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## Best Practices for Walsh Group Websites

1. Objectives and Measurements
2. Homepage
3. Navigation
4. Web Page Design & Layout of Information
5. Information Architecture & Organization
6. Accessibility
7. Effectiveness of Message
8. Use of Graphics, Animation, etc.

### 1. HAVE OBJECTIVES & MEASUREMENTS

*Develop clear objectives. Many websites have developed into a "dumping ground" for "all of our literature." Plus, "things we never had printed up." Once you have objectives you can develop a navigation system that supports them.*

*Some examples of specific objectives include:*

- Reduce paperwork
- Introduce new products and services
- Provide reference information for current customers
- Introduce our company's services to prospects and get them to interact with us
- Provide informational details to supplement current communications
- Technical support to complement internal resources
- Find qualified job applicants
- Support distribution chain

Once you have objectives then you can develop measurements to track your progress. Examples of measurements include:

- Number of monthly visitors
- Number of qualified leads
- Increase in Internet business activity
- Phone calls for customer service
- Requests for more information

## **2. HOMEPAGE**

The homepage of a website needs to convey a clear message of what information is provided, what the company does and what paths the user can follow. The best homepages present clear navigation succinctly while concentrating on the most important attributes of the website's offerings.

## **3. NAVIGATION**

Website navigation must be easy-to-use, consistent through all pages and obvious to anyone using the site. Navigation must also deliver on the implied promise of delivering the pages requested accurately. The best navigational systems present themselves well graphically, are clear and obvious while staying concise and keep the user feeling confident about their choices.

## **4. WEB PAGE DESIGN & LAYOUT OF INFORMATION**

Effective design will incorporate all of the critical elements of the page into the space available, while maintaining a professional and appealing look and feel. Attributes like the menu, sub-links, content, ads, and login/shopping bar should always be in the same place and should be consistent with users' expectations of where to find these items, i.e. login bar in the upper left, menu on the left or top of the page, ads down the right side or on the top, etc.

## **5. INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE & ORGANIZATION**

Organizing information in a website is very unique to the type of site and the type of company. Typically for sites that primarily provide information to potential clients, every important piece of information should be only one or two clicks away. Categorizing different groups of pages and types of information successfully will mean that users can find what they are looking for without being confused. The criteria for an e-process or e-commerce website are similar, but require that information that is related to the task or product on the page be instantly accessible and easy to understand.

## **6. ACCESSIBILITY**

Pages should be designed so that a user with a screen resolution of 800x600 with 256 colors can easily see and use your website. Exceptionally small text, illegible fonts, indistinguishable colors, poor "alt tags," unclear headlines and content all should be avoided. Pages, especially the home page should stay under 40K in size, unless the audience is primarily broadband equipped.

## **7. EFFECTIVENESS OF MESSAGE**

Your company's primary message should be one that differentiates you from the competition and makes it clear what you do. The message should be part of your logo and carried on every page, or at least a part of the consistent elements of each page.

## **8. USE OF GRAPHICS, ANIMATION, FORMS & INTERACTIVITY**

Graphics should be used to engage, inform and entertain visitors. While they can help you establish a professional "look and feel," graphics are often overused and must be carefully monitored and optimized to allow slower connections to see your material as fast as possible. The same rules apply to animation, but animation should be even more limited in use – so that only those areas that truly benefit from moving images and words use them. Interactivity is an important element that every website should carry – there must be something you are trying to get visitors to do and interactivity should enable them to do it – even if it is as simple as filling out a form or e-mailing you.

Let's talk. If you agree with our best practices, maybe we can help improve your customer's experience. We can also provide:

**MODIFICATIONS**

**QUICK FIXES**

**INTERACTIVE SERVICES**

**MEASUREMENTS**