



BrandExtract°

Websites that Work

Malcolm Wolter

Director, Interactive

BrandExtract, LLC

malcolm@brandextract.com

713.942.7959





BrandExtract°



The Milking Stool

How the simplest of tools finds new life
as a useful metaphor for the well-designed website.





The Milking Stool



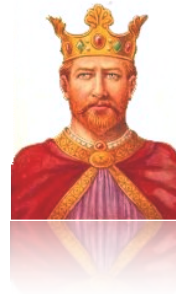
Your site must have three things in order to work:

1. Content
2. Usability
3. Interactivity





BrandExtract°



Content's Still King

Sound clichéd? There's a good reason:
Valuable content rules all.



Content: Long Live the King

If you have content people want, all other things that you **think** you need (like a “cool” design, or flashy animations) pale in comparison:



- One page
- No design to speak of
- Over 23 million visits per day
- Nearly 8 **trillion** visits in the last year





Content: Give People What They Want

- Nonprofits **overestimate the importance of aesthetics**
- Asked to rank 11 website components from most to least important, nonprofits list the following characteristics as the top five:
 1. Easy to use.
 2. Significant content about the cause.
 3. Visually pleasing.
 4. Memorable URL.
 5. Information about how to get further involved.

Source: GuideStar/Network for Good Survey, 2007





Content: Give the People What They Want

- Users ranked "Easy to use," "Significant content about the cause," and "Information about how to get further involved" in the top five. However, they ranked "**Visually pleasing**" 8th and "**Memorable URL**" next to last (10th).
- An attractive website with a catchy URL will not be appreciated by visitors who **cannot find what they're looking for**.

Source: GuideStar/Network for Good Survey, 2007





Content: People Want Information

Most important things to users:

1. In-depth content on the organization's **cause**
2. Information on **exactly how financial contributions are used.**

Source: GuideStar/Network for Good Survey, 2007





Content: Call to Action

Three out of four visitors to nonprofit sites are **motivated to take further action**. They aren't, however, necessarily taking that action online:

- 20 percent made online donations
- 39 percent donated offline
- Some 9 percent reported volunteering online
- 15 percent said they volunteered offline

Your call to action: Provide links to donate, advocacy, and volunteer opportunities **both online and off**.

Source: GuideStar/Network for Good Survey, 2007





Content: The Big Picture

Think Strategic: “Conversions” through Content

- Build a sense of **community**: Blogs, message boards, photo albums
- **Be authentic**. Use a friendly, honest voice and publish bios of key members of your organization. Publish personal calls to action by the leadership.
- **Identify, adapt, adopt**: What are other nonprofits doing well (in your area or outside it)? Study them to see if their methods can be modified to help achieve your goals.





Content: Build Your Brand

Support Your Brand

- **Show, don't tell:** Every picture, every press release, every message is an opportunity to promote your brand.
- Use a “look and feel” and messaging that’s **consistent** with your printed collateral
- Pictures of real people paint a thousand words—stock photographs paint about ten.
- **Keep it simple.**
- Don't pontificate—**participate.**





Content: Common Tactics

Elements to Consider

- Contact Us info, **prominently displayed**
- A calendar of upcoming events that users can **subscribe** to
- A Press Release area with an online press kit, press contacts, etc.





BrandExtract°



Usability Matters

The best content in the world won't do you any good
if users can't find what they're looking for—fast.





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

10. Not Answering Users' Questions

- Provide the info people want and **make the pathways to it obvious**
- Don't bury them under multiple layers of **marketese and bland slogans**

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

9. Opening New Browser Windows

Don't pollute the user's screen with **more windows** (particularly since most current operating systems have lousy window management).

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

8. Violating Design Conventions

- Users spend most of their time **on other websites**.
- Expectations for your site are based on what's commonly done on most other sites. If you deviate, your site will be harder to use and **users will leave**.

