

Website Design Tips

What makes for good design?

The point of design is to communicate:

- ✓ And, good design communicates effectively. So before doing anything, you must know *who* your audience is. What captivates and engages a corporate executive could just as easily put a young computer programmer to sleep.

It should never be boring:

- ✓ But, no matter who your audience is, good design should never be boring. The style, theme and mood of the design elements should reflect the tastes of the target audience. Your goal is to get a reaction, usually positive, but not necessarily. In some cases, you may actually want to provoke the audience, to elicit strong feelings, or make them feel strange or disturbed. Jarring design elements, unpredictable layouts, and deliberately haphazard typography can, when done right, communicate just as effectively as clean typefaces, a consistent format, and simple navigation.

It should reflect your image:

- ✓ Most importantly, the design of your web site should reinforce the message you want to convey, the attitude you want to reflect, and the image you want to depict.

It should be attractive:

- ✓ In terms of designing for the Web, there are a few points to keep in mind. Graphics, for instance, can make or break a site. Without them, a site is dull and uninteresting. But if the graphics are too big, they can take too long to download. Or they may simply be irrelevant, adding no value to the site. Graphics must project and reflect your image. They must be appealing and attractive. One of the most important graphics in a web site is often the navigation bar. This makes it easy for your visitors to surf, letting them know where they are at all times, and allowing them to go wherever they want without having to return to the home page to see the site index.

Things to avoid:

- ✓ Textured backgrounds, blinking text and other distracting elements are popular among novices, but should generally be avoided. Too often, textured backgrounds are ugly and almost always they make the text difficult to read. Unless you have a very good reason, stick to white or black backgrounds. As for blinking text, we can't think of any reason ever to use it. And be careful when you use bold text. Save it for headers. Bold text is meant to capture the viewer's attention. Too much of it defeats the purpose.
- ✓ Sound: Music and Sound Bites are generally very annoying, to say the least. Whatever the genre of music, it sounds absolutely atrocious squeaking out of those really small, really cheap, standard issue "computer speakers" which most people have! At the very least, people will simply kill (mute) the volume. The greater, more realistic hazard is that they will quickly exit the website, never to return again!

The Bottom Line:

- ✓ Less is best!
- ✓ *KISS!* ;-)