A MARKETER'S GUIDE TO UX

THE **'INVISIBLE' ELEMENTS** THAT FUEL SUCCESS

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FUEL YOUR BRAND

INTRODUCTION

WHEN THE INTERNET AS WE KNOW IT FIRST APPEARED 25 YEARS AGO, websites weren't much to look at - let alone useful as forums for doing business. But websites now are sophisticated. Even simple pages are built to collect information, respond to user preferences and automate purchases. Today's web design is a lot more detailed because:

- → Software and hardware are vastly more sophisticated
- → People are much more comfortable navigating the web

RESPONSIVE AND INTUITIVE SITES ARE THE NEW NORM, and poor user experience (UX) will drive away customers, increase a site's bounce rate and undo any good that organic search and social campaigns have accomplished. In many ways, UX is a brand's first and last opportunity to make a good impression.

You don't have to be a designer to recognize common user experience issues and appreciate sites with beautiful layouts. With an understanding of basic design principles, you can diagnose common UX problems and identify appropriate solutions that will provide visitors with a better on-site experience.

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STARTING
WITH THE BASICS

THERE ARE 3 MAIN DISCIPLINES OF UX

1. VISUAL DESIGN - The overall appearance of a website, including the colors, typeface, layouts and pictures that users see.

2. INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE - The way content is organized on a website. It dictates how users navigate from page to page, but it also encompasses the types of media used for different kinds of content.

3. USABILITY - The site's overall user-facing functionality, from making purchases, to signing in with passwords or other higher level functions.

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VISUAL DESIGN

Today, web design has become incredibly sophisticated, and there are many visual rules marketers have to follow to present information in the way that's easiest for users to understand.
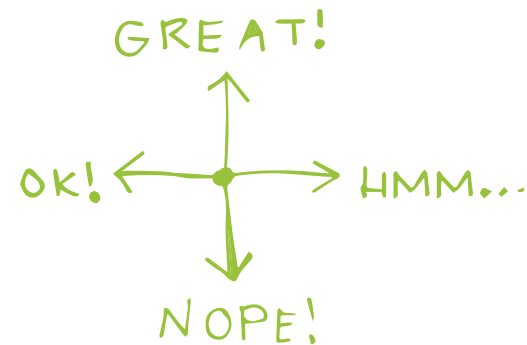
HIERARCHY
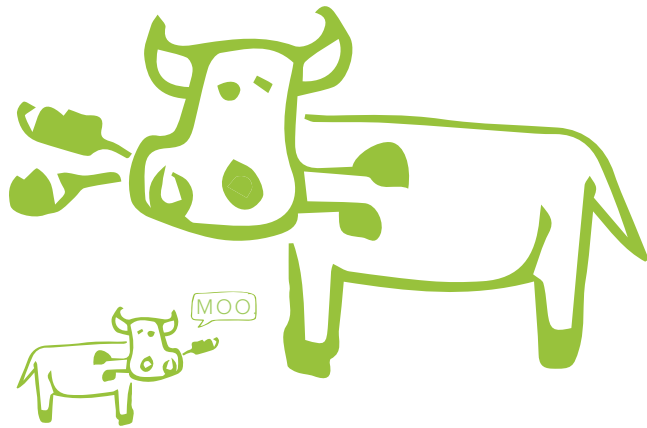
The bigger something is, the more important we perceive it to be.

→ Size headlines, page titles and subheads in order of significance (headlines are larger than subheads, etc.).

→ Keep image sizes in check. Large images will dominate pages and draw readers eyes away from text and other visual elements.

DIRECTION

English speakers read left-to-right and top-to-bottom, and most readers generally scan top-left to bottom-right.

→ Put the most essential information and navigation buttons at the top left where people generally look first.

→ Add calls to action at the right or bottom of a page where users' eyes will end up.

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COLOR

CAN YOU READ THIS?

AND HOW ABOUT THIS...

THIS?

