

DEBATE

What's the key to a successful website?



Oliver Yeates
CEO
ClickyMedia

A CLEAR, simple and intuitive navigational system is arguably the most important element of any successful website.

As Albert Einstein said, "The best design is the simplest one that works." This could not be truer when you look at website navigation.

Your users should immediately and intuitively feel they understand how to work your website, without guidance. Failure to find the particular page or resource they were looking for within three or four seconds will almost certainly take your users back to Google, and they'll end up using a competitor's resource instead.

You should consider the user's thought process – not just your own – when building your navigational system.

A good system starts with intelligent content structuring, so grouping content that the user associates together is very important.

To truly understand how easy your website is to navigate requires testing. Try to find a group of users which match your target audience and set them a task to carry out a certain process or locate a particular page within your website. Observe and take note.

If it's easy, your navigational system works. If it's a struggle for them, it will be a struggle for your wider audience, so find out why they struggled and try to understand why. Once you've perfected it, you won't look back.

Website analytics programmes such as Google Analytics are useful to monitor common process "drop-offs" – or pages with a particularly high exit rate – so use them to nip that possibility in the bud.



Pam Turner
Senior web developer
Adeo Group

THE MOST crucial part of designing a functional website is getting its foundations right. It's a commonly overlooked part of the overall construction process, but getting your CSS – or cascading style sheets – grid framework correct is vital to further the technological development and management of the website from both developer and client perspectives.

The CSS grid framework is an invisible foundation that provides a structure to the websites we design and develop. It is extremely beneficial for building page layouts, as it allows faster and more efficient workflow, which saves time for developers. It's consistent, reusable, and eliminates the need to uniquely style the positioning of every element on the page. It saves repetition and brings benefits to performance and optimisation, too.

Never underestimate the importance of your coding, though. If the dimensions are miscalculated, the layout will break which will result in page anomalies – a headache you, and your clients, can do without.

It's getting easier to create a CSS grid framework. There are a multitude of online tools available that allow you to plug in your preferred column and gutter widths that automatically generate the full grid for you!

Increasingly, developers are using CSS framework to generate responsive grids, which enables web pages to use a range of style rules, flexible images and fluid grids. It's becoming a vital tool, as it empowers websites to automatically adjust to a full range of mobile and tablet screens. And when consumer demand for on-the-go devices continues to grow, responsive design framework is something your clients will now require as a necessity.



Chris Buckley
Founder
Pixel Kicks

IT'S MORE than likely that people who know their way around a website use a content management system – or CMS for short – to update its content.

Whether you do or don't, you cannot underestimate how essential a CMS is to a modern-day website.

With blogs increasing in popularity all the time, systems such as Wordpress, Joomla and Drupal are seeing huge growth. Wordpress in particular now powers approximately 20 per cent of the entire web alone.

CMS gives end-users huge advantages, as they can manage and update everything they wish from a single control panel. Whether this is simply changing a phone number, adding some new photos to a gallery, or posting a news update on your company's latest products, the possibilities are endless.

Being personally able to control the content of a website is extremely useful, and though a CMS-powered website may cost more in the beginning, the cost-saving implications of not having to pay your web designer for every single update are obvious. It's money I'm sure you'd rather have in your back pocket.

Most common systems work using "plugins" or "modules", and there are hundreds if not thousands of free available plugins that can completely revolutionise your website. Whether you want to improve your SEO, add a fancy new gallery, or send emails to all your customers, you can do all this, and more. It sounds advanced, but with a CMS, it's easy.

Content management systems also help us build websites more quickly, so it's a win/win situation for everyone. It's very rare that we'd create a new website without one!



Ollie Blackmore
Founder and director
Selesti Ltd

WE ALL know there's little point in having a website if no one actually sees it. SEO is the key tool to attract visitors to your website, and that's why we've got a rapidly expanding team of search marketing specialists, who focus solely on that.

In a nutshell, SEO can be defined as the process of improving your website in order to increase the amount of traffic it receives.

On every new website project, the Selesti development and search marketing teams work in tandem to make sure that the finished products we deliver to our clients are fully optimised for search purposes, from the first line of code to the last.

One of many ways to achieve great SEO is by building websites to be responsive; our design process is mobile first in most cases. This way, the site will adapt to whatever size screen it is being displayed on, negating the need for separate mobile, tablet and desktop versions of the website.

When people are increasingly accessing the internet on the go, our clients need to know their website is accessible to everyone, on every device.

The result is seamless user experience which is beneficial for SEO.

We're big fans of social media and its advantages for digital marketing, which is why we include social sharing functionality wherever possible, too. Social is a great platform for boosting views, which is just what our clients require.

Perfecting SEO is an ongoing process, but our search marketing team are constantly fine-tuning the technical side of things while also producing new and informative content for our search clients, to attract more visitors and increase engagement.

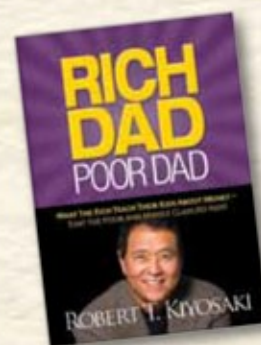
BOOKMARK



Eric Sink, The Business of Software

This selection of essays from the author's blog, each written between October 2003 and April 2005, is all related to the subject of running a small software company. It's informative, friendly and gently humorous. The chapter on marketing is almost a handbook for my job!

Saul Painter, marketing executive, Macrium Software



Robert T Kiyosaki, Rich Dad, Poor Dad

If we could only have one business book, Rich Dad, Poor Dad by personal finance author and lecturer Robert T Kiyosaki would be it. Using his unique economic perspective, Kiyosaki clearly shows logic in financial planning, and taking control of your life and finances, drawing from his own experiences.

John Stevenson, director, Pareto Financial Planning

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us so highly?

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