THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF A WEBSITE DESIGN

If you are a business owner, your website is absolutely one of the most important tools you have in your arsenal to get more - and better - clients and customers. So what separates a good website from a bad website, or a good one from a great one?

Branding

Your website should be a direct reflection of your business and your brand. Your visitor should immediately make a visual connection between your logo, print material, and brick-and-mortar location. A website that does this adds a level of credibility of your business.

Interaction

A truly effective website design engages your visitors immediately and continues to hold their attention through EVERY page, as well as influences them to contact you, which is probably your website's ultimate goal. Again, there is a fine line between interaction and annoyance, so the level of interaction should never outweigh the benefit.

Intuitiveness

A great website anticipates what your visitor is thinking and caters directly to their needs, and has elements arranged in a way that makes sense. If a visitor is searching for one of your products or services on a search engine or directory where your site is listed, it's important that your website have a landing page that is directly relevant to what they searched for rather than forcing them to filter through all of your information.

Information Accessibility

Not all visitors to your website are interested in, or have the time to peruse the entire site. They may need to access only a phone number or address, or just a certain bit of info. For this reason it's important to place key information in plain sight, in an area that's easily accessible. Not being able to locate some needed information on a website is always a frustrating. The experience is annoying at best, and a disgruntled visitor won't stay on your site very long and is unlikely not to return, much less do business with you.

Content

This is the backbone of your website. It is the reason most visitors are seeking from your website in the first place. Your website text should be informative, easy to read, and concise. Connecting with the visitor and convincing them about how they will benefit from you is essential for maintaining interest. Content will do more than anything else to make your website design engaging and effective.

Navigation

Easy to use and understand navigation is a vital feature your website should have in the header. The navigation menu should be easy to locate with items that make sense to new visitors. The viewer should always know exactly where they are on the website and have easy access to where they would like to be. Remember, there is a fine line between an interactive menu and an annoying one, so functionality should be the idea.

Colour Scheme

The colours you choose for your website will significantly impact the opinions of individuals who visit the site. Most importantly, your website's colour scheme should be an extension of your brand and incorporate the same colours you've chosen to represent your brand. When determining these colours, we recommend doing some research regarding which colour combinations resonate in your industry. For example, healthcare organizations often choose shades of green and blue which are associated with health and wellness. In contrast, a florist may want to choose shades of red, pink and similar vibrant colours which conjure images of beautiful floral arrangements.
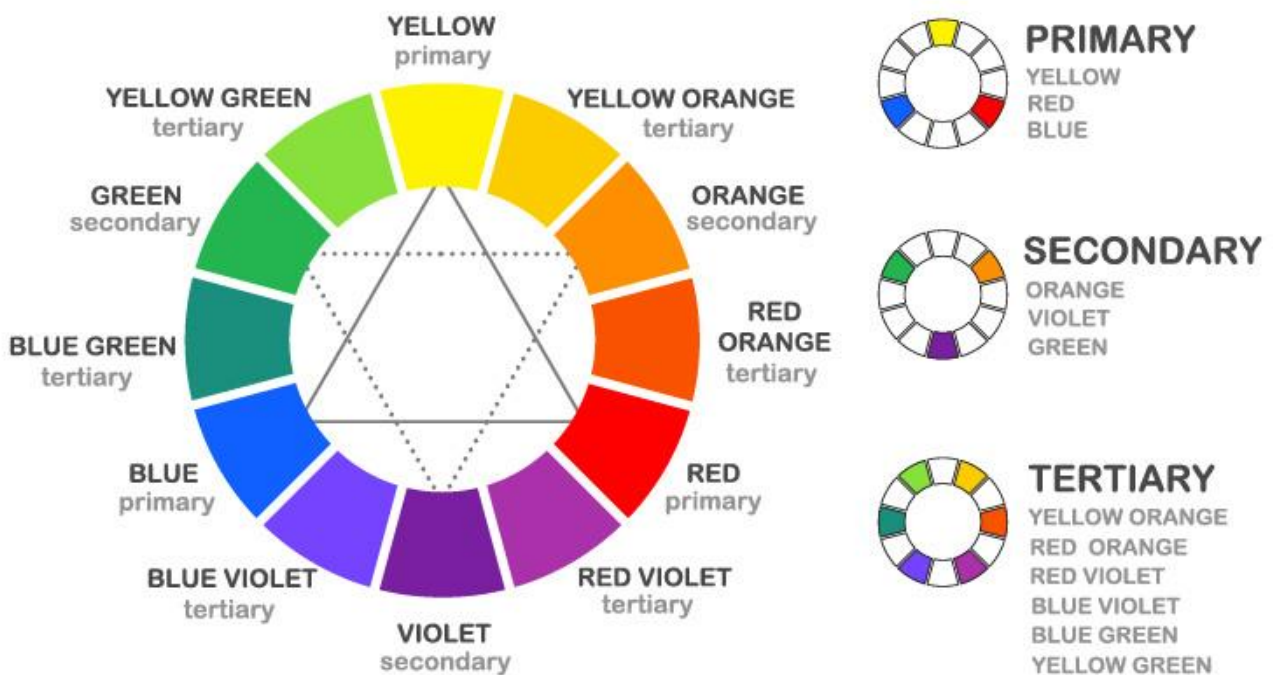
How to pick colour harmonies:

The easiest way to select colour combinations or palettes is using the colour wheel and applying the principles of analogous, complementary, monochromatic, and triad colour harmonies.
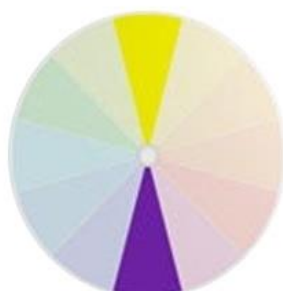
When choosing branding colours, the colour wheel is one of your greatest aids.

Monochromatic - When you have one personality trait that you want to focus in on, a monochrome scheme will emphasise the meaning of that one brand colour. While great for minimalist brands, the challenge here is differentiating the hues enough that your sight doesn't become visually stunted.

Analogous - Colours next to each other on the colour wheel have harmonious relations, since adjacent colours usually have similar emotional connotations. Analogous schemes are safe bets, but as such not the best for standing out or drawing attention.

Complementary - Colour complements - or opposites - are colours directly across from one another on the colour wheel. Because they're opposites, they bring out the best in each other when paired; you see complementary colours a lot in sports teams. Complementary colours are great for dynamic, stimulating visuals.

Triadic - A stable branding colour scheme, triadic colours draw in equal parts for three different sections of the colour wheel. Triadic schemes are stable like analogous themes, but offer a more stimulating variety like complementary schemes. The hardest part is getting the three colours to coincide with the traits of your brand identity.

White Space
White space refers to the spacing between the different elements on your web page. Proper utilization of white space is crucial to creating an effective visual layout on your web page. It will help you achieve a clean website that draws the user's attention to the important element on the page, making it easier for them to access their desired information and, more importantly, perform your desired actions. You can leverage white space to balance videos, text, CTA buttons, and other items on the page to avoid a cluttered look. Websites which fail to use white space effectively may be a bit visually overwhelming, making it harder for the user to focus on the important items on the page.

Overall Layout and Visual Appearance
Your design should align with a handful of soothing adjectives: it should be simple, familiar, intuitive, clean, and accessible. Use plenty of whitespace to give the elements of your site room to breathe, and use grid-based designs to keep design items organized and orderly. Strong photography, icons, or graphics provide supplementary information to your text but make sure the images complement each other and the brand you're looking to represent. The more engaging the images on your website, the more likely you are to hold the attention of your audience. Using a combination of high-quality photo images, illustrations, tables and infographics will provide your website with a varied feel. Photos add a sense of credibility and integrity to a website. However, it's important not to go overboard with too much. Scrolling text, animation, and flash intros should be used sparingly in your web design and only to emphasize a point for maximum effect.

Responsive
Responsive design is the most effective way to ensure your website is optimized for all devices – desktops, tablets and phones. This approach allows your website to adapt to the device its being viewed on, ensuring all images and text are formatted and sized properly at all times. This will provide the best user experience. Without responsive design, your pages may look incoherent on the smaller screens associated with smart phones and tablets. Text may be jumbled or too difficult to read.