

Web Design / User Experience Best Practices

1. **Improve site design and usability by knowing how customers use your site.** Perform distinct usability tests to understand how your customers are using your site, their likes, dislikes, the barriers to conversion, and other downfalls of the site.
2. **Knowing what your customers want is the most important thing you can do to improve your site's usability.** Usability tests and actively soliciting customer feedback through interviewing and surveying are all good ways of knowing their needs. Use your understanding to design with a customer-first mentality rather than a design-oriented mentality.
3. **Create user personas and user profiles.** Knowing who your customers are allows you to architect your website by taking a customer-first approach. Understanding the demographics, motivations, goals, task flows and desired functionality of your customers will help you prioritize and improve the site design.
4. **The design of your site should be based on UX, not just design aesthetic.** Create a wire frame with UX best practices in mind. Content, links, navigation, functionality, and error handling may affect the design and need to be defined and approved before the creative look and feel is applied.
5. **Try to keep it as easy to use as possible.** Best ecommerce design practices include simple navigation, clear messaging (inventory, pricing, shipping, tax, etc.), simple checkout processes, anonymous shopping, multiple ship-to's, wish lists, merchandising of cross-sells and up-sells.
6. **Build your navigation and search to help customers easily find products.** Techniques such as faceted or guided navigation, advanced search features, and product wizards will keep customers from going elsewhere to find they want. Navigation and search features create discovery on-site, and are some of the most important features you can focus on from a product perspective.
7. **Give your customers as much product information as possible.** Build your product pages to show comprehensive information. Provide product reviews and comparison functionality, and use rich media techniques (such as image zoom, alternate images, and color swatches). The more information you provide, the more confident your customers will be in converting, and post conversion.
8. **Build all your main pages to be landing pages.** The home page is becoming less and less of an entry point into your site. Create brand stories on your category and product detail pages as customers could come in from any channel (not just direct traffic to your homepage).
9. **Personalize the site to help customers find what they want.** The ability to deliver personalized content, promotions, and emails based on a customer's particular user attributes, preferences, past purchase history, site navigation, entry into the site, etc., allows for opportunities to merchandise more effectively.
10. **Aim for cross-channel consistency.** When designing sites for multichannel retailers, the user experience should be consistent across channels and include cross-channel shopping features such as store returns, in-store pick up, store inventory, gift registry and gift cards.

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eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

Web Design / User Experience Key Questions to Ask

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many customers have you sold? How many have left your company, and why?
3. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”? Won any awards in that space?
4. What peripheral or supporting services do you offer (e.g., technology, SEO/SEM, usability testing)?

Products/Services

1. What information do you need from my company as part of the site design?
2. What optional services do you provide as part of the site design?
3. How long to design a basic site? A sophisticated one?
4. What is your process for working with a third-party ecommerce provider?
5. Do I own all licenses and artwork created/purchased as part of this process or are they under your name?
6. Which third-party ecommerce platform providers have you worked with in the past? How did they affect your design?

Process/Practices

1. What is your ecommerce design philosophy?
2. What key design practices are included in your service?
3. What practices do you follow to improve usability?
4. Please explain your design methodology.
 - a. How does the process work?
 - b. How do you work with my team and my technology providers (ecommerce, search, etc.)?
 - c. What is your process for wire frame review?
 - d. What is your process for creative review?
 - e. What types of documentation do you provide (e.g., wire frames, style guide, etc.)?

Pricing

1. What is your pricing model for your services?
2. Are there any additional fees (e.g., implementation, usability testing)?

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