

Website Usability

Creating a web site is relatively easy. Everyone has access to tools that make authoring HTML pages easy. The trick is no longer getting the page built - it's getting it built right, and then getting it looked at - again and again.

There is no shortage of advice on the web about graphics and layout design to help you get your pages built. But to create web pages that ensure your audience can actually use your web site means your web site needs to look good and be usable. It's a little harder to find good advice about the convergence of design and usability, which I believe is the most important angle to site design. Let me share with you what I consider to be some of the top design-usability principles:

- Get to know your audience and design for them—not for yourself or your colleagues
- Test the site with inexperienced web users
- Make the content on your first page rich and explanatory
- Archive content after redesigning or changing a site
- Include useful search terms in meta tags and titles
- Provide contact and copyright information on every page
- Set up the navigation system to help users find what they are looking for
- Provide search options
- Maintain consistency of design
- Provide printer-friendly pages
- Enhance your pages—don't replace them

All my web design clients reap the benefits of having their web sites built on these principles. Find out the difference between a web site, and a usable website.