

How to Stop Those Pesky Return Visitors

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Almost all website need return visitors. Unwittingly though, many companies add features to their sites that discourage users from returning. Here are the 3 most common of these features. Check your site to see if you fall into one of these traps. If so, you may want to rethink their use. Remember, you may be able to get users to visit once but they probably won't come back.

1: Splash Screens

Users visit your site for specific information. If your site presents the information they are looking for quickly and easily then they will remember you and return next time they need that information. Splash screens however, hamper your users from quickly getting to the information they are looking for. All pages on your website other than the home page should be voluntary. Your home page should be dedicated to convincing people to dig further into your site.

Remember: Don't make it difficult for your users to find what they are looking for.

2: Embedded Multimedia

This falls under the category of "Don't annoy your users.". When a user visits your website, you have no idea of their computer's multimedia capabilities. You also don't know what is currently happening on their computer or what effect that playing a multimedia file will have on tasks currently running.

Don't assume the user is not listening to anything at the moment or that playing a multimedia file will not interrupt something important. If you message depends on the user viewing/listening to a multimedia clip then put a play button on your page. Make it blink if you have to so as to grab their attention. But don't automatically start it playing when the page loads.

Remember: Don't annoy users you want to do return.

3: Eye-Candy Overkill

Eye-candy are those little flashing bits of technology that you sprinkle throughout your site. Whether it is Flash menus or Java applets, eye-candy is good when used in moderation. Menu's that change when a cursor is rolled over them, images that subtly change while the user is viewing the page, Flash animated menus are all good examples of eye-candy. They add value to the site by making it more visually appealing while not distracting the user from their goal. Scrolling Marques, moving buttons and flashing messages are all examples of bad uses of eye-candy. Even the best uses of eye-candy though, can be overdone. Keep it useful and keep it to a minimum.

Remember: Eye-candy should enhance the experience of your users, not detract from it.