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

7. Anything That Looks Like an Advertisement

- Web users **don't pay attention to ads** that get in the way of their goal-driven navigation. (The main exception being text-only search-engine ads.)
- Legitimate design elements that look like prevalent forms of advertising are also ignored.
- Avoid any design elements that look like advertisements.
 - Banner ads due to shape or position on the page
 - Animated ads—areas with blinking or flashing text or other aggressive animations
 - Pop-up “windoids”

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

6. Page Titles With Low Search Engine Visibility

- The page title is almost always used as the clickable headline for listings on search engine result pages. Only the first **66 characters** or so display.
- Page titles are also used as the default entry in “Favorites” when users bookmark a site.
- **Don't start with words like "The" or "Welcome to"** unless you want to be alphabetized under "T" or "W".
- For other pages than the homepage, start the title with a few of the most salient information-carrying words that describe the specifics of what users will find on that page.

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

5. Fixed Font Size

CSS style sheets unfortunately give websites the power to disable a Web browser's "change font size" button and specify a fixed font size. About 95% of the time, this fixed size is tiny, **reducing readability significantly** for most people over the age of 40.

- Let users resize text as needed; you may even provide **special tools** in the interface to help those who don't even know they're able to resize the font.
- Specify font sizes in relative terms — not as an absolute number of pixels.

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

4. Non-Scannable Text

A wall of text is **deadly** for an interactive experience. Intimidating. Boring. Painful to read.

- To **draw users into the text** and support scannability, use these proven methods:
 - subheads
 - bulleted lists
 - highlighted keywords
 - short paragraphs
 - the inverted pyramid
 - a simple writing style
 - de-fluffed language devoid of marketese and “happy talk”

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

3. Not Changing the Color of Visited Links

- A good grasp of past navigation helps you understand your current location, since it's the culmination of your journey. Knowing your past and present locations in turn makes it easier to decide where to go next. Links are a key factor in this navigation process. Users can exclude links that proved fruitless in their earlier visits. Conversely, they might revisit links they found helpful in the past.
- Knowing which pages they've already visited frees users from unintentionally revisiting the same pages over and over again.
- Use **distinctly different colors** to distinguish visited links.

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

2. PDF Files for Online Reading

- Users hate **unexpectedly launching a PDF** file while browsing, because it breaks their flow.
- PDF is an undifferentiated blob of content that's hard to navigate.
- PDF is great for printing and for distributing big documents that need to be printed. **Reserve it for this purpose** and convert any information that needs to be browsed or read on the screen into real Web pages.
- Telegraph the fact that a link is a PDF (or other downloadable file format) by putting the file extension and size in parenthesis next to the file name. Tiny icons may also be used, with the file size.
 - **Example:** [Annual Report 07 \(PDF, 350k\)](#)

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





Top Ten Usability Mistakes in Web Design

1. Bad Search

- Overly literal search engines can't handle typos, plurals, hyphens, and other variants of the query terms.
- Rank your results by relevance, if possible
- Search should be presented as a **simple box**, since that's what users are looking for.
- If your basic search engine is optimized properly, there is seldom a need for an “advanced search”.

Source: Jakob Nielsen's *Alertbox*, 2007





BrandExtract°



Interactivity = Web Nirvana

Interactivity is the only thing that separates
your site from brochureware.





Why Interactivity Matters

Over the course of human history there have been five introductions of a major mass-communication medium.

Medium	Attribute
The book	Voice multiplier; pass info from one generation to the next
The newspaper or periodical	News, information over night
Radio	Human voice; emotion and personality
Television	Motion, pictures.
The Internet	Interactivity

Source: *The 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding*, Ries and Ries





What Is Interactivity?

Interactivity is not just the ability to select from a menu. Interactivity is the ability to:

- Type in your instructions and receive the information you requested in the format you requested it in
- Receive additional information based on your original query
- Add your own information to the site
- Handle complex pricing situations almost instantaneously
- Teach through tests, quizzes, puzzles and games
- Build virtual communities and vast social networks.

