The Five Golden Rules of Website Design

Websites are an essential part of doing business in the modern world. Sadly though, many websites out there are missing five fundamental rules that will dramatically improve the user experience and website conversions.

Call to action

Does your site have a clear call to action on every page? There is no point having a website if it's not going to create sales, enquiries or leads. Conversions and enquiries can dramatically increase if you add a call to action at the bottom of every page.

The call to action is a short one line sentence which states the action a person should take with an easy click here button.

A call to action could be "call us to discuss your requirements", "click here to request more information", "add this item to your basket".

Writing useful content

Define the purpose of the website before you start writing the content. Too many people think they need a website so get one built but have no idea what the purpose of the website is and just pad it out with text.

Another trap is trying to cover too much or too many things and you end up diluting the effectiveness of your site.

Some things to think about:

Is the website there to offer information to your clients?

Is your aim to cross sell and tell people about other services and products you offer?

Is the purpose simply to make sales or generate leads or revenue?

If your website is not useful or offering anything unique it frankly deserves to be resigned to the depths of obscurity. With search engines focusing more and more on user experience it is indeed a folly to forget to make your site useful and easy to use.

Keep it simple

Write compelling copy and try to show a human face. If you can show a visitor why they should choose you over your competitors then you have given yourself an advantage.

Don't write 10 words if you can get away with 4! People do not read web pages, instead they scan it and extract key phrases and headings.

If you make your content easy to scan, with good use of headings, bold text, lists and bullet points people will spend longer on your site and will be more likely to engage with your company.

Generally speaking one or two sentence paragraphs work best. Don't ever use text to fill a page or pad it out with waffle, instead look to combine pages if content is similarly focussed and themed.

Check, check and recheck everything

A spelling mistake or grammatical error will stand out and put off many customers.

Failing to show attention to detail in your own website will convey the impression that you are unprofessional and that details, precision and accuracy are not important to you.

It is worth checking that links also work. Broken links and missing images will frustrate customers and put them off.

After your site is finished, take some time and visit it with a fresh eye. Actually read the text, if you find you start drifting off then don't expect your visitors to stick around.

Ask a friend or colleague to use your website and watch them carefully as they navigate the site, you can learn a great deal from this experience.

Do not prompt or provide instructions other than perhaps initially suggesting a goal, like "find out…." or "can you find the price of…". Often glaring usability problems will manifest themselves. The button or link that you thought stood out, is actually quite hard to find.

Contact forms

Make it easy for your website visitors to contact you. A simple call me back form works really well.

We see too many website forms that are overly complex with badly worded questions that people will never fill in.

On one large client's website, we converted a detailed enquiry form into a simple, "please contact me" form and enquiry levels went up 120% and conversions were much higher than before.

Essentials for a form are name, a means to contact them, so an email address, postal address or telephone and then provide a free type space for an enquiry or question. With every additional field you add the likelihood that the form will be completed diminishes.

So the mantra is to keep it simple, make it easy to use, thoroughly check the site and give clear direction to the user on their next course of action.

Now that your site is ready it is time to drive visitors to your site and begin your online marketing efforts.