.

Successfulweb was hired to evaluate a redesign project, including a custom shopping cart, which had cost the client several tens of thousands of dollars.

Unfortunately, we see this occurrence too often, a non-tech savvy client and a blind faith in a web design firm. Further, this client is a sizable organization – consulting revenues of $15 million annually. The work was so weak, it had to be tossed. We recommended the client return to the original site and begin an incremental site improvement program from there.

Most portions of this report take on the nature of a tutorial or instructional piece…a product of the state of the website, the improvement sets which are of highest priority, and the skill level of the client and their web team.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impact</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Action – Improvement Recommendations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework for Website Audit / Review</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Evaluation Criteria</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorecard – Success Indicators</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Success Indicators Reviews</td>
<td>10–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Page Review</td>
<td>17–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Interior Content Page</td>
<td>24–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Long Content Page</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Flow Chart</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link Check Report</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This report is the product of a website audit and needs assessment. It measures the target site against industry best practices and quality standards. This report offers opportunities for site improvements, makes actionable recommendations for site repair and enhancements and prioritized them based on the greatest impact on business outcomes.

**Website Goals:**

The target website is a re-design of XYZ’s current site. The new website is designed to provide information to potential customers, process transactions, and capture visitor information for sales leads.

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Executive Summary

This reviewer finds the website totally incapable of achieving the goals for which it is intended. XYZ has been poorly served by a web development team who clearly do not understand the nature of today’s sophisticated and complex web environment.

The web is no start-up technology or brochureware. It’s a powerful global business channel capable of reaching and maintaining new customers worldwide. Business-to-business (B2B) online sales hit $2.72 trillion in 2006, and continue to grow 100% annually (U.S. Census Bureau E-Stats report).

1. **Rip and Replace, Redesign Does Not Work** – Redesign of the website has failed to advance the ball down the field. The same problems that existed in the old site were carried forward into the new one – nearly exactly. Rip-&-Replace hardly ever works.

2. **Web Initiative Lacking Adequate Management** – XYZ is very late into the game. Its web efforts are floundering. However, quick recovery techniques exist. It’s recommended that XYZ outsource to experts who deploy “Continuous Website Improvement Management” (CWIM) and demand measurable results. The right team will stabilize costs, minimize risks and accelerate time to profitability. You can begin seeing positive results in 30 days.

3. **Serious Ramifications** – Rough numbers, but over 5,000 users visit your present site per month. Be assured, the vast majority will never return. This is a disaster. This is costing XYZ an untold amount of business – millions of dollars are being left on the table.

4. **Strong Competitive Threat** – Competitive intelligence reveals XYZ’s competition is diversified, and using the technology of the web smartly. XYZ’s leadership position is being eroded – and quickly – by astute competitors.
Negative Impact

This website is so poorly constructed; literally hundreds of best practices and user experience issues are ignored. However, by way of example, here are a few findings with the most negative impact on your business results:

1. **XYZ’s Goals** - This website is intended to further the company’s goals; it ignores any such effort.

2. **User Experience** - This site ignores the needs, problems, and issues of the user. This is a death blow. If tracking and measuring were employed, you’d see a shockingly high bounce rate.

3. **Sales and Lead Generation** - The site completely lacks an understanding of buying behaviors, motivations, and how to drive users to respond to a call-to-action. You simply cannot justify any expenditure unless the website makes the cash register ring.

4. **Information Organization (IA)** - Information is poorly organized, impossible to easily locate, difficult to navigate, and filled with inconsistencies and errors. *A strong foundation of IA is critical.*

The visitor sees the web as a “product” they use. When they come across a site that’s incomplete (such as all the prices not being shown on the Electronic Products page), or with frustrating features, they have a strong negative reaction. They regard the site as being broken.

Going live with this site as is would be a drastic mistake. First and foremost, an intelligent web strategy must be developed, and iterative improvements management employed.

Furthermore, while this is occurring, content needs to be re-written – first and foremost from the standpoint of delivering it in a user-centric format, as well as to correct factual errors. Even a casual read finds many. Two examples:

- **Inconsistent and out-of date material**: Home page incorrectly lists 450,000 individuals trained by XYZ., while the actual figure is 800,000. Content must be kept fresh.