AND THIS...?
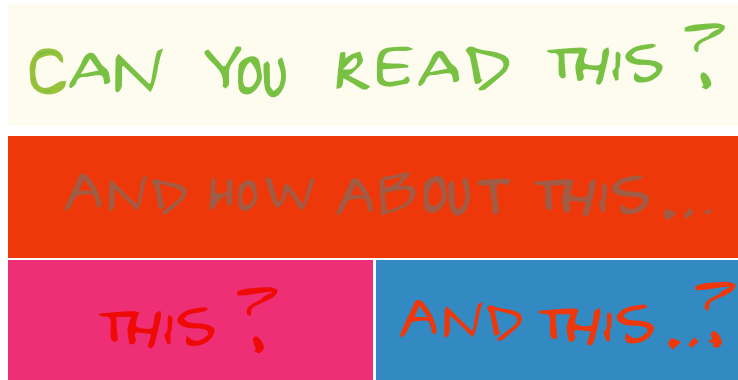
A consistent (and attractive) color scheme will give your readers a cohesive experience across pages

→ Primary colors - red, blue and yellow - compete for visual attention, so they should only be used together sparingly.

→ Give logos distinct colors to make them stand out on the page. Logos are potent symbols of a company's brand, but giving them the same color as other parts of a page diminishes their impact.

SHAPE
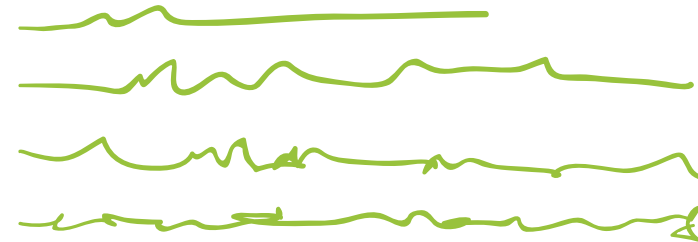
The human eye can read text quickly and smoothly if it has a line to follow, but the more the eye has to move, the more difficult it is to read, so text is ideally aligned on the left.

→ Format elements consistently on pages and throughout entire sites so readers know CTAs will always be to the right of the page and contact data can be found at the bottom of the screen.

→ Keep it uniform so visitors don't struggle to understand site elements.

INFORMATION
ARCHITECTURE

Information architecture is the organization of media, whether it's on the billions of computers that make up the internet, or individual pages on a single website. Good information architecture keeps people reading seamlessly from one article to another, from a blog post to a video and then back to a white paper.

NAVIGATION
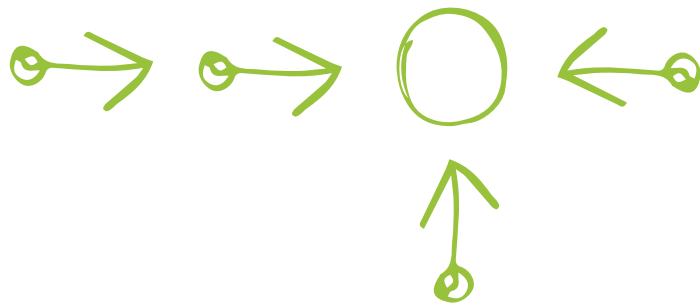
Intuitive menus, breadcrumb trails and carefully labeled pages make it easy for people to know where they are on a site and intuit where they should go next. Tags and categories also help keep blog posts, news stories and other types of content organized and accessible.

MEDIA TYPES

There are numerous types of media that users expect to encounter online, including plain text, videos, PDFs and other file types. Creating content in formats that are appropriate to business goals is an essential part of Information Architecture.

→ Videos demonstrate WHO is behind a company and HOW they do what they do.

→ Case studies and whitepapers demonstrate a company's insights.

→ Infographics teach quickly through visual interpretations.

For more on the ideal types of content to convey different messages and achieve various marketing goals, see Brafton's Content Catalog.

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USABILITY

A person's ability to use an application or perform a function falls under the definition of usability. A site with good usability won't confuse or frustrate visitors as they navigate content. However, this is one arena where a lot of businesses let visitors down. Some common issues include:

SHOPPING CARTS

# CALLS TO ACTION

I WANNA CLICK THAT!

