

How visual problems break your website and user experience

Nowadays marketing and business landscape are always changing. Your website is more than just a simple selling tool - it can be your business card, your storefront, and your product. Chances are high that at least some of your business important conversions are taking place on your website.

If done right, your website can be the most powerful tool for you ever, and act as a 24/7 salesman. However, with evolving technologies, there are quite a few mistakes regarding visuals and usability that can also destroy the user experience, rendering your website not even just useless but damaging to your business.

We've put together a simple list of typical problems that might occur on your website in terms of visual usability and what you can do to avoid them.

1. Too little white space

This might sound counter-intuitive at first glance, as people usually tend to put as much content on their websites as possible: Advertising products, give the customer information about services etc. But it is really crucial to keep in mind that enough whitespace is one of the most crucial design points and not enough of it can be a usability killer. White space makes your content legible and stand out while allowing users to focus on certain elements. There are studies which show that whitespace increases the attention of a website visitor by almost 20%.

Solution:

Use plenty of whitespaces to keep your website legible, fresh and modern. It will also help with your branding efforts and give the user a consistent experience. A good rule of thumb is the "1:1:1 rule": Keep as much whitespace below and above content, you want to highlight as the content itself takes in space. This allows the reader to focus her attention on the content and experience a feeling of openness and visual clarity.

2. Slow pages

Not directly a visual problem but closely coupled to the use of non-optimised images, a slow webpage can be not only frustrating but also lead to high bounce rates on your website. With smartphones and tablets now among the majority of website visitors, people will access your content from many different platforms and maybe on slower mobile network connections. If the page load takes more than seconds, this can lead to abandonment rates of over 80%.

Solution:

Use these free google services (<https://developers.google.com/speed>) to check for slow loading. Try to optimize your website loading speed by optimizing images and build a cache friendly site.

3. Unattractive CTAs (Call to Actions)

Most of the times you want the user to convert to some actions, which is done by using calls to actions. Visual cues can be used to let them follow to content which is relevant to them. Often times, unfortunately, buttons which should lead to an action are not highlighted

enough, presented in dull and boring colors or simply too small. Wrong colors can also be a problem, as different colors can send different messages to the user. Things like trust and experience need different colors than warnings. Wording should also be chosen carefully: Certain words can trigger or interfere with behavior.

Solution:

Choose colors wisely, cold colors like blue and green project professionalism and trust while bright colors pull attention and can also be used to transport excitement. Use bold words to build time-sensitive and action-oriented CTAs. Buttons should include a verb or a word that includes an action, to excite the user.

4. Links not differentiated from the rest of the page

If you include links in your page, you want your visitor to follow them. But if these links are not identifiable as such, users will not likely click them. It might be tempting to come up with your own style for links, but this is often not a smart move: Studies have shown that regular web users have been conditioned to see blue and underlined text as links, and they know they need to click them to follow them. Exploiting this already trained behavior is always a good idea.

Solution

Make links identifiable by styling, don't hesitate to use "old-school" link colors, and also don't worry about the length of the link title: the more information the better to identify.

5. Convoluted design

Sure, your site should be beautiful and also modern or even innovative. This is unfortunately not always the best thing to get people to convert: Less is often more. Don't make your site "clever" just to be clever, because this risks confusing your users. Radial navigation, counter-intuitive visuals, they all might be innovative, but they will lead to frustrated user experiences: keep it stupid simple. This also applies to visuals and design.

Solution:

Use tools like fullstory.com and google analytics to find possible points of hesitation for users. These points can indicate issues with clarity of design because hesitation can be caused by being unsure of the consequences of an action

6. Unresponsive design and/or broken visuals after updates

It's a no-brainer: You should make sure that any updates you apply to your site keep things functional. Often times updated plugins, customized CSS when using CMS like Wordpress can break visuals, rendering parts of your site broken or even unusable.

Solution:

Make sure to check for visual problems after updating content, changing core elements of your site like navigation and when updating important plugins with effect on visuals. Testing can be really time-consuming, but it's a must if your site is live and public. You can also use tools like diffy (www.diffy.website) to automate this tedious process.

Conclusion

When it comes to user experience and design, there are a lot of things that can go wrong when building your next product. Most of these problems, however, can be easily fixed. For

many issues there exist tools which help to find the problem and/or fix it. Make sure to address these issues, and high bounce-rates due to visual problems will be a problem of the past for your websites.