- **Confusing information**: The About page and the Team page should be combined into one area to avoid confusion – both should be sub-topics in an overall category about the company. As is, one page mentions 50 consultants, the other seven. (And if the seven represent management, this needs to be indicated – there are no titles to go with names.) Good information architecture and a standards-based navigational system would eliminate much of this problem.
Taking Action – Improvement Recommendations

This site is given a score of 13.2%. This is a very low score and should serve as a wake-up call. The site is in need of many improvements, but the following is a short list of ten you can make on a small budget that can be implemented quickly, are high-impact, and exhibit immediate results:

1. Stop the bleeding. Put a knowledgeable team on a monthly retainer and begin implementing these recommendations.
2. Establish a clear set of goals and objectives, define success, and establish metrics to highlight progress toward these goals.
3. Develop a Unique Value Proposition for the company and site, and publish it in the header section of every web page.
4. Install a web analytics software package that allows tracking and measuring of visitor behavior. These packages are reasonable in price. In fact, Google offers a pretty impressive one free and installation is relatively quick and easy.
5. Rework the home page incorporating the suggestions made in this review, especially reworking global and secondary menuing system.
6. With the functionality and interface problems of the shopping cart, it’s apparent that the current team and direction will not get you there. The maturity of off-the-shelf shopping cart applications today are highly sophisticated, modestly priced, and rapidly installed. A short research effort will determine suitability.
7. Starting with the most important pages first, remove secondary menuing from the content on interior pages and place in a “left menu” column.
8. Install a site search engine. These are inexpensive. In fact, Google offers their big search engine free to index the pages on your site. Place the search box in the header on every page.
9. Starting with the most important products first, create links in your global navigation that lead to each product category page. For example: a product category page about workshops promotes workshops in general, and links to each specific workshop page. Each workshop page should move through a complete persuasion funnel, ending with a call-to-action to the shopping cart and a series of lead generation devices.
10. Begin building lead generation devices that are within budget and can be sustained over time. Start small but start something. Begin a monthly newsletter. Ask visitors to register to be notified on new releases, new products, free occasional white papers of interest, etc. Each is intended to motivate visitors to give contact information, so make the device worth the action.
A Framework for Website Audit / Review

The focus of this report reflects a five-point organizing framework:

1. Think of your website in terms of a tightly connected and continuous link between your site, a successful visit, and the impact that has on your business results. Hence, the visitor experience becomes the framework around which website effectiveness is measured.

2. Your website is not the pages and the objects on them, but your visitor's reactions to those objects. Visitors respond to your site with a mouse click, and that is a trackable event. It turns out that a system to audit and monitor the visitor experience becomes a key business objective.

3. Within limited budgets, website efforts can't do it all, so something has to slide. Of the 1,000+ web best practices, only a few dozen account for the vast majority of a site's business results. That's the 80/20 Rule. Success or failure depends on smart decisions and intelligent resource allocation.

4. Today the web is a sophisticated environment. It demands a systematic approach to exploit its potential. A continuous improvement process that incrementally optimizes results is a vital business objective. Today, management must be standards-based, data-driven, and business-focused.

5. Today the web user is experienced, empowered and connected in a networked marketplace. They've seen both beauty and the beast, and are impatient with mediocrity. They demand ease of use, efficient, relevant, engaging, and consumer-oriented websites. These are so rare; provide it and be rewarded with their loyalty.
Website can be divided into functional segments (layers) to better express how site improvement activities impact the visitor experience and your bottom line. Layers are divided into Key Success Indicators (KSI) which are further segmented into the most impactful and transformative best practices. The effectiveness of each best practice is then measured through tracking Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

This website is evaluated against this set of criteria. Scores are assigned on the quality of execution of each best practice. By weighting each criterion, one identifies which site factors fall into the category of low-cost, short time-cycle efforts that produce disproportionate business results.
**Scorecard – Success Indicators**

The website scorecard indicates the site’s strengths and weaknesses by broad category. Use this chart to prioritize work efforts. It indicates where the site is in most need of improvements.

Scores are based, not necessarily on the direct quality of implementation of best practices, but weighted based on the impact on your website outcomes.

The Quality of Experience (QoE) score is an average of all categories as it is the cumulative effect of all evaluation criteria.

It should be added that scores below 70 represent a major negative issue to the success of the website. An overall QoE score 13.2% indicates that this site has slightly more than a 1 in 10 chance of fulfilling the tasks set for it.

