

Web Design / User Experience Best Practices

1. **Knowing your customers is the most important thing you can do to improve your site's usability.** Usability tests and actively soliciting customer feedback through interviewing and surveying are all good ways of doing knowing their needs. Use your understanding of them to design with them in mind.
2. **Create two to four User Personas to identify similar customer types.** This allows the site to be designed based on customer types that will most often visit your site. Understanding the demographics, motivations, goals, task flows and desired functionality of your customers will help you prioritize and improve the site design.
3. **Go beyond wire-framing your site.** Wire frames are text-only schematics or blueprints of all of the pages on the site. Content, links, navigation, functionality, and error handling may affect the design and need to be defined and approved before the creative look-and-feel is applied.
4. **Try to keep it as easy to use as possible.** Best eCommerce design practices include simple navigation, clear messaging (inventory, pricing, shipping, tax), simple checkout processes, anonymous shopping, multiple ship-to's, wish lists, merchandising of cross-sells and up-sells.
5. **Build your navigation and search to help customers easily find products.** Techniques such as faceted or guided navigation, advanced search features, and product wizards will keep customers from going elsewhere to find they want.
6. **Give your customers as much product information as possible.** Build your product pages to show comprehensive information, provide product reviews and comparison functionality, and use rich media techniques (such as image zoom, alternate images, and color swatches). The more information you provide, the more confident your customers will be in their purchases.
7. **Build all your main pages to be landing pages.** The home page is becoming less and less of an entry point into your site. With the increasing use of external search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN, different landing pages can be used; thus making your category and product details pages possible entry points into your site.
8. **Personalize the site to help customers find what they want.** The ability to deliver personalized content, promotions, and emails based on a customer's particular user attributes, preferences, past purchase history, site navigation, entry into the site, etc., allows for opportunities to merchandise more effectively.
9. **Aim for cross-channel consistency.** When designing sites for multi-channel retailers, the user experience should be consistent across the channels, with functionality such as store returns, in-store pick up, store inventory, gift registry and gift cards.