Nonpro t Website Assessment Guide

Assess your site's e ectiveness & identify common problem areas

Bureau for Good

Introduction

Your site is often the rst (and sometimes only) point of contact between your organization and your audiences. Most, if not all, of your outreach, marketing, PR, and social media e orts will point directly to your site. A bad site will turn audiences away, and that translates to lower outreach and marketing ROI.

How do you know if you're turning your audiences away? Although a low bounce rate is often cited as proof of audience engagement, what it really says about your site is

What makes a good site?

A good site is one that successfully addresses the needs of two parties: the organization and the audience.

Prioritizing desired responses

When feeling overwhelmed with too many choices, audiences tend to choose none—they simply give up! That's why it's important to prioritize desired responses. Focus your entire site on a small handful of high-value responses, and narrow down to an even smaller set (only one, if possible) on conversion-oriented pages. By doing so, you can drastically increase conversions.

DONATE! SIGN UP! PARTICIPATE!

DONATE YOUR TIME! SPREAD THE WORD!

SIGN OUR PETITION! SHARE YOUR STORY!

START A FUNDRAISING PAGE! JOIN US!

WRITE TO YOUR CONGRESSPERSON!

GIVE US YOUR OPINION! VOLUNTEER!

VISIT US! SHARE OUR CONTENT!

ADVOCATE! TELL A FRIEND!

Overwhelmed? So are they

Creating user-centered content

In keeping with their inward perspective, some organizations create content *they*, not their audiences, would want to see or read. No matter how much you love your content, visitors won't consume it if it doesn't address their needs and interests. What's worse, unnecessary content makes your useful content harder to nd, and will cause your audiences to give up and move on.

Long-winded text, generic images, and boring videos are some examples of content that will cause your audiences to lose interest. Keep your content brief and to the point, avoid repetition, and always ask yourself: Can we say it in less words? Would

event photos

last night's gala

how to help

long-winded descriptions

irrelevant videos

what we do

outdated stuff

policy updates

our ED's whereabouts

generic photos

our impact

Spotting navigation issues

When you go to the mall, you may start by heading straight to the floor plan to figure out where you are and where you want to go. You may also rely on signs posted throughout the building.

Here's what you would **NOT** expect when visiting the mall: floor plans that contradict one another; finding a corner of the mall containing dozens of stores that aren't on the floor plan; walking west and somehow ending up in the east wing. If you did, you'd be confused and frustrated. You'd want to leave as soon as possible.

On a website, navigation works in a similar way to a mall floor plan. Good navigation should help users understand where they are, what section they're in, and what path they used to get there. A site with bad or inconsistent navigation will cause audiences to quickly become frustrated.
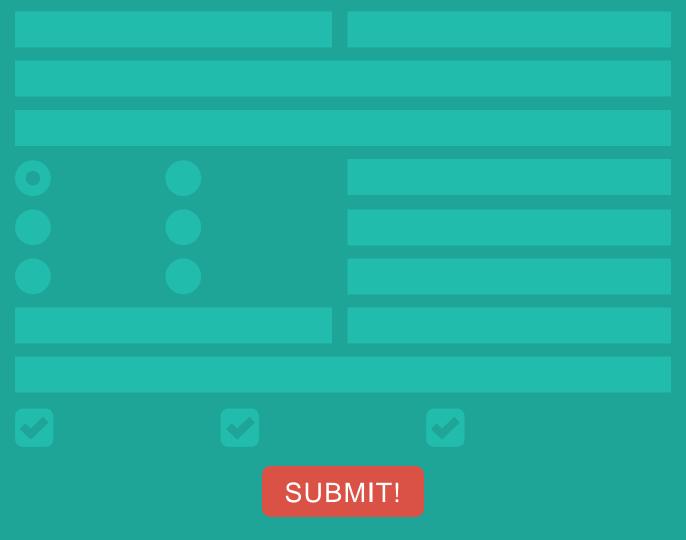
Some symptoms of bad navigation include:

ƒ Branching sections that go too many levels deep (on most nonprofit sites, more than 4; news and information sites are an exception)

ƒ An excess of main navigation items(for most nonprofit sites, more than 8-10; news and information sites are an exception)

ƒ Navigation labels or calls-to-action that visitors would find confusing or unclear

ƒ Lack of wayfinding cues, such as clearly marked parent sections and breadcrumbs

ƒ

Optimizing forms

Conversion-oriented forms, such as those for donations or email subscription, represent a delicate balancing act. You want to gather as much actionable visitor information as you can: full name, address, phone number, work number, the works. But each additional field can drastically reduce conversions. Your visitors can't be bothered to fill in long forms, or don't want to give away personal information without a good reason to do so.

Optimize your forms by gathering only the most high-value information about your visitors, so you can keep form fields to a minimum. In addition, keep your conversion pages focused by providing a single call-to-action—the purpose of your form. Additional calls-to-action distract your users and reduce conversions.

SUBMIT!

Too many questions can lead to too few answers

User-centered layout & design

Good layout is about visual hierarchy—some elements are emphasized in relation to others. Good designers use size, color, and negative (empty) space, among other things, to create emphasis. The skillful use of these techniques serves to guide the visitor's eye.

The design process often fails because of a lack of clear goals: the elements to be emphasized have not been established or prioritized. An improvised approach results in messy layouts with no clear focus. As a result, audiences don't know where to look. The design process can succeed only when core messages and desired responses dictate design decisions.

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Seeking outside help

Once you complete your website assessment, you're ready to determine the extent of the work required to improve your site's experience. Perhaps all you need is to rethink your content creation strategy, and train your team to create more user-centered content. If the changes need to go much deeper, you'll want to seek a web design rm to help you redesign the site from scratch. A good web design consultant or rm is a knowledgeable partner that can help you establish messaging and desired response priorities, think about your site in more user-centered ways, and bring up issues and problems you hadn't even thought about.

Hope you found our guide useful!

Don't start your nonpro t website without me

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