13.2%

**Quality of Experience**
1. **Tracking and Metrics** – Lack of website metrics is a major barrier to XYZ achieving the goals set for this website and realizing a return on investment. Websites are capable of producing extremely high returns to risk ratios. However, a systematic approach must be employed to exploit it.

The old adage is especially true on the web, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” The most beneficial power of the Internet may be trackability – in which the behaviors, buying habits and responses to your intent can be tracked and measured. Web analytics contains the following advantages:

- aligns the website with company goals,
- gauges progress and effectiveness in achieving those goals,
- justifies expenditures,
- creates a framework for ROI measurement,
- fuels the website management process – observation, measurement, diagnostics, prediction and course correction/refinement.

2. **“Continuous Improvement” Management** – XYZ is updating its website in an "All-At-Once" or "Big Bang" approach. Websites problems are never solved intuitively. It's too complex an environment. Rip-and-replace strategies never work. They just change the problem set. Website returns are so easily affected by minor refinements, that long time periods between adjustments is a devastating blow to cash flow.

"Iterative Improvement Management" is a proven approach – incorporated by nearly all Fortune 500 companies. Iterative site improvements are made and visitor response is tracked and monitored. The intent is small, manageable and affordable steps, driven by feedback and data, hence, eliminating guesswork and trial-&-error. This is an absolute must if XYZ is to realize desired returns and gain control over its business outcomes and website destiny.

- **Immediate Results** – Turnaround cycles are measured in days, not weeks, not months.
- **Eliminates Risk** – Constant feedback provides financial visibility, accountability and information that justifies costs and informs actions at every small step along the way.
- **Reduces Costs** – Designed to accomplish tasks on small budgets and in short time frames.
- **Highly Effective** – Is data-driven, standards-based, eliminating guesswork, trial-&-error and rip-&-replace strategies of website improvements.
3. **Unique Value Proposition** – Immediately upon arriving on the site, the home page fails XYZ and the site visitor in a catastrophic way. After arrival on the home page, studies show the page has 8 to 10 seconds to answer a series of questions in the mind of the user. Your visitor wants the “big picture” right up front.

   1. What site am I on, and who is this organization?
   2. What is the site about, and what can I find and do here?
   3. Why should I spend my time on this site, and why buy from this company instead of a competitor?

If they are not adequately answered, you have just failed the “introduction” in your relationship and driven a visitor into the waiting arms of your competition:

If you answer the first two questions to their liking, the visitor arrives at the third. How you answer that question is your Unique Value Proposition (UVP). Your answer must say, "In the space in which we operate, we are your best solution, PERIOD". A UVP tells your visitor in a very few words in an immediately seen location: 1) who you are, 2) who your audience is, 3) what product/services you provide, 4) how you create value for them, and 5) how you are unique, differentiated in the marketplace. Then, everything you do on your entire site supports and expands on this message.

4. **Persuasion and Motivation** – Every web page has its job to perform in achieving the goals and objectives for the website. To motivate a visitor to respond to your calls-to-action on each page, you have the task of identifying, persuading and motivating. Answer these questions in the mind of the page viewer:

   **Web Page’s Tasks:**

   1. Purpose / Intent – What is the purpose of this page?
   2. Action – What action can I and am I supposed to take?
   3. Motivation – What is the benefit / gain? Why should I take that action?

   **The Website Is A Conversation:**

   The XYZ website divorces itself from the mental processes and attitudes in the mind of the visitor as they interact with the site. Hence, there is no appropriate response to critical points in the dialogue: (1) friction; psychological resistance; and (2) anxiety; disproportionate apprehension.

   This site’s web pages fail to understand the needs of the visitor at each point in the buying cycle. The site must be there with the appropriate response – answer a question, quell a fear, overcome an objection.
5. **Branding & Relationship Building** – As more business is transacted over the Internet, the relationship you build with your audience becomes your brand. In fact, the relationship becomes your product. People still buy from people. To drive the point home, most sites fail to convert 98 out of every 100 first-time visitors. As you create relationships, you build loyalty. As you build loyalty, you build retention. Frequent visitors produce sales conversions at a rate up to 10 times new-visitor rate.

**Lead Generation**

E-commerce sites must employ lead generation as a secondary strategy to overcome the weight of customer acquisition costs. Repeat visitors cost up to 10 times less than generating the new visitor. Yet, this site offers scant reason for the visitor to return. It must incorporate lead generation devices to re-engage those 98 who did not convert in the first place. Secondly, it must deploy devices to maintain touch points with the 70% (on average) who abandon shopping carts.

