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THE WORST TRAFFIC TACTIC by Jakob Nielsen

The Worst Web Design Mistakes

Jakob Nielsen is the world's foremost expert on the most underutilized web conversion tactic – Usability.

For nearly 22 years he's studied how people interact with sales systems; focusing the last 11 years on understanding how real people use the web.

His research reveals what visitors see, what visitors read, and most importantly what visitors do (even uncovering what they're honestly thinking).

The ability to truly understand the thoughts and actions of real visitors on our site gives us the power to improve our designs, increase our conversion and generate more profit...with little or no extra cost.

For an Introduction to Usability, check out the Trafficology 101 section of the membership site.

A recent study I conducted focused on what real website users found the most irritating. Before you start thinking, "I've heard this before", remind yourself...these were the biggest web design mistakes of the year. People are still complaining about them because they continue to be so common.

The number one complaint was very simple:

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I cannot read the text.

Many sites have small fonts or poor color contrast. I just don't understand why this is a problem.

Designers probably think pink text on a green background looks good, but a website can serve no purpose if your visitors cannot read your writing.

Looking good is much less important than people actually being able to read the material.

The second biggest web design mistake of 2005 was using non-standard links. If your visitors don't know what to click on, they will not visit your other pages; and that defeats the purpose of your entire website.

The simplest resolution is to always use underlined, colored text for your links. Then people know for sure they can click on it.

Also, ensure the link text clearly state what people will find on the next page. Don't just say, "Click Here".

That's a mystery link. It doesn't explain what visitors will see when they click on the link. Instead you should use something like, "my top usability tactic". Life is too short to click on mystery links...so people just ignore them all together.

The third thing web users complained about the most was flash animation or anything that moves, blinks, or gets in the way on the web.

Web designers make this mistake because they anxiously want to feature their important, exciting promotion. But, the more elaborately an element of your website, the more people will ignore it.

People think the best offers and the most important information is the ones that look like it's plain information. They surmise, anything that looks like a big advertisement is probably just an advertisement and that is not why I am on the web for.

The more things look like an ad the more people will actually ignore it. It's paradox. The more you promote something, the more it will be ignored.

Therefore, don't use overly aggressive graphical design elements. Rather, use a more subdued design.

Other major design mistakes to avoid are:

- ✓ Not writing short, scan-able content.
- ✓ Creating too long, too restrictive web forms
- ✓ Not providing a big enough product image
- ✓ Not providing contact or company info
- ✓ Using Fixed Page Widths