If transaction processes are complicated or ineffective, customers will abandon their carts and find your competitors.

→ Users don't like having to register and create new usernames and passwords to access sites. According to Experian, 26 percent will simply abandon their shopping carts if they have to sign up, so companies shouldn't add these barriers unless absolutely necessary.

Calls to action should be easy to recognize and click without becoming a distraction.

→ Bold buttons are great, while floating banner ads and flashing elements make it difficult for users to complete basic tasks.

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SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

PAGE SPEED

PAGE LOADED.
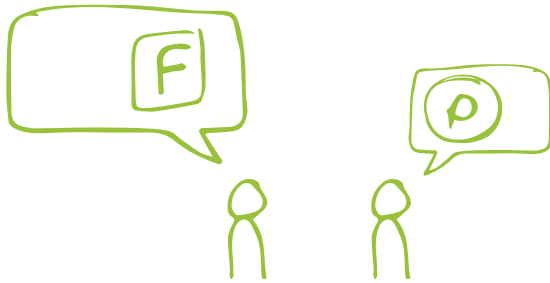
Make sure all widgets are functioning properly before adding them to your site.

→ Social sharing icons prompt engagement, but a Facebook Like button that doesn't work properly will frustrate people and discourage participation.

Web users expect pages to load nearly instantaneously.

→ For every second a website takes to load, conversions drop by 7 percent. Make speed a priority when building a commercial site.

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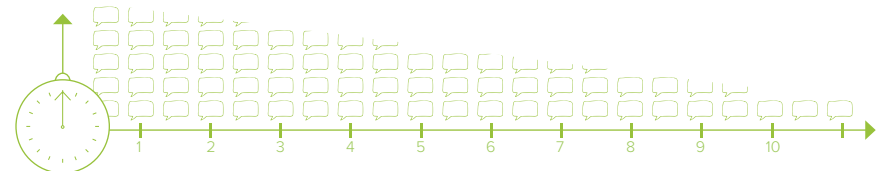
SOLUTIONS
TO UX ISSUES

User experience issues put a massive barrier between customers and sales, but they can be fixed by looking objectively at a website and figuring out how it works - or finding people to do that for you.

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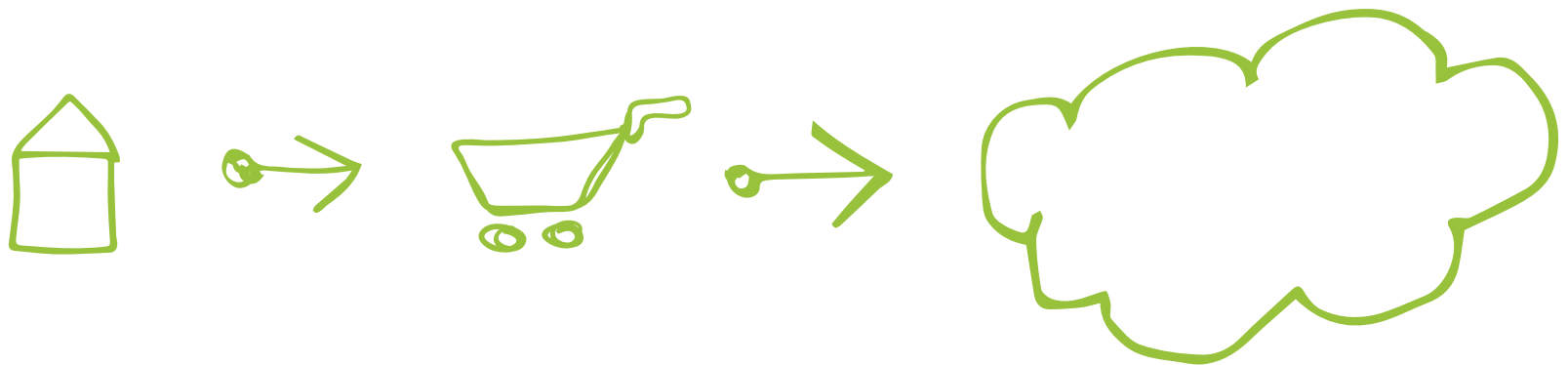
1. GET A NON-MARKETER'S OPINION

A person who isn't attached to the site can offer insights that will be incredibly helpful at spotting even the most subtle UX issues, such as product landing pages without a "Buy" button.