The XYZ site, failing to address this issue in the slightest, will see severe ramifications to its brand with accompanying negative results to its financial returns.

6. **Information Architecture (IA)** – This is akin to the library sciences – ways in which a site's total body of information is organized, categorized and indexed to best fit the purpose for which the site is intended. How the information is structured must be tightly linked to and drive company goals and promote ease of visitor use.

IA divides itself by a variety of structures. Random, unordered structure creates lack of clarity, imposes work on your visitor, and creates friction. Some organizational strategies include:

1. **Audience-specific** – XYZ’s offerings are strategic sales requiring visits by multiple disciplines. Content oriented to each persona improves the user experience.
2. **Task-specific** – Next, each discipline will arrive with a unique task to complete, problem to solve. The site’s information structure must accommodate those variations.
3. **Topical** – XYZ’s products are information-intensive. Organizing information in ways that match individual’s unique decision-making behavior reaps rewards. Allow the visitor to locate buying-decision information quickly / easily. Some is best indexed alphabetically, others chronologically, or by topic.

The lack of a clear IA structure results in XYZ’s loss of confidence and credibility. Websites are viewed as products and this one, seemingly unorganized, appears to be broken in the most fundamental of ways.
7. **Navigational Elements** – Navigation is composed of the visual elements visitors use to find their way through the information, as organized by the information architecture. It's composed of all the various tools provided in making the task of maneuvering around the site an intuitive, efficient and pleasurable experience.

   1. **Congruency** – Is the quality of the linkage between navigation and information architecture, between navigation and the site's goals and objectives,

   2. **Consistency** – Describes the navigation elements, their layout and structure throughout the site, the user’s ability to move freely both horizontally and vertically. It has to do with positional awareness. Does the visitor ever feel lost, confused, or disoriented as to location, and how to get to everywhere from anywhere within the site?

   3. **Relevancy** – Does the navigational scheme / labeling reflect the user’s reasons for visiting, and their (not XYZ’s) priorities? Are the priorities correct in sequencing the persuasive presentation, and natural to the visitor's buying behaviors and motivations?

Lack of clarity in IA structure is naturally reflected in navigational schemes. The most damaging issue on the XYZ site is the lack of audience, task, and topical menuing systems. The site's menus fail to promote a beneficial persuasion structure. It also fails to indicate positional awareness and is replete with cul-de-sacs and dead-end paths.

8. **Interface Design** – The layout & design of the site is the visual vocabulary chosen to 1) best present the company’s brand and image, 2) best support and deliver the site’s content and message, and 3) best assist the visitor in achieving the goals and tasks for which they arrived.

   1. **Consistency** – Simpatico with, supports and furthers the site’s goals and objectives,

   2. **Congruency** – How the visual vocabulary contributes to or distracts from each page’s task,

   3. **Relevancy** – Appropriateness and relevancy to this site’s specific audience, their sensibilities, psychographics.

Critiques of the XYZ site: 1) layout and color palette of this site missed its audience — not appropriate for the sophistication, professionalism, and the industry leadership position of XYZ; 2) objects such as the upper-right circle/triangle, repeated along the bottom of the page, consume valuable real estate and, most importantly, act as distractions, diminish the user’s concentration and the message’s impact – as does the dark blue field in which the website sits; 3) no variance in style sheets to accommodate different page requirement, i.e., a shopping cart page is a very different animal from a content page; and 4) no use of graphics/images which are appropriate to and promote the intent of the page.
9. **E-Commerce** – Today's online shopper is sophisticated and judges the e-store experience harshly. E-commerce should provide a pleasant and unambiguous experience. Unfortunately it does not in most cases. Shopping cart abandonment rates are nearly 70 percent.

Shopping cart design must make the technology disappear. It must make navigation in and through product category, product offering, and “more information” pages seamless. If not, friction and anxiety are intensified at this stage in the buying process.

With XYZ's online store, acceptable e-commerce results are not achievable. A few factors are:

1. No abandonment capture is visible.
2. The shopping cart falls outside the standard flow expected by users, and hence, feels clumsy.
3. Closing the sale – 70% abandonment rates result from inadequate desire relative to a negative event encountered. Desire must be intensified with persuasive components emphasizing benefits over features, credibility indicators, testimonials, customer reviews, excerpts of materials, answers to common questions, etc. Online, you can't assume the sale is made even at the checkout stand.

