

## FOCUS ON WEB SITE USABILITY AND DESIGN

Web usability is extremely important to the success of your web site, and is directly related to your site's potential to effectively make money. A web design focused on usability will attract and retain more visits from search engines and referral sites, and will also improve your ability to sell a service or product online.

A well-designed web site will help visitors take action, such as completing a purchase, requesting more information, or subscribing to your company's newsletter.

### Web Site Usability Techniques and Tips to Retain Visitors

The below list is a compilation of research in web site usability.

#### Web Site Design Usability Tips

1. **Response or load times** for your web site are important. If your site is slow, some visitors are likely to get impatient and look elsewhere for their needs. Choose a competent hosting provider who will give you the best hosting options for your company's needs. ([Visionary Services Web Hosting](#)).
2. **Flash that doesn't support real user needs** is a distraction and slows your entire site. If you want to enhance your web site's graphical presence, selectively choose the size and placement of Flash...a little goes a long way.
3. **Splash screens** are a big no-no. A splash screens tells your customers that you are more concerned about image than customer service, and will hurt your search engine visibility.
4. **Complete basic usability testing** by several people, on several operating systems and browsers. Every user will navigate and handle a web site differently. Take notes on what each individual likes and dislikes. ([Visionary Services testing standards](#)).
5. **SIMPLICITY is king** for web site usability. Weighing your web site down with graphics, flash, and other image-heavy content makes it more difficult for a user to find relevant information. Keep it simple.
6. **Rely on text, not graphics** whenever possible. Graphics can appear differently on various computers, and some web browsers hide images. Text is readable by the search engines, where graphics are not. While "alt tags" should be used with graphics, they shouldn't replace text.



## Content Usability Tips

1. **Copywriting should be straight-forward** and should not include industry jargon or “tech-speak.” Assume your potential customers do not know much about what you sell – teach them.
2. **State the most important information first** on each web page. Everyone starts reading at the top. In this case, a web site is similar to a newspaper: top stories go “above the fold.”
3. **Make good use of Headings and Subheadings** to clearly and efficiently organize your web site content. Headings help readers find the information most relevant to their needs.
4. **Hyperlinked text should be easily understood.** In many situations that standard “Read More” link is not enough. Users like to know exactly what they are going to receive if they click a link. (“Read More” is helpful when posting a partial article on one page, then linking to the remainder of the article.)

## Web Site Navigation & Menu Usability Design and Implementation

1. **Keep Navigation and User Interface simple** throughout your web site. Use the same navigation structure on every web page, and maintain a consistent navigation process. It’s also good to provide more than one way for a user to find important information. For example, a top navigation link may send a user to your products, but you can also provide links in the body of your text to send a user to a specific product page.
2. **Include a focus for specific materials** such as news articles, blog posts, or product sales. These small content blocks aide in prompting the web visitor to a specific goal on your site. ([Visionary.com homepage with “Recent News” focus block](#)).
3. **Group similar pages** to help improve your web site’s navigation. On many sites (specifically e-commerce or retail web sites) a “Related Pages” tool will be appreciated by your customers.
4. **ANALYTICS are absolutely required** to gauge the effectiveness of your web site and to find ways to improve it. ([Visionary’s Urchin Statistics implementation](#)).
5. **Prioritize local navigation over global navigation.** Local navigation leads to web pages on your web site; global navigation leads your visitors away from your site. Cross-linking can be helpful for search engine optimization, but be selective in the web sites you choose to include on your site. Make sure you are not sending users to a different web site if your own site will provide the answers or services they are seeking.
6. **Don’t let a web page stand alone** on your website. Every page should relate to another in some manner. Provide easily used links between related pages.



7. **PDF files used sparingly** will improve your web site's usability. A PDF breaks up navigational flow through your site. When possible, provide a web version of documents instead of (or in addition to) a PDF. If your company creates a newsletter, you can post it on-line in a web version, as well as a printable PDF.

## Privacy and User Interaction Tips

1. **No Pop-Ups!** Don't display advertisements in pop-up ads. Web users flee web sites that push marketing materials at them in such a direct manner.
2. **Earn the visitor's trust** by providing contact information, details about the company, privacy policies, and other standard content.
3. **Display a relevant error message** when someone tries to view a web page that isn't there. If possible, provide links that may help them find what they are looking for.
4. **Always follow proper email and marketing guidelines.** A marketing campaign can have enormous impact on your web site. Developing a marketing plan, that includes how to maximize your web site, will only help your business. In addition, email campaigns should be well-planned. Be careful about sending group emails out that could be considered Spam. Find a resource who can successfully distribute your message to your client list. ([Visionary's Email Campaign Services](#)).

Read more about Web Usability:

- Copywriting and Usability – [Papers and Essays](#) by Jakob Nielson.