

Seven Qualities Of An Effective Web Site

If your web site doesn't have the following qualities, chances are that your web site is not going to be as effective as you expect -- and you might not get your monies worth out of it.

1. A clear purpose
2. Meets your target audience's goals and needs
3. As good as or better than your competition
4. Easy to use and to navigate
5. A promotion strategy that reaches the target audience
6. Search engine friendly
7. Meaningful content, with appropriate use of graphics and technology

1. A Clear Purpose

You cannot be everything to everyone. The purpose must be specific and realistic. It defines the mission of your web site, what you want visitors to do, short and long term goals, and why people will come to your site.

2. Meets Your Audience Goals And Needs

You must define who your target audience is and focus your design on meeting their needs. Without a clear audience definition, you can design a "really cool" web site, but one that doesn't meet the audience needs as they visit your site.

3. Meets Or Beats Competition

Think of it as survival of the fittest. You need to analyze what your competition is doing right and wrong. You want to do what is right, but you do not want to make the same mistakes.

4. Easy To Use And Navigate

Ease of use increases reader satisfaction and can give you a competitive edge. The primary focus is on the user -- the primary tool is usability testing. A low-tech, inexpensive method of usability testing is to have five people (that can role play your target audience) use your web site and give you constructive feedback. They must be honest and objective. You must remain nonjudgmental and make improvements where needed.

5. A Promotion Strategy

A "build it and they will come" strategy usually doesn't work. You need a plan for how you are going to make your site visible. In addition to search engines, you can include your web site address on all your advertising, signs, brochures, business cards, stationary, and so on.

6. Search Engine Friendly

If search engines are important to the success of your web site, you need to plan for and implement search engine friendly design considerations. See Search Engine Friendly for more information.

7. Meaningful Content

An attractive web site is important. But too often, a web site is attractively designed, but is lacking meaningful content or information. The content of your web site should have more impact than it's cover.