

Tips for Improving Website Navigation

A business often has more than one target audience it wants to reach with its website. Different customers mean different sales appeals and a homepage needs to be able to direct visitor traffic to go to the right places to get information or make a sale. In order for visitors to find the right information, a website's navigation path needs to be clear. Without a clear navigation path, visitors will become confused and leave before they can make a purchase. Here are some ideas to consider when designing the navigation on a homepage:

Make the Navigation Familiar Most people expect the navigation buttons to be on the left side of the website or at the top of the website. If the buttons are on the right, it makes the visitors hesitate and think. You don't want them to have to think about the navigation; you want it to be instinctive and easy. The more familiar the navigation, the less likely they will get lost or confused. They will know how to find the correct path to where they want to go.

Use Text Links to Reinforce the Path People rely on navigation buttons to find the main paths of the website, but it is also important to reinforce the main paths with text links within the content. Again, this makes it easier for visitors to immediately go to where they can get further information without having to think.

Decide on a Path for Each Buyer As you put the content together on a homepage, or any other page of a website, you need to think about the complete path that you want to create to take the customer from information to purchase. The path will differ according to the audience appeal, and your purpose. Sometimes your audience needs to be educated before they can make a purchase. In that case, you need to make sure that visitors receive enough information that they will feel confident in making the decision to buy. This type of audience will need to know the features of your product or service as well as the benefits before they can make a decision. It would also be helpful to have testimonials and examples to reassure them that they are making the right decision. When you have to take the time to educate your audience, you would probably take them from the homepage to another area of the website where they can get further information about your product or service. However, if they didn't need to be educated, they could simply go from the homepage to the buy page and make their purchase. So, on the homepage, you need to make sure that you have both types of paths available: one for the buyer who needs to be educated, and one for the buyer wants to immediately make a purchase.

Decide on a Path for Each Audience When you are trying to appeal to multiple audiences, it is important that your homepage has information to appeal to each audience. When visitors come to your website they are looking for information to solve their specific problem. You need to have information that they can quickly and easily identify as the solution to their problem. For instance, maybe your company offers a product or service that is useful to Human Resource Directors, managers, and individuals. Each one of these three audiences would have a different benefit appeal that could be used in gaining their attention on the website. An easy way to do this is to set up three bullets that are questions with text links to take each audience to a separate page where you can exclusively cater to this audience: *Are you a Human Resource Director looking for XYZ? *Are you a manager looking for XYZ? *Are you an employee looking for XYZ? You want each one of these three audience members to land on your site and immediately find the path that will take them to the solution they seek.

Conclusion Good navigation on a website is one of the secrets to having a successful website. The information or content of the website needs to be laid out in such a way that it is easy to follow and logical. The easier it is for people to find information on a website, the more likely it is they will buy. And, the more difficult it is for them to find information, the more likely they will never visit your website again.

About the Author

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