

## **Three Things a Business Web Site Should Be**

By Debbie Campbell

I've been thinking recently about how to sum up my ideas about what constitutes 'good web design' in a way that makes sense to my small business clients, and in a way to which they can easily relate. Yesterday while shopping in a bookstore, the following came idea came to me. This may not apply to every site, but I think it's a good foundation for many.

### **Three Things a Business Web Site Should Be:**

#### **1. Intuitive**

Business web sites should be predictable. They should have navigation that looks like navigation. They should be so predictable that they become almost invisible to the visitor – the interface is so intuitive that you don't even think about it after the first page.

Don't surprise your visitors. Don't force them to download something just to be able to see what you've done – they will likely go somewhere else. I think that the more conventional your product or service, the less you should rely on cutting-edge techniques to accomplish basic tasks like navigation, and the more simple your site should be. Following these guidelines will result in web sites that are all very similar; make them stand out by making them unique in appearance.

#### **2. Attractive**

'Simple' does not mean 'plain.' Make your sites with a strong, clear design that reinforces the client's business personality. Use the company colors where you can. Use fonts that are easy to read – and large enough to read; no tiny text. Make the text contrast highly with the background colors.

#### **3. Optimized**

Your clients will in some cases never even see the code, but the search engines will. A thoughtful attempt to optimize a site for decent organic search results is important. It helps the chances that your client's business will be found in a search. It helps make later redesign faster and less expensive. Standards-based design can also make it easier for visitors with disabilities to grasp your site – and why turn away potential customers?

Following these guidelines has improved the quality of my own designs and made my clients more aware of the effects of these simple but important elements. Most importantly, remember that most business web sites aren't created for art's sake - they're created to solve problems. Don't force visitors to bend to your wishes; a 'good' business web site is designed for their convenience. Anything you do to put a stumbling block in the way of an easy experience is a potential turn-off, and may be an invitation to check out a competitor instead.

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Debbie Campbell is a web developer of 11 years and the owner of Red Kite Creative (formerly Parallax Web Design) - ([www.redkitecreative.com](http://www.redkitecreative.com)). Debbie is passionate about CSS, valid coding and web standards. She creates and redesigns websites for small businesses and encourages her clients to get involved with their customers via their site – launch is the beginning, not the end!