10. **Lead Generation** – The target of lead generation is the 98 persons out of 100 who didn't convert. The aim is to capture the visitors' contact information, giving the team follow-up sales opportunities. Three keys are: 1) Establishing trust, credibility and confidence, 2) building relationships over multiple touch points, and 3) creating visitor retention and loyalty. Without that foundation, nothing else happens.

This site fails at the prime ingredient in lead generation – motivating repeat and frequent visitation. It gives users no reason to return. Every successful “knowledge” vendor – consultants, trainers, publication sites – offers a promotional look under the hood. The more reluctant or analytical buyer is still unconvinced. You don't get their contact information unless you raise the bar. That's done with “give to get” lead generating tools that maintain relationships over time: provide PROMOTIONAL CONTENT through opt-in e-mail campaigns, downloads, newsletters, webinars, discussion forums, white papers, etc.

Further exploit XYZ's position as thought and industry leader by providing exclusive offerings, unavailable through your competitors. Develop an onsite “resource center” and provide industry overviews from XYZ’s fresh perspective, news, innovative ideas. If you are the “E.F. Hutton” in your field, people listen to you – take advantage of it.

Create some exclusivity by providing some information free and available to all, while more preferred content is accessible behind a registration or sign-up form. In time, build a database, segmenting your audience, so you may market to repeat and high-value customers uniquely.
11. Content – Content is the most vital issue on the website. It is how you communicate with your audience. The success of your website is directly proportional to the amount of content your visitors read. Three issues combine to create a high readability index.

1. **Meaning** – what the site says. Is your content and information on target for the audience, and is there enough of it to motivate a wide variety of visitor types into action?

2. **Tone / Texture** – How the site says it. Is your content oriented toward the visitor, their problems and needs? Self-orientation is a sure loss of trust and credibility. It’s called empathy – the visitor knowing you understand and care about their issues, *not yours*. You know how the question goes, “What’s in it for me?”

3. **Presentation** – How text is visually formatted. Web users don’t read copy on the web, they scan it. When they find the information they seek, then they read only that which is germane to the task at hand.

The most commonly found mistake in crafting content is exemplified by the XYZ site. When visitors see a block of narrative copy, that’s all they see — a large block of text, no meaning. You are asking them to read the entire text block to discern if it contains anything of interest. Only a very few highly motivated visitors are willing to give you that amount of their time.

Two concepts solve that problem, Inverted Pyramid Writing Style and Principles of Scannability. This is another issue requiring immediate attention.

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This Forrester Research study represents web user preferences and highlights the gap between what web owners and web users consider important in web design. The highest priority in the minds of users is ease of finding and reading content. They want to get in, finish a task and get out. Notice how low they place look-&-fell issues – 7th on the list. Only 26% place it as top priority.
12. Competitive Intelligence (CI) – Through search engine marketing, the web has turned every buyer into a comparative shopper. Buyers arrive at your site looking for ways to eliminate you in the process of narrowing alternatives into a short list. Differentiation from the competition is the only way to insure XYZ makes the cut.

Reviewing a few of XYZ’s most direct competitors on the web indicates a narrowing in competitive advantage. These sites are exhibiting a full understanding of the web and employing best practices. A regularly scheduled program of competitive intelligence will give XYZ the opportunity to maintain its lead, avoid surprises, identify opportunities for product / services innovation, and be continually aware of what other sites are offering your customers.

Your website’s UVP must convince each visitor that you are the site for their solutions as compared to the competitors’ sites they have just visited or will next. So, if you are not focusing on online marketing, your main competitors are stealing customers that are rightfully yours. Remember, your competition is only a mouse click away.

13. Quality of User Experience – QoE is a subjective measure of the quality of what the visitor experiences as they interact with the website. A QoE index measure how well the site performed and delivered on the visitor’s goals and expectations:

1. **Performance** – Basic functioning issues such as fast page loading, no broken links, no software glitches, no errors or failures, site displays well across browsers and screen resolutions, meets basic usability standards,
2. **Ease of Use** – Degree to which site is easy to navigate, content is easy to find and read, it’s intuitive,
3. **User Delight** – The site is visitor-oriented; friction and anxiety points are well handled; the site exceeds expectations in content and available features compared to competing sites.

