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With Websites dropping off of the Internet quicker than you can say "dotbomb", the line between success and failure on the Net can depend on something as simple as an icon, graphic or download.

Web design is a hot topic, with companies trying to create user-friendly interfaces which entertain, inform and impress. The trouble is, it seems nobody can agree on what makes a site easy to use and worth returning to again and again.

Jakob Nielsen is a Web design expert, who gets paid up to US\$10,000 per day for criticizing Websites.

He says the most common mistake Web designers make is creating sites which are so busy showing fancy Flash animated graphics users are unable to figure out what service or product the site actually offers.

"The key thing is people coming to your Website, not you," says Nielsen.

"They are outsiders, they are customers. They do not know about your company, they do not know about your product, they don't even care about all your details. They just want the facts, fast."

Nielsen believes simple and informative is the best method for a consumer-based Web site. He cites Amazon as one example of how a good site is designed.

Amazon's interface is light on text, organized and categorized so the user can see everything which is available on the site. Simply click through for more details and information. The background is white and the layout is unfussy.

"Black sites are symbols of cold sites which are hard to use", says Nielsen.

The Web guru also added that one of the biggest mistakes designers make is forcing people to go into special pop-ups, which do not necessarily provide the information they are looking for in the first place.

The bottom line is users want simple, easy-to-use sites which give them all of the information they need up-front, with no fancy Flash animations.



Web design: Good business
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