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Top 5 Homepage DOs & DON'Ts

We've all heard the saying: you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Unfortunately, when it comes to the web, judging a site by its homepage is exactly what we're all guilty of – and with good reason. Your homepage is the face of your business, just like your shop window would be if you had a physical store. Putting some effort into the look, feel and general usability of your homepage will likely help in gaining business.

1 Don't overdo your colour choices

A pack of 24 crayons look amazing when housed in their box set, but not so great when used all over your website. An abundance of colours only confuses your readers and drives them away. It looks horrible and is unpleasant on the eye, so it's essential to carefully plan an effective colour scheme of no more than five shades and your design will most certainly look appealing.

Try this: If you need inspiration or a helping hand into the right direction, browse through different colour recommendation sites such as Colour Lovers to assist you with selecting an effective colour scheme for your business.

Remember: A colour scheme will reflect your company image; choose the best option for your market niche. Loud and bright colours may be suitable for a music band, while lighter and sleek shades are appropriate choices for a law firm or doctor.

2 Do provide quality content

What is said on your site is just as important as the overall look. And SEO counts towards ranking favourably in search results, so it's vital that you write creative and concise copy that is still rich in keywords. However, recent changes to Google's algorithm have resulted in over-key wording and non-relevant keywords being negatively ranked. Limit yourself to using one or two keywords per page and never use a keyword density over 6% – you may otherwise soon be under Google's wary eye!

Try this: Opt for exact keywords that match your overall content perfectly. Use 2-3 terms 2-3 times, but no more. It's possible to both keyword well and have good content, you just need to be thorough and conscientious.

Remember: Don't forget to update your content regularly. Stale information is just as undesirable as poorly written content.

Information provided by Melbourne IT



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3 Do not use too much flash

Flash animations look great when used sparingly. Time is money and your website users don't want to wait for information to be delivered slowly. If your homepage takes too long to load, users may leave and your visitor retention stats might hurt because of it.

Try this: Compress your website's CSS file to assist your site with optimal speed and design. Also, make the most of textures and gradients for a visually pleasing result.

Remember: Focus on good usability over suave animations. You want your users to digest your content and message, not be distracted.

4 Do make your mission statement clear

The reality is a user will visit your website and want to know what you're about within the first two minutes. Nobody should have to spend 40 seconds trying to locate an 'About us' page. Therefore, if your message isn't clear, they may quickly leave.

Try this: Implement a search box on every page so users have the option of searching for their needs if they can't find something on your site.

Remember: Contact templates are a very popular choice on contact us pages. They save users time and the hassle of loading a timely Outlook mail direct link.

5 Do use concise links

Make sure your navigation bar links and text-embedded links are titled appropriately. Users should not have to guess what they are clicking on and if pages aren't easy to navigate, your users won't stick around for long.

Try this: Embed links to different pages of your website on every page. By linking page content, you could also help boost your search engine results.

Remember: Links that go to other websites should open up in a new window. You don't want to lose visitors from your own site, but you do want to give them relevant information.