While a QoE measure is subjective, the cumulative scoring of each website component does provide a benchmark to study trends. Ultimately, the most quantitative measure of QoE is conversion rates. Visitors respond to a site’s calls-to-action out of satisfaction with the overall experience, with the company and its website.

Based on the scoring of this site, the QoE ranking and the sites conversion rates are sub-optimal. Immediate action should be taken to correct the issues responsible for weak results.
Home Page Review

An evaluation of multiple page objects

1. Header Region
2. Top Banner
3. Navigation
4. Right Information Bar
5. Content
6. Footer

The home page suffers from two major deficiencies:

1. It is designed as an interior content page, while the job of the home page is vastly different, and
2. There is no call-to-action button that shouts "click me", leading to paths that support the company’s main web goals.
Page Header Region – Site Identify – The page header region is sometimes referred to as the “first read” position on the web page. It is the first location the eye sees (left to right, top to bottom, western style of reading).

1. Since the website should be viewed as a conversation and persuasive presentation with the reader, the header begins the introduction. The XYZ logo is well placed. Its appearance portrays a professional feel; coloring is bright but not glitzy. The user gets a good reaction from it for the company’s offerings and for the audience to which it is directed.

2. Next the eye is drawn into a tag line or slogan which is a good thing except that this one disappoints. Shy away from terms like “leader”. Any one on the web can say that and does, hence, it is not believed by the experienced web user. Deduct one point from the trust and credibility scoreboard.

3. Which bring us to the next point – credibility. Since trust is such a core ingredient in all commerce, the header region is a good place to begin working on trust, employing some credibility indicators.

Separate yourself from your competition with a “total awards” statement, or number of persons trained, etc. Unearth some good copy out of the main content, like “450,000 individuals trained from over 500 major organizations.” (As noted on page 5, this is an inaccurate figure.) Bring your credibility front and center – don’t bury it!
Top Page Banner – Although this animated banner does accomplish some brand personality and image, it has two failures:

1. It attempts to create a connection with the visitor by rotating a series of questions exhibiting “knowledge of customer.” However, (a) These questions are in the wrong place in the persuasion cycle; and (b) no visitor will wait over 1 min for this information to be delivered at this time.

2. This real estate should be allocated to much more important information vital to this point in the dialogue.

Visitors arrive at a site with three main questions in mind. Studies show the site has 10 seconds to provide sufficient answers or lose the visitor:

1. Where am I?
2. What can I do here?
3. Why should I be here?

Your new arrival feels a certain disorientation until these questions are answered to their liking. The answer to the third question is your big one. It’s your company’s and website’s Unique Value Proposition (UVP). It’s the single most important piece of information to be transferred at this point in the conversation with our new arrival. Give it immediate visual prominence in the eye-pathing over the page.

See UVP Primer >>
Site Navigation – The home page’s global navigation bar is used to perform another task, get a good start on answering the second question, “What is this site about, what can I find, and what can I do here?”

Visitors are turned off by a lack of information at this point. They immediately label the site as incomplete, half-baked and feel the site is going to require work on their part to get to answers or achieve goals.

You’ve just allowed your visitor to feel disappointment or frustration very early into the relationship.

Home page navigation lacks audience-specific and task-specific links that move a visitor immediately to most popular content. Also, this site with its wide array of topics to cover, cries for a website search on each page, but particularly on the home page. A visitor could simply enter a keyword and be given a list of relevant pages covering that topic on your site – immediate gratification.

Navigation is designed to drive the organization’s goals. Notice duplication in terms, About and Team, while workshops, a key revenue source, is omitted entirely.
Right Information Column

Client Testimonial – This column starts with the right instinct, credibility indicator. However it is too long to be read at this point in the dialogue, and commands the eye’s attention too early in the eye-pathing on the page (white is the strongest attractor on these colored backgrounds). If credibility / trust were established in the header, leave it to that location for the moment.

Upcoming Workshops – This information is well located on the page geography, positioned in what has come to be known in the standard layout as “related information”. This might be a bit much space to allocate to one subject on the home page. That same space might be dedicated to a group of “teasers and promos” to what’s inside the site: upcoming workshops, new publications, what’s new, upcoming web clinics, etc.

