

Creating an Effective Website

Effective websites can be like fashion design. What is in fashion one year may not be in fashion the next. I have never been one to try to keep up with the latest trends. I stick to the classics. My webpage designs are nothing too bold, trendy, or cutting edge. I simply want to be effective and, if possible, classic. In order to achieve success; I have studied three reputable articles on webpage design.

The first, Web Design Principles of Successful Websites, by Martin Luenendonk, is the founder of the Finance Club and Entrepreneurial Insights.

<http://www.cleverism.com/web-design-principles-successful-websites/>

The second, 10 Top Principles of Effective Web Design, by Shortiedesigns, is a company that specializes in WordPress webpage design.

<http://shortiedesigns.com/2014/03/10-top-principles-effective-web-design/>

The third, Does Your Website Have What it Takes?, by Spritz Web Solutions, is a company that specializes in webpage design, development and marketing.

<https://www.spritzweb.com/resources/good-website-characteristics.html>

The design principals that are in common with each article will be used as a priority to improve my own O.L.T.D. (Online Teaching Diploma) website. Comparing the articles using a simple check mark will determine what principles are in common. These principles, however, are aimed at being general in scope and do not necessarily meet the purpose of my website. For example, I am not selling a product, so “Buy Now” button is not too critical. The ergonomics of where the buttons are placed, the colour and size, are. With the goal of improving my website in mind, I have also included the “Knight’s O.L.T.D. Website” in the chart.

To read the chart, the following key is used:

“✓ “ means that the design principles is included.

“Yes” means that I believe I have met the design principles well.

“Improve” means that I plan to improve this area.

“N/A” means that it is not important to the purpose of my website.

“Not Sure” means I am undecided.

Website Design Comparison Chart

Design Principles	Martin Luenendonk	Shortie Designs	Spritz Web Solutions	Knight's O.L.T.D. Website
Purpose, reflects company, attractive		✓	✓	Not Sure
Visually appealing	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Communication (clear, organized, short)	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Fonts and Sizes	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Limit Colours	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Images and Graphics	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Navigation back buttons, limit menu	✓	✓	✓	Improve
Grid Based Layout	✓	✓		Yes
"F" pattern	✓	✓		Not Sure
Load Time	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Cross Platforms/Browser Friendly		✓	✓	Not Sure
Searchable	✓		✓	Not Sure
Simplicity	✓	✓	✓	Yes
flashy graphics and animation (limited)	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Functions well	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Consistent Layout	✓	✓	✓	Yes
Minimal scroll and movement	✓		✓	Yes
Use descriptive Links			✓	Yes

The Results

Perhaps the most important feature of a website is its purpose. With the purpose in mind, one can weigh the importance of each design principle. I marked this category with "Not Sure" as I am not clear of its purpose. Is the website to demonstrate that I have met the goals of the O.L.T.D. program? Is it to be used to apply for an online teaching job? Is it to learn the skills of making a website? Is it a landing site for posting assignments? I believe that it is all of the above. It is with those purposes that I filtered all my opinions of where to improve my website.

Although many of the principles are marked with a "Yes", improvements can always be found. I am confident that all the fonts, colours, and text sizes meet a high standard of professionalism. I also believe that I am consistent on each page with sizes and location of my photos. I have limited the choices on each page and the user can find

information with three clicks of the mouse. I am not heavy on graphics, so each page loads quickly. I have kept the amount of text to a minimum and clear as possible. I like the ergonomics of my pages. The only time the user must scroll around is on the evidence pages. My site functions well and the links are well described so the user knows what to find if they click on the button.

Areas to improve

The navigation needs to improve. Currently, when you click on the link button, you go to a pdf document. Because a pdf document does not allow for a “Back Button”, the user needs to close the document or click back on the website page. This could leave the user confused. If I hit the close button will I see the website under this page or will I exit the internet altogether? The solution would be to create another page on the website, but the instructions for the evidence pages were to be in a pdf file.

Navigation does not flow well from each journey page. I believe that they should connect to each other with a “Next” or “Go to” button. Currently they are Blog pages and buttons cannot be added to them. It is not evident that the user has to scroll down to see the information on the page. The other pages have an evidence button, so the new pages would be consistent with other pages too.

The Resource for Online Learning page does not have a “Lego” picture. I also think it should be combined with Community Connections. Perhaps the title should change too. “Tools for Online Learning” comes to mind. Originally I thought one page would link useful tools for teaching online learning, and the other for linking information about online teaching. I need to be clear on the purpose of these pages.

I also know that the content of the evidence of learning for 501 needs to be improved.

Areas I am “Not Sure” about

The “F” pattern may not be applicable to my website. The “Menu” goes across the top of each page (top of the “F”). The pages were designed to be simple so there is very little scrolling to do. The “F” pattern may not be relevant on my webpages. The evidence pages, however, could be rewritten to meet the “F” pattern standard. I do not think it is worth the extra time it would take to revamp those pages. It is, however, something I should keep in mind for the future.

I am also not sure about how cross platforms and browser friendly my website is. I have to assume that Weebly designed their site to be read by all browsers and platforms. Since none of the purposes of my site require reading my site on a cell phone or tablet, I will not worry about platforms for now.

My site is not too searchable. I did notice that in Weebly you can add key words to help your site be searched. Unless you have almost the exact words in the title of my site, you cannot find it. This is not important to me, but I think I add a few words just to see how I can improve finding my site.

Areas that are "N/A"

I just had one area of "N/A" and that was for flashy graphics and videos. To put videos on your site, you have to pay for the professional site. Mine is free so if I want to add videos it would have to be linked. I believe you can imbed your video, but I need to learn how to do that.

Conclusion

Website designs are consistently changing. By going with a "Classic" look, I hope that my website does not get dated. Websites must always be updated with new information and to check if links are broken. By using three different authorities on website design, I have located areas to improve my O.L.T.D. website. My main concern is with Navigation. By improving my site it is hoped that the user will have an improved viewing experience.