



Guidelines for Engendering Trust

**Convert Visitors into Customers to Accelerate
Sales on Your Site and Your Clients' Sites.**

Graphic Design Tips to Help Accelerate Visitor Interaction and Transaction

We will show you how to address what we see as three of the top issues that affect trust with web visitors. There are many more, but we see these three as straightforward for you the design and web expert to address, especially when in the development of a website, graphics, and logo/brand identity.

Three top issues are Site Quality, Risk - both real and perceived, the Reputation of your or your clients business - again real and perceived.

Site Quality is key to mitigating risk and building an organizations reputation, so we are focusing here. Risk and reputation are also influenced heavily by overall site quality, usability, and design.

Your Marketing and Sales teams (and your clients') certainly control other potent factors including offers, pricing, incentive, and brand that are also key drivers of trust. Perhaps you can influence these as well, but the focus of the paper is around what you can drive.

This is not as much an overview of the basic principles of graphic and website design as it is specific pointers that can help you build trust for you and your clients based on TRUSTe's 12-year history in building trust for websites.

COLOR

Heuristics for attractiveness and aesthetic design start by understanding your true target customer, who is sustainable, profitable, and likely to use your web medium to interact and transact with your business.

Thoughtful, judicious use of color that is balanced with low saturation pastel colors for backgrounds is recommended. Some research indicates designs should not use more than 2-3 fully saturated intense colors.

Consider testing contrast. While designers love colored fonts, consider the reader, their monitors and even devices, and test whether there is enough contrast between the text and the background. Use helpful tools like [Accesskeys](#) and [Validator](#).

SIZE, SHAPE, AND MOTION

Symmetry and style specific to visual layout. Consider symmetrical, e.g. bilateral, radial organization that can be folded over to show the symmetrical match. Research shows use of curved shapes help convey an attractive visual style when contrasted with rectangles as well.

Structured and consistent layout using grids to structure image components and portray a consistent order. Consider using rectangles to compose grids. Some advise keeping within a 5:3 height to width ratio.

Depth of fields – consider use of layers in an image stimulates interest and can be attractive by promoting a peaceful effect. Use of background image with low saturated color provides depth for foreground components.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Choice of rich media to attract attention such as reasonable flash video with speech and/or audio all have an arousing effect and increase attention. Music can attract by setting the appropriate mood for a website. Keep size, audio, and duration of any video aligned to your target visitor and customers consumption habits and stage of purchase. Research especially geared to SMB online buyers, shows video as an effective mid-sales cycle (consideration phase) asset for many B2B products and services as one example.

Image optimization especially around file size for graphics is critical to building a positive user experience. Recently load times have begun to be factored in for Google quality scores as well. Use tools like [Yslow](#) to measure your draft pages.

Liquid layouts for the range of your target visitor and customer screen resolution, and consider browser compatibility as well. The young hip marketing manager may have the same apple monitor you do, but the decision maker may be using (and thus seeing) something very different.

Website Design Tips to Optimize User Experience

Travis Pinnick, Product User Interface Design Manager, TRUSTe

SIMPLIFY THE DESIGN FEATURES

Users are much more likely to engage with a design they can quickly interpret and feel comfortable using. Be aware of your design enough to be able to separate what's important from what is not. More features don't always make for a richer experience, and can in some cases even lead to greater user frustration.

A lackluster design with excessive features usually stems from a requirements gathering process with too many stakeholders in the kitchen and not enough designers to push back.

Renowned interface design expert Alan Cooper says excessive functionality interrupts the flow of the intended activity of your design. When in doubt, ask yourself if a feature is really necessary. If the answer is no it probably needs to go.

REDUCE VISUAL CLUTTER

Clarity and simplicity make your design more usable. Bad design pushes too much content without attention to ease of interpretability. Good design is clean and simple. Arrange your content into logical clusters, and it's both easier to read and interpret.

Try to create a design that has only a few sparse dominant elements (the most important content) by making it bigger, or bolder, or by using an attractive image to draw attention to it. Don't try to fill every pixel with content - white space is usually a good thing when used properly.

Strive for a design that is clean and simple, and it will reinforce your content rather than detract from it.

SUPPORT THE USER'S MENTAL MODEL

Users want to feel good about using an interface, but they don't necessarily need to know everything about it. Make it as simple as possible for the user to achieve that feeling by supporting the way a user thinks about using it.

The goal is to make your user comfortable and confident. Most users don't need to know that an array has been created to hold a list of items, but they can easily understand the metaphor of a checklist because that's a concept they can relate to. User-centered design expert Donald Norman calls this the "designer's model" - present information in a way that supports how the user thinks.

TESTING DESIGN

Most small businesses are afraid of testing because they think it's too expensive, will take too long, etc.

Usability expert Jakob Nielsen says you can find 75 percent of the major problems in a design within the first four user tests. Whether you know it or not, you're too involved with your design to see its flaws. Even if you only put the design in front of 4 people who have never seen it (your spouse, your HR guy) any testing is better than none, and is bound to reveal design issues you hadn't noticed.

Also, outside of the pages themselves consider testing other operational tactics like load times. You in the graphic design seat may have a T1, but consider what percentage of your audience uses dial (still). Test against these with Yslow or other load time testing tools. Screen resolutions, operating systems, and browsers vary among users as well, so test those before go live.

To Learn More, View Our Recent Webinar [“Ten Cost-Effective Ways to Market Your Business Online and Inspire Customer Trust”](#)