

10 Essentials When Designing An Antiques Website

By Evan Mangan

1. **A fast loading homepage**

Around 80% of web traffic comes from search engines. That means people land on your site and expect to find what they want quickly. Ensure the homepage loads within a maximum of seven seconds. If users have to wait for your page to load, they will bounce off the site and go to the next site that appeared on the search page results.

2. **Showcase Your Antiques**

Small photos often won't do justice to the beauty of your antiques. You should use the latest macro flash technology. Include slideshows on your website and ensure antiques buyers immediately get to see the beauty of your stock. Flash viewers are now ubiquitous with almost 90% of browsers containing the plug-in. Also consider a movie brochure which is a very affordable way of showing off the diversity of your stock. Panning and zooming effects are applied to photos of your antiques and captions convey the key features. Set to music, this results in a powerful marketing tool on your website.

3. **Ensure you can upload images and content**

Ensure your design agency develops a content management tool which allows you to upload new product images or descriptions and change prices whenever you wish. This is essential for Antiques Dealers given that stock will frequently change.

4. **Navigation should be simple**

Navigation should be simple and intuitive. A child should be able to immediately understand how to find information on your page. A person should never be more than three clicks from what they want.

5. **Don't have too many graphic devices**

Avoid filling your site with lots of graphic devices. Certainly avoid music in the background - if it doesn't annoy the visitor in the first

visit, it certainly will in the second. Never have more than one animated device on a page as it is too distracting.

6. Ensure you are not in the dark

Ensure you have web-tracking software to tell you:

- How many visitors go to the site daily
- What town, region or country they are from
- How many get past the home page and what pages they tend to look at or rarely visit

This is vitally important data to help you refine your antiques website. For example, if you discover that only 20% of visitors go beyond the homepage, that is a big issue. On the other hand, if you can see that very few users visit a key page on the site, this information provides the guidance you need to refine and optimise your site design.

7. Look at your competitors' sites

You should always keep an eye on what other antiques dealers are doing online. Bookmark the websites of key competitors and visit them once a month. Incorporate new and innovative ideas into your site.

8. Make it easy to purchase

If you are selling products on your site, ensure your users are never more than two clicks away from ordering the product.

9. Ensure your online brand is consistent

When customers visit your antiques store what impression do they have? In a few words, can you describe the personality of your brand? Ask yourself what is the tone of voice and what kind of experience would customers expect on your website? Ensure your web designers understand how to translate your offline brand to your website. Ask them how they will go about it. As experts, they should know.

10. It is all about traffic

Finally, and most importantly, always design your site with traffic in mind. Many golf courses make the mistake of designing their website and then start thinking about driving traffic to it. The problem is that the way you design your site can result in your site being ignored by the search engine spiders, which means you will receive very little traffic. When designing your site, ensure you avoid the following

pitfalls and ask your marketing agency to confirm that they have been avoided:

Avoid flash sites. Sites are designed in HTML or flash code. Search engine spiders sent to index your site cannot read flash.

No frames. Spiders cannot read what is inside a frame, so you won't be indexed and noticed by search engines.

No dynamic pages. Some sites are developed with a database which generates dynamic pages. You can tell if there are dynamic pages on your site if there is a ? within the page URL. Again. Not all search engines can read dynamic pages so it is best to avoid them.

Text within graphics. To ensure text is read uniformly by different browsers, design agencies often put text within a graphic. It looks great. However, a spider cannot read what text is in a graphic and simply moves on.

About The Author

Evan Mangan is a former Head of European Marketing for Yahoo! Mobile and was Head of International Operational Marketing for Orange. He is founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Crowd (www.TheMarketingCrowd.com) and Marketing Antiques - a full service marketing agency which makes the marketing techniques employed by major brands available and affordable to antiques businesses.

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