→ Find three people who don't work in web marketing (the less people know about the design and creation of a website, the better!)

→ Ask them run through pages as if they were normal customer

→ Compile a feedback report

IT'S SOOO, GREAT!

HMM...

MARKETER

USER

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2. DRAW A SITEMAP (LITERALLY)

Because user navigation is supposed to be seamless, it should be easy to visualize. Draw a simple sketch of how new visitors might ideally go from one page to another.

→ Create a (simple) flowchart of all possible clicks from your homepage

→ Check for ease of access to key commercial pages, blog pages, resource pages, etc.

→ Count the clicks from category pages (blogs, company news, etc.)

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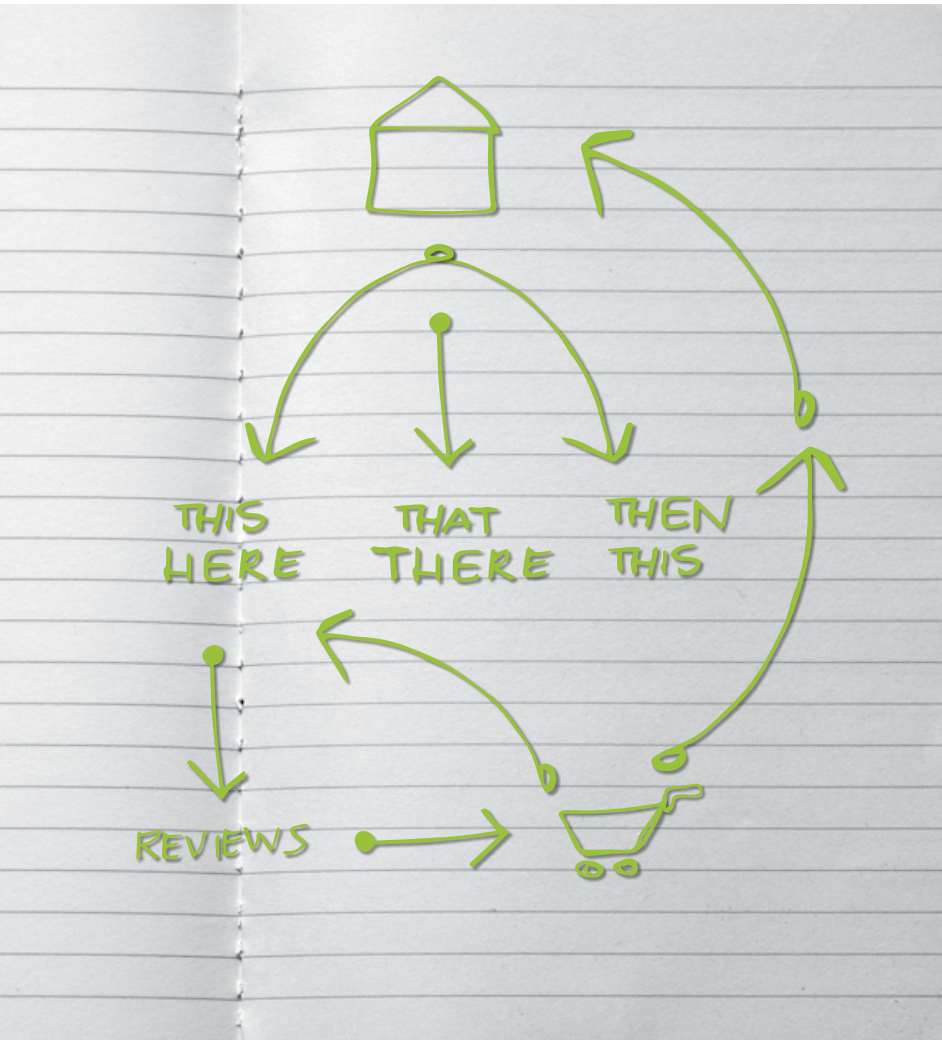
3. COME UP WITH USER SCENARIOS

It's hard to plan for every circumstance that could disrupt a user's visit, but it helps to think through some common problems - and solve them.

