Web Design Self-Assessment

There is no faster or more effective way to reach new supporters and donors than through online marketing. But simply having a website is not enough to attain the results your organization seeks; your site must be designed to deliver your message, branding, and content as well as convey the spirit, mission, uniqueness, and importance of your organization.

To create an “indestructible design,” each web page must effectively communicate three critical pieces of information:
1. Where the visitor is,
2. What the visitor can do there, and
3. How the visitor can do those things

Take a few minutes to read through the questions below and compare the answers to your organization’s website, then contact one of our web design experts for more information on how Blackbaud can help you design a website that inspires more support.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

What percent of your total fundraising revenue comes in online?
Typical yields from online fundraising are 3% – 7% of your total fundraising revenue. If you are making less than that online, you might want to consider changing your call to action or making it easier for your visitors to make a donation.

Does your website clearly communicate your key marketing messages?
Which group or place is your primary focus? How do you achieve your mission? Who have you helped? Your marketing message informs possible donors about what you do and why you do it. Be truthful, clear, respectful, and share relevant information with your website visitors.

Does your site accurately reflect your organization and its mission?
The language, tone, and content of your website must be informed by knowledge of your audience. Your organization’s website is a tool for each user to learn more about your mission and how they can help. Be sure to ask visitors to take part in online surveys or do analysis of other organizations in your sector with similar missions to ensure your audience is being heard.

Is content fresh and ever-changing?
Fresh content keeps visitors coming back to your site to spend time and to donate to your organization. A website frequently updated with new content is more likely to be crawled by search engine spiders affecting your search engine optimization (SEO) score.

Is content laid out in readable chunks with the ability to drill down?
Use headings to break up your web content into readable chunks that can be scanned easily.

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The heading calls attention to the information below it, allowing visitors to decide whether they want to drill down and read more or skim over it.

**Do you have multiple calls to action on your website?**
Every website should have an objective it wants users to complete, whether it is to fill out a registration form, sign up for a newsletter, or volunteer time. A call to action provides focus to your site, a way to measure online success, and direction to your visitors.

**Does each call to action have more than one visual reminder on the page?**
A good rule of thumb is to provide more than one way for a visitor to complete your call to action. For example, you could provide a static donate now button as well as in-line text copy with a request for donation.

**Does each page tell the audience where they are in your website?**
Establish a home base and always provide a clear path to where you want your visitors to go, as well as back home. Hierarchical menus such as Home> Donate> Donate Now> work well here as well as clearly titled pages.

**Does each call to action help the reader accomplish the whole process in one sitting?**
Make it simple for the user to achieve your specified call to action. For example, clicking a “make a donation” button results in a donation form with the ability to pick fund or pre-populated fund matching or an event ad leads to the event registration form. Make sure you plan all actions for the visitor and don’t make them come back to finish a step.

**Do you feature engaging photos that tug on the heartstrings, pull visitors in, and get them to take action?**
Images play a crucial role in helping your visitors form a lasting memory of your organization. Photos that clearly capture the heart of your mission will often influence the donation behavior of supporters. Take a look at the photos on your website and change them if they don’t contribute to your overall goals.

**Is your online branding consistent with your offline look and feel (logo, colors, etc.)?**
Your website branding should be an extension of the way you market offline. Your brand represents a predictable pattern of qualities and behavior that gives users a strong sense of security.

Include your logo on all web pages, use the same imagery and color as your offline collateral, and communicate your message clearly and precisely.

**Is your site visually appealing, clean, and professional?**
Visual appeal is the first noticeable quality of a website. Web users form their first impressions of a website in as little as 50 milliseconds. If the user interprets your design as appealing — long enough to warrant further exploration — your mission has been accomplished.

**Do you know the most popular browser used by your website visitors?**
A simple Google Analytics® review of your website can show you the top browser being used to access your website. It’s important to identify your audience and build your website to suit that audience.

**Is your design attractive in all major browsers and screen resolutions?**
Your web pages should work at any resolution, but you should optimize your site for the most widely used screen resolution, 1024 x 768. The four major browsers are Internet Explorer®, Firefox®, Safari®, and Google Chrome®. If you’re not designing your website for viewing in all four browsers, you could be losing supporters.

**Is your site easy to scan?**
Sure, you want your website to be visually appealing, but can a visitor scan it easily? People do not typically read websites — they scan them. So use simple fonts, black text on a white background, and headlines to separate sections.

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Is your layout and color scheme consistent from page to page?
Changing colors schemes and layout from page to page creates an unnecessary confusion or disorientation for the user. Each page in your website should be clearly identifiable as part of your site through the use of fonts, colors, images, backgrounds, positioning of elements, page layout, and copy voice.

Is your design well balanced?
The layout of your site or the positioning of web elements on the page determines how balanced the page appears to a user. Arrange your website design pieces in a planned, coherent, visual pattern.

Does your design have rhythm?
Rhythm is the repetition or alternation of elements, often with defined intervals between them. It creates an internal consistency and allows your visitors to relax and prompts them to investigate further. Rhythm can be implemented through multiple additions of the same images throughout your site or repeating of navigation elements from page to page.

Are the elements on the page in proportion with one another?
Proportion is the relative visual size and weight of particular graphical elements in a design composition. By designing in proportion, your layout becomes easily scanned and well-structured, making it simpler for your visitors to read.

Are the elements on the page unified?
Unity can be achieved by use of the same color, or different tints of it, or using a similar graphic style for illustrations. Unity can also be achieved through margin and padding changes to the elements of your site, bringing them closer together or further away from each other.

Is your navigation neat and predictable?
Navigation graphics should be standardized so they provide a predictable cue for the user. Once the user knows where to find the navigation menu and how to use it, the navigation should be at the same place on each page.

Does your navigation bar suggest next steps for visitors?
Navigation should suggest next steps once the initial content is consumed. Often major headings can be subdivided, such as a catalog of programs your organization runs or a list of press releases. There are many examples of menu systems that drop-down or cascade to reveal more selections within a category.

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