Web Recommendations – This is absolutely the wrong place to invite your brand new visitors to leave your site and go somewhere else. You are attempting to channel thinking in the conversation along a desired path, leading to some desired action. Minimize unsupervised thinking and browsing. Maintain focus, clarity, along specified persuasion funnels as long as possible.
Body Content – Your goal for a page is to escort the visitor to the main body of content as quickly as possible. On this home page, the content is in last place in the eye-path hierarchy – a mixed message to the user.

Headline - Page headlines must be a grabber. You are attempting to capture the interest of the reader in the same way as a newspaper headline. Focusing on the company instead of the visitors issues is akin to wanting to interest Pavlov’s dogs in a great leafy salad.

*David Ogilvy, author of Confessions of an Advertising Man and Ogilvy on Advertising* says, "On the average, five times as many people read the headlines as read the body copy."

Content - Home page content is very different from interior page content. This message should promote the “big picture” view of the organization and its offerings. Look at home page content as you would view a magazine cover. The job of the magazine teasers, promos is to get you to open the book.

The job of the home page is to elicit one mouse click. But make that mouse click lead directly into a persuasion funnel that leads to enlarging your bank account.

Lastly, but most importantly, most of the content on this page seems self-oriented. It’s way too much for a home page. Not to say that links to important revenue sources aren’t permissible, but keep it crisp with visually dominant call-to-action buttons

Headline Writing Samples >>
Footer Region – The footer region of the home page does its job at duplicating the global menu. It is a good idea to also include company contact information in the footer at each page: physical address preferred or at least a clickable e-mail address and phone number.

Utility items such as contact us, sitemap, privacy statement, TOS, etc. should be visually separated from the global menu items and easily located. Two issues are at play:

1. Ease of contacting the company is important. You can never be sure when a question or urge to communicate arises in the mind of the user.

2. Full physical address and contact information adds to the comfort level of a first time visitor that’s unfamiliar with XYZ’s brand.
**Interior Content Page** – This page is an example of an interior content page style sheet.

Many comments made in critiquing the home page apply to these pages as well:

1. **Navigation**
2. **Content**
3. **Missing Call-to-Action**
Interior Page Navigation – The Team page provides an opportunity to discuss navigation further. The global site navigation clearly does not track the goals of the website. A good balance of what you are trying to promote and what the visitor is trying to achieve is more important than “About Us,” and should have positioning on the global menu accordingly.

This is vital. Web page geography should be divided into distinct areas where like content/functions occur. Visitors know from page to page, this is where I can find navigation, this is where content resides, this is where I find related information. It’s a simple concept. You don’t look for your socks in the kitchen silverware drawer, and you don’t store your secondary navigation where the content resides.

Place secondary and/or tertiary navigation elements in a separate left hand column with a different color background. For a two-column structure this also provides a clear location for “related information” to occur – related topics, new articles, etc. It’s a good place for persistent positioning items such as a request for visitor registration or newsletter subscription offers.
Content – The importance of page headline cannot be overemphasized. It should be well written, and visually eye grabbing – size and color prominent.

Further, it is absolutely vital that content be broken up into small chunks/paragraphs with titles, sub-titles and bulleted lists. Text on a page must be quickly scannable or it will be ignored.

Call to Action – Following the concept of designing with intent, every page and every object on every page is designed to drive a particular goal. Content, especially, is designed to motivate and persuade. Each page falls somewhere within a persuasion funnel, has a job to perform as a stage of the buying and decision process. If not, it does not belong on the website.

Every piece of content is followed by a call-to-action of some sort. Why would you write content if it is not expected to get the user to respond by taking some action? You never know what piece of content is the one that motivates the visitor to act, so associate every piece of content with a call-to-action.

Call-to-action can be a placement on your mailing list, subscription to your newsletter, or it may just be a link to the next page in a persuasion funnel. But never miss the chance to send the user to your shopping cart or generate a lead.
**Long Content Pages** – Pages of this layout have a very high probability of very low use. It is another example of how the website is asking the user to “work” through a long list of items to discover the information they seek.

The better solution is to categorize the long list of links into some groups or classes. This gives the user a way to quickly scan and locate the class, then the link they desire.

[Learn More About Scannability Principles >>]
Thank you for this engagement. We value your business – please let us know how we can improve services delivery.

B. Ray Champagne

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XYZ & Associates, Inc.
Report Date: 20 Nov 2008