→ Run-through a "new visitor" experience and see how long it takes to find a promoted resource

→ Try "advancing to check out" and look for shopping cart or form submit errors

→ Look for places that might store misinformation (ie: expired credit cards) that will discourage transactions

4. ASK YOUR CUSTOMERS

Perhaps the greatest tool for maintaining good UX is to solicit customer feedback because these are the people on your site every day and they know what works and what doesn't.

→ Ask longtime customers how often they visit the site - and why

→ Ask new customers what they learned about the company from the site

→ Send a quick survey to top customers asking them to report site issues and favorite site features in exchange for a discount or gift

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YOUR WEB RESULTS
DEPEND ON USER EXPERIENCE

The goal of UX is to make users' experiences as intuitive as possible. You want a site that people love to visit - not one that's complicated to move through. Fast navigation, streamlined content distribution and good design will enhance your credibility and keep visitors on pages longer.

UX also plays an increasing role in how many visitors you attract to your site in the first place: Search engines strive to assess a site's usability when ranking pages, as this plays a huge role in whether people find it helpful. Marketers need to step back and think about how they can optimize sites for users, rather than focusing all their efforts on appeasing search crawlers.

Contact Brafton to discuss the content and architecture that can create a better experience for your visitors.
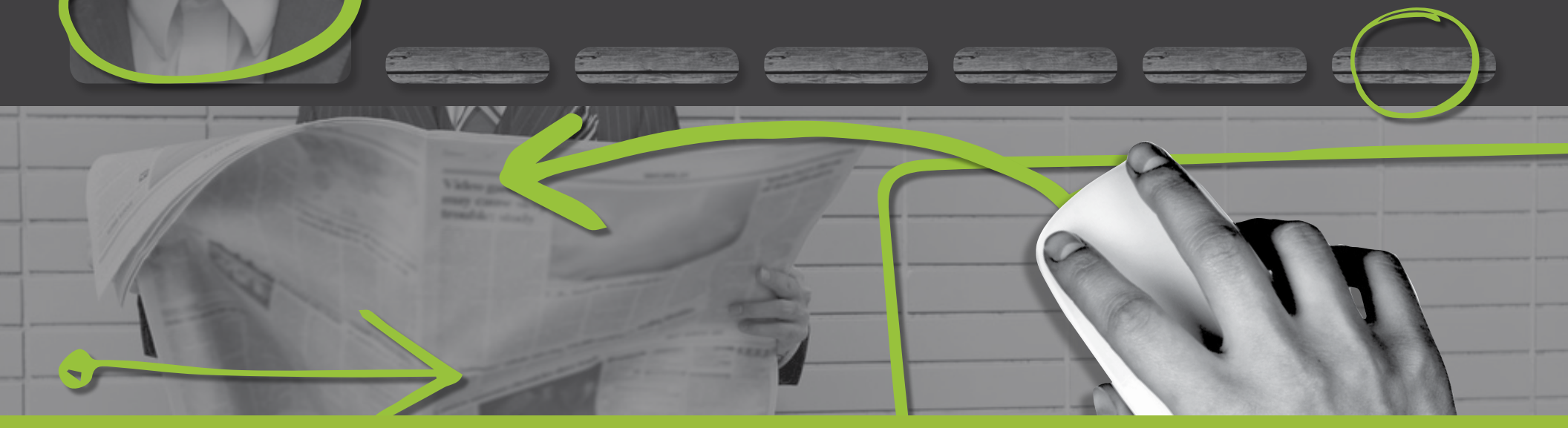
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