

Five ways to keep your website rockin' in 2013



The third quarter of 2012 is approaching and marketing managers will soon need to make plans for 2013. What are the game changers for the upcoming year? Read on to learn about the top five traits that will help your website stay ahead of the curve and ready for the ever-changing online environment.

1. Responsiveness

In 2013 there will be more mobile Internet users than those with desktop connections. Is your website ready for smartphones and tablets?

Websites must be ready for the mobile era; failing to keep up might result in an unexpected drop in online conversions. There are several approaches to making a website responsive to screen size: create a special version of the website that will automatically be shown to those with small screen sizes or redesign the website responsively. Elements that are unnecessary for a mobile version are hidden, while other elements may be styled differently. Resizing the window of a responsively-designed website will cause the layout to change on the fly.

2. Usability

Do you think your website is easy to use? If the answer is just a gut feeling, it may be wise to reconsider. It is easier and cheaper than ever to test how users interact with a website using new technologies.

Even running simple click tests that give users a specific task and record their answers gives enough insights to discover the troubled parts of a website. This means that solutions are then based on data, not guesses.

Usability will become an important factor in creating a

successful web presentation. The bar for user-friendly design has been raised to a whole new level. More and more companies are jumping on this trend, making their solutions more accessible to the user. Businesses that fail to adapt will be left behind since users will have more options at hand.

3. Analytics

The time of one-tool-only analytics is over. While Google Analytics, the industry standard, keeps providing good general data, it is now possible to dig deeper and obtain more granular analytics using new tools that cooperate with Google Analytics. These tools monitor the exact routes a user takes on a website. Despite sounding like the ultimate spy tool, they allow business to make very well-informed decisions about online presence.

Websites are no longer simple extensions of a business. They are becoming the core element of many businesses and this trend is expected to rise in the coming year. It is thus necessary to implement tools that allow businesses to use data when making decisions.

4. Aesthetics

Despite data setting the pace in web design, there has also been significant improvement in the aesthetics of graphic design. A site's aesthetics need to complement data-driven decisions.

With companies like Apple raising the standard for beautiful design, users are starting to expect the same quality of design in other products and services they use. This applies to all industries (from ordering pizza online to finding a good lawyer).

Again, more and more companies are adopting this trend and competition is rising fast. You need to be there as well or your customers might opt for more visually attractive solutions.

5. Dynamics

Have you noticed how Facebook loads new status updates without actually reloading the page? Web interaction is now about more than just those nice photo galleries that pop up over the text.

It's about sleek animations when the cursor hovers over a link, which gives visitors a feel for what is going to happen if they click.

Navigating through long, boring content doesn't have to be that boring any more—give users a bit of interaction and they will read the otherwise boring sales pitch.

Conclusion

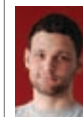
For the ROI (Return on Investment) of a website redesign to have positive results, it is important to include all five of these elements in the specifications. Don't get fooled by beautifully designed websites that can't really measure conversion rates or users get confused with its navigation.

The buzzword of 2010 was Web 2.0, which included all new social technologies with user-generated content. One might expect Web 3.0 to be the next big thing. However, the thing that will change the game in 2013 will be an intelligent web that conforms to users' specific needs.

Using new technologies can really help companies to grasp a competition edge. Take advantage of a website redesign and update your website a year ahead of time. Make it responsive, dynamic, attractive and easy to use and be sure to evaluate with great analytical tools.



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