



## Best Practices to select a Website Designer

The Stanford Web Credibility Project (<http://credibility.stanford.edu>) found that 47% of users make buy decisions based upon the site itself. This implies that if the site is professional in appearance and supplies the essential information in a clear and complete manner, nearly half your customers will be comfortable making the buy decisions without further off-site research.

### The 3-8 Seconds Window

In our testing experience, when customers are searching for products or services across a variety of sites in a competitive market (10-20 sites will be visited on average), decisions about a site's professionalism are often made within the first 3-8 seconds of viewing the home or landing page. Customers gather a surprisingly broad range of impressions including:

- company or organization size
- services
- about management
- who you are doing business with or who is a member
- and often price.

### Bottom line: "What's in it for me?"

They demonstrate emotional feelings of connection or dissatisfaction, as well as feelings of anxiety and/or comfort. They often decide if they are in the "right place". Moving on to the next site is faster than you would ever think, no browsing around if it doesn't feel right, they're out & gone before you know it (just notice your own behavior next time you are looking for something on the web)

Small business and Organization sites often underestimate the importance of a good graphic look and feel. Sites often exhibit unprofessional graphic design, yet site owners wonder why so many visitors abandon the site.

A graphic designer I know who recently completed the redesign of an e-commerce site, found that the new design resulted in nearly doubled pageviews, time on site, and purchases. Good graphics can make a big difference.

If you're in doubt about the effectiveness your present website look and feel, user test your site on passers-by. Ask them to view your site for just 10 seconds and ask "what is the site about?", do the same for competitor sites. You may also ask

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probing, open-ended questions about their impressions and feelings. This will give you a good idea of the impression your site creates to visitors. I always tell companies or organizations that your website design & layout is telling a story, a visual story....and it has 8 seconds to do so!

### What a Graphic Designer Should Accomplish

Here's what you should expect a good graphic designer to accomplish:

- Select an attractive, comfortable color palette.
- Include attractive hi-res images with benefit-focused captions.
- Deliver a value proposition or branding statement in the initial eyepath.
- Present simple and effective navigation.
- Drive the eye path to the important calls to action.
- Optimize all graphic elements for fast loading.
- Keep the page simple, clean, and effective.
- Insure that viewers can "get it" in 10 seconds or less.

Good graphic design is too important to your success to risk an amateur look and feel. Unless graphics is in your blood, bring in a graphic designer to help get your site right.

### How much does a good designer cost?

In your quest for a designer, make sure your designer pays more than lip service to site usability. Good graphic designers may charge \$2,000 to \$5,000 for a professional design (\$100-125/hour). That may seem expensive, but great graphics translate to increased sales. Make the investment.



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