

A website's landing page is the most valuable ammunition in a company's marketing arsenal. The impact of this page extends beyond clicks or conversions because a entire brand experience is what the potential customer sees. So why do so many companies seem to take a site's usability for granted?

There are seven serious usability mistakes that most corporate websites commit. Interestingly, these common errors are often products of sound principles that Web designers mistakenly apply:

### **1. Too Much Introductory Text on A Landing Page.**

The worst kind of filler copy usually starts with, "Welcome to our site, click on the blah, blah link to get info on our new blahblah..." Telling people what to do on a site is futile. The user will go where he or she feels like. People generally read very little on a website. Instead, users scan the page, picking out words that are relevant to them.

### **2. Not Showing What A Site Offers to Users.**

Many sites are horrible at explicitly stating what they offer and how their services or products differ from those of their key competitors. Instead, they hide this information in industry jargon that may be lost on users. Keep in mind that users will only spend a few seconds to scan the site for what they need.

### **3. Using Gratuitous Animation and Graphics on a Site.**

The dirty secret among Web designers is that we love to see cool animation and graphics, even if these don't contain real content. Using generic stock photos that have nothing to do with a content can distract users from the main goal on a page — to take action.

### **4. Not Showing Users Where They Have Been on A Site.**

Knowing what pages have been visited is a basic function that all navigational designs should support. Flash sites are notorious for this basic omission. Only one-third of corporate sites use link color to show users at a glance where they have been. Without this basic browser function, the result is navigational confusion and users re-visiting the same page twice. This usability mistake is especially hard on elderly users who rely on changing link colors to determine visited and unvisited links.

### **5. Not Telling Users What the Site or Company Does on its Landing Page.**

One of the most popular links on a website is the "About Us" link. Most people click to find out what the company does or what the site is all about. It's popular because tag lines and advertising copy are so generic and content-free that users have to work hard to find out who you are or what you sell. If a landing page tagline under the logo doesn't tell me who you are, then as a user I'm lost. As an example, I pulled these tag lines off

the sites of national companies without the benefit of a logo. Do you know what the business is?

- 1.) "Making sense of investing."
- 2.) "The strength to be there."

The first example is easy: it's investment brokerage Edward Jones. The second takes more thought. Did you guess a deliverable goods company? The New York City Fire Department? Wrong. It's actually AIG Insurance. If a huge national brand can have this disconnect, imagine the difficulty of an obscure slogan from a not-so famous company trying to establish a brand on the Web.