

Elements of Great Websites

by Irene Kopaliani



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here are literally millions of websites on the Internet these days. How do you make sure that your website is not lost in virtual obscurity? Well, there are several key elements that every great website has. These elements are described below:

Visible Elements

How eyes see the site

The first item that's seen on the website is the upper-left corner. From there, the eye moves to the upper-right corner, and then it moves in a zigzag fashion from elements that grab its attention. Knowing this fact, you'll notice that most great websites have their company's logo and key messages positioned in these most coveted eye catchers!

Layout

Layout of the site is extremely important. Great websites have a consistent layout and repeat certain elements of it throughout the site.

Alignment

Elements on the website have consistent alignment. Choose either left or right justification and stay away from centered alignment.

Colors

Use 2-3 colors throughout the site, keeping text to the easiest to read combination of white background and black text. Overdoing the color makes eyes wander the page trying to figure out logical connections.

Graphics

Graphics are an important element of any website; however, it is easy to overuse them. Great websites use graphics sparingly and consistently. For example, if site has illustration graphics on its pages, their design and fashion should follow the same style.

Easy Navigation

Great websites have one common feature—easy navigation. Whether it is menu based, link-based or graphic based, navigation should be consistent throughout the website. It is also a good idea to have a “you are here” link on the sub-pages to allow quick jumps between parent-child menu items.

Short and Organized Copy

Websites are designed to grab user’s attention. Main page of the site should not overload the user with heavy text. Break up the text in small paragraphs. Clearly label topics in **bold** or *italics*. Try to minimize the scrolling on the first page. Create jump links from the main page “read more.” Remember that most users stay on the website for less than a minute.

Invisible Elements

Keywords

The key element of the great website is presence of keys in its Meta section. Keys are what search engines see when they crawl the site. It is imperative to have a targeted set of 10-20 keywords that are 2-3 words. Remember that most people online use 2-3 words for their search string.

Title

Every webpage should have a short and descriptive title. Titles should not be a repetition of keywords; however, keywords should be used in the sentence. Titles should be kept to about 36 characters.

Description

Description is displayed when the page is presented in the results of the search query. It is imperative that websites have a detailed description that’s short and to the point, without marketing twists. The length of description is generally kept to less than 256 characters; and many search engines display only 128.

Links

In order for a website to score high with the search engines, it should have links pointed to it. Larry Page's (one of the founders of Google) famous PageRank measures a website's popularity by the links that point back to it. Great websites usually exchange links with other sites and affiliates.

Creating a state-of-the-art website takes knowledge and patience. Remember, people often visit the website *before* the personal meeting to learn about the company. Therefore, take the time to study the website design and make sure to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do the prime spots on the page display a strong message?
- Does the website look attractive?
- Is the copy clean and concise?
- Does the website provide easy navigation for visitors?
- Have the invisible elements of the website been properly setup?

Remember to keep the points listed above in mind when creating or reviewing the website design. Consider firm's brand and keep elements of the website consistent.

About the Author

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