

16 KEYS TO A USER-FRIENDLY WEB SITE



DO

- **Do** use Web analytics to track how users move through your site – and where they get stuck. If they never find certain parts of your site, it probably needs different navigation.
 - **Do** make links obvious. Unequivocally identify text links and make buttons look clickable. Write meaningful link labels. If you use icons, label them clearly.
 - **Do** show some content first, before asking users to register or subscribe.
 - **Do** reduce the clicks a site visitor must make before reaching substantive content.
 - **Do** check your links regularly. Broken links and dead ends are frustrating to users.
 - **Do** give users some connection to your print product — if you have a publication. E.g., provide contacts, subscription and advertising information for Web and print products. Web users don't live in a vacuum — if they know you have a print edition, they expect to see some reference to it on your site.
- **Do** give your homepage a distinct layout. You have 7 seconds to get the user's attention, so use the space wisely. Your homepage should highlight the main activities of your site. "Bubble up" content to show users what they'll find. Define a starting point for new users. Don't let your homepage look like all your others.
 - **Do** use space wisely. The "above the fold" space in a browser window is valuable real estate, so don't waste it on graphics or blank space.
 - **Do** put a search box on every page. Don't put two search boxes on a page, even if they search different areas of your site. Almost half of all users on average prefer to use search rather than clicking links, so search is essential.
 - **Do** find five people to test your site. Watch them navigate and attempt tasks. It's a problem if more than one tester can't do or find something.
 - **Do** include "About Us" and "Contact Us" sections to build credibility. Advertisers want fast access to media kits and advertising contacts, while readers want access to editorial contacts and customer service.

When users come to your site, do they stay? For how long? Enhancing the user experience is a critical success factor for generating online revenue. The following tips will help your visitors become the loyal readers that you want.

DON'T

- **Don't** use complex navigation systems. Stick to common navigational practices, unless your publication is focused on unconventional thinking.
- **Don't** slow your users down with unnecessary graphics and animation.
- **Don't** be clever for the sake of cleverness. No matter how smart, or how important you think your site is, your visitors aren't going to care if they have to fight through clever marketing terms and confusing links to get to the information they want.
- **Don't** bombard users with promotional offers and advertiser messages before they've gotten a good look at your content. The one exception is pre-homepage display ads — but always allow the user to "Skip this ad."
- **Don't** make forms longer than they need to be. Do you really need that info? Exercise caution when requesting "mandatory" data.

Want to learn more and put these best practices in place on your site? Contact ePublishing. Our hallmark is Web design and development combined with publishing industry experience. We bring current best practices to every site, and implement a set of integrated features to best meet the needs of your audience.