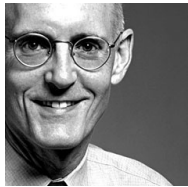


Before Designing a Website Let's Talk About a Plan

Hanson Design's website analysis and assessment process



Gilman Hanson

Before you do anything to your website, we recommend you think about exactly what it is that you want to accomplish. With rapid changes in the marketplace, new product offerings, ever-evolving technologies and growing customer sophistication, there are plenty of reasons to develop a solid plan for your new website—and doing a comprehensive web assessment is a good place to start.

THE ADVANTAGES OF A COMPREHENSIVE WEBSITE ASSESSMENT CAN BE:

- Significant cost savings during design, construction and implementation
- Involvement of key stakeholders in the process
- Keeping brand and advertising messaging consistent
- Increasing brand performance
- Fostering customer and new user satisfaction
- Increasing sales opportunities & profitability

WE DIVE DEEP—IN UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING A NEW VISION FOR YOUR SITE

Our comprehensive assessment involves the following process:

1. Vision — clarifying objectives and where you want to go

Our Vision work is a strategic brainstorming tool that discovers key insights and objectives, while developing new directions and plans for today and the future. An Assessment and Evaluation of all your site needs, issues and requirements will be established in detail during this session. Business, Marketing and Brand goals will also be clarified. You should be prepared prior to the session with thoughts about the

existing site and marketing initiatives as well as aspirations and expectations for site improvements.

2. Website Analysis—where are you now

With the goals and vision established, we conduct an audit of your current website. The audit evaluates 11 critical areas (see below). Additionally, we may recommend market research to find out more about how your customers (and new prospects) perceive the user experience on your current website. We use a variety of online tools and surveys to identify user insights and preferences.

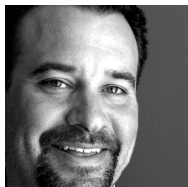
3. Competitive Website Audit—who is doing it better

We believe it is important to understand what the competition is doing. We conduct a thorough audit of your top competitors' sites. We identify trends, competitive strategies, design use, functionality, the timely access to information and what features to be avoided or adopted into your new website.

CLIENT AND COMPETITIVE AUDITS ARE EVALUATED USING THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

User Interface & Appeal

- I. **Home Page.** What is the initial impact? Does it set the proper context for visitors? How informative is the home page? Is multimedia being used effectively? How fast does it load? Does the home page explain and clarify the site's purpose to the user?
- II. **Readability.** Is the site easy to read with intuitive information groupings—or is it just solid blocks of text? Will it print well? Is the font easy to read? Are line lengths acceptable?



Eric Livingston

THINGS TO CONSIDER

You'll need a clear roadmap when developing your new site. Below are a few questions to consider:

- **SITE GOALS** – Expectations and goals for your new / revised site.
- **BRANDING** – How will your brand “fit”? Your website is the gateway to customers and prospects.
- **MARKETING AND PROMOTION (SEO)** – How you can be found on Google.
- **TARGET AUDIENCE** – Whom do you want to impress?
- **DETERMINE INTERACTIVITY** – How visitors should react and interact with your site?
- **COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS** – How does your site stand up to your competition?
- **WEB ARCHITECTURE** – How can your website performance be improved?
- **DESIGN / USER INTERFACE (UI)** – How does your site look (and feel) to users?
- **DATA FLOW AND DELIVERY** – How you can use dynamic content, video streaming, Flash and other methods to optimize your site.
- **SITE NAVIGATION** – How to make it easy for your customers to buy, be informed and want to come back.

Is the site easy to scan with categorized information groups, or is it just solid blocks of text? Will it print well?

- III. **Graphic Design.** Is the site visually pleasing? Does the site incorporate appropriate use of color? Does the site contain recognizable brand elements? Does the site have a consistent “look-&-feel”? Does the site effectively use unifying visual themes to support brand consistency? If you remove all of the images from the site, does it maintain brand integrity? Does the site incorporate an effective use of imagery?
- IV. **Links and Labels.** Are labels and titles on section headers and content groupings easy to understand? Are links easy to distinguish from text? Are links ambiguous and uninformative (“click here” or “white paper”)? Are links spread out in documents, or gathered conveniently in sidebars or other groupings?

STRUCTURE, CONTENT & FUNCTIONALITY

- V. **Site Organization.** Is the site organization intuitive and easy to understand?
- VI. **Navigation.** Is the global navigation consistent from page to page? Do major sections have local navigation? How effective is the site's overall navigation system?
- VII. **Audience.** Does the site convey a clear sense of mission to its intended audience? Does the site use language that is familiar and comfortable for its target audience? Are there clear pathways through the site by User Type? Does the imagery support the brand and add relevance for the intended user?
- VIII. **Content.** Is there a sufficient depth and breadth of content offerings? Does the content match the mission of the organization and the needs of the audience? Is the site developing its own content or syndicating other sources? Is there an appropriate hierarchy of communication (Headline – Detail – White Paper) ?

- IX. **Search and Search Results.** Is the site's search engine easy to use? Are there basic and advanced search functions? Are search results organized and easy to understand? Do they give relevance rankings or provide context? Do the search results remind you what you searched for?

PERFORMANCE, MAINTENANCE & SEO

- X. **Performance & Maintenance.** Overall, do pages load slowly or quickly? Are graphics and applications, like search and multimedia presentations, optimized for easy Web viewing? Are there dead links? Are there Functionless Forms?
- XI. **Search Engine Optimization.** Is each page properly titled? Are the keywords unique to the subject matter of the page? Does the page provide unique content text that is appropriate to the subject matter? Are the page keywords repeated in the content? Are images labeled with ‘AltText’? Are text links used instead of image buttons? Is there a site map? Do outside websites and resources link to the site?

4. NEEDS ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS – A PLAN FOR SUCCESS

The results of the Vision session and ensuing research will be summarized in a Comprehensive Project Plan that identifies all recommendations, website content types and proposed site functionality. The Project Plan will also identify the potential software needs required to implement the proposed functionality. You will then have a solid framework for moving forward with creating a highly effective website – with measurable success.