Source: *The 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding*, Ries and Ries





Opportunities for Interactivity

- **E-mailable pages:** Cheapest form of viral marketing there is. You can also use tools like Digg to effectively push content to your target audience that you otherwise have no way of reaching.
- **Online surveys, polls, and feedback forms:** Ask your audience how you're doing. Listen to them and act, where appropriate
- **Search:** For sites of 100 pages or more; invest in better software, then fine tune it for your content and user queries.
- **Loyalty programs:** Say "thank you" with gifts for various levels of giving (ala PBS).
- **Gift-giving support:** Enable people people to make gift donations.
- **Catering to seniors:** Most sites discriminate horribly against older users. Don't.
- **E-mail newsletters:** Publishing a newsletter is probably the single-highest ROI action you can take to improve your Internet presence.
- **Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and message boards:** Create a soapbox or public square for people that share your passion.
- **Educational puzzles, games, and quizzes:** Entertain while you advocate.





BrandExtract°



Usability ROI

Because money talks...





Usability's ROI

- **Fact:** Genuine ROI numbers for usability are hard to come by.
 - Organizations often don't have any historical metrics to measure against
 - Sometimes they don't diligently track the results
- ROI numbers analysis can **inform** but will never replace smart business and design sensibilities.
- Most available ROI stats are anecdotal; every situation is different.

*Source: Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, February 12, 2007





Usability's ROI

That said, here are some popular “rules of thumb”*

- On average, e-commerce sites double their sales by following e-commerce user experience guidelines.
- Even sites that don't sell online can double the conversion rates for business goals such as generating leads or enticing subscribers to read their email newsletters.
- Improving the usability of a company's intranet can save millions of dollars through increased employee productivity.

*Source: Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, February 12, 2007





Usability's ROI

What about nonprofits?

- Most nonprofits accept donations on their site. Donation pages should follow usability guidelines for registration and checkout.
- Nonprofit sites are competing with many other places where people can spend their money. Users often say that they don't feel like donating to a particular charity because the site doesn't present itself in a sufficiently credible manner.
- Finally, answering the phone costs anywhere from \$10-\$100, depending on the call center staff's qualifications. The more people who can answer their own questions directly on the website, the fewer calls your organization will get. Reduced call center costs are often the most direct form of ROI.

*Source: Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, February 12, 2007





Overall Value of Implementing UI Best Practices

- **High Return on Savings and Product Usability**
 - “Once a system is in development, correcting a problem costs 10 times as much as fixing the same problem in design. If the system has been released, it costs 100 times as much relative to fixing in design.” (Gilb, 1998)
- **Development: Reduce Costs**
 - **Save development costs:** “Approximately 63% of large software projects are over budget and the top four reasons rated as having the highest responsibility were related to usability engineering.” (Nielsen, 1993)
 - **Save development time:** “Speeding up development is a key goal for integrating usability effectively into product development; one-quarter delay in bringing a product to market may result in the loss of 50% of the product’s profit.” (Conklin, 1991)
 - **Reduce maintenance costs:** “It has been found that 80% of software life cycle costs occur during the maintenance phase and were associated with “unmet or unforeseen” user requirements and other usability problems.” (Nielsen, 1993)
 - **Save redesign costs**





Overall Value of Implementing UI Best Practices

- **Sales: Increase Revenue**
 - Increase transactions/purchases
 - Increase product sales:
 - Increase traffic, size of audience
 - Retain customers
 - Attract more customers (appeal)
 - Increase market share (competitive edge)





Overall Value of implementing UI Best Practices

- **Use: Improve effectiveness**
 - Increase success rate, reduce user error
 - Increase efficiency/productivity (reduce time to complete task)
 - Increase user satisfaction
 - Increase job satisfaction/decrease job turnover





Overall Value of implementing UI Best Practices

- **Return on Investment for UI Design and Usability**
 - Increase ease of use, which saves money
 - Increase trust in systems
 - Decrease support costs
 - Reduce training/documentation cost
- **Other**
 - Litigation deterrence and safety





Conclusion

BrandExtract
713.942.7959
www.brandextract.com
7026 Old Katy Rd., Ste. 210
Houston, Texas 77024

Thanks!

Malcolm Wolter
Director, Interactive
BrandExtract, LLC
malcolm@brandextract.com
713.942.7959

