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DESIGN FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

EFFECTIVE WEB SITE REDESIGN STARTS BY TALKING TO CUSTOMERS AND KNOWING HOW THEY USE THE WEB, AND YOUR SITE

YOU'VE CALLED A meeting to discuss redesigning your company's Web site into a more effective marketing tool. Your IT person starts talking about all the new tech gizmos he wants to add to the site. Your Web designer argues it's all about looking cutting-edge. Your customer service chief says what she wants on the new site are reams of product information so people won't constantly flood the customer service center with complicated and time-consuming phone calls. As the discussion heats up, your CEO sticks her head in the door to say that, whatever you do, do it right because she doesn't want to have to sign off on another Web site design for at least five years.

Is this any way to create an effective Web site? No, no, no and no, say Web experts. Effective site design doesn't start from inside a company or organization but rather begins by looking outside to determine what your customers want from your site, how they use it and even which types of devices they use to access it. Site design should flow naturally from there, all the while reflecting your brand's image and its brand promise to site visitors.

"You have to be able to connect on an emotional level [with site visitors], you have to be able to inspire," says Jeremy Elder, an interactive designer with Minneapolis-based Introworks Inc., a branding firm. Adds Seth Rosenblatt, vice president of marketing for Autonomy Interwoven, an interactive marketing and Web content management solutions firm, designing a site is "a journey, not a destination. You're

The SEVEN SINS of Web Site Design*

PRIDE: Talking only about yourself/your company; putting the CEO's picture on your home page

GREED: Asking customers for so much information to register at your site that they decide it's not worth their time

ENVY: Wanting every gadget and feature your competitors have on their sites

WRATH: Making outrageous statements about your company or trying to frighten site visitors into working with you

LUST: Emphasizing flashy content over substance

GLUTTONY: Stuffing too much content onto your home page and other site pages, making the site difficult to read and difficult to connect with emotionally

SLOTH: Being lazy in how you test customer reaction and usage of your site

* Taken from AMA webcast "The 7 Deadly Sins of Web site Design," featuring Seth Rosenblatt, vice president of marketing for Autonomy Interwoven. To view the webcast, go to the Resource Center at AMA's Marketingpower.com and find it in the webcast archive.



Tesco's Web site is a prime example of good design, says Seth Rosenblatt of Autonomy Interwoven.

never 'there.' You're not supposed to be 'there.' Cast off the illusion of a final solution." Rosenblatt earlier this year moderated an AMA webcast, "The 7 Deadly Sins of Web Site Design," outlining the pitfalls of Web site design. Autonomy has headquarters in San Francisco and Cambridge, England.

Chief among those sins, he tells *Marketing News*, is what he terms sloth, meaning laziness in doing customer testing and research. Gathering customer reaction to printed marketing collateral was often a simple matter of A-B testing, where customers look at two alternatives and choose the one that is most effective, Rosenblatt explains. That practice carries over to Web design at firms where Web sites are launched as mere online versions of brochures.

But the corporate brochure concept of design is obsolete, Rosenblatt says, so Web site design testing also must change. The Web affords the opportunity to do much more in-depth and varied testing of an almost limitless number of options. "Look at the Web as a never-ending experiment," Rosenblatt advises. When your testing mindset changes, good Web design "becomes less about fighting over what

you think is right and more about creating a process to bring customers to the table," he says.

Once you have an idea of what your audience wants to see on your site, create a site architecture, known as a framework to tech types, to deliver it, Elder advises. "You've got to make sure that your design and [your framework] support your content and your message," he says. Also, "make sure all design elements support the brand."

Incorporating social media elements, such as Twitter, Facebook and others, is hot at the moment, but only use them if they help the customer experience, Elder and Rosenblatt agree. "Don't just employ the latest, greatest technology without considering the audience," Elder says.

Rosenblatt warns against envy—wanting all the goodies a competitor may have on its Web site. Assuming you should gauge your site by comparing it to direct competitors' sites is outdated thinking, he says. Visitors to your site won't just be comparing it to competitors' sites, they'll be comparing it to a wide range of sites they regularly visit. So get to know where your customers visit and what they like about those sites, Rosenblatt advises. **■**