THE BEST DAMN WEB MARKETING CHECKLIST, PERIOD!

Domain Name & URLs

What this is about: This checklist covers various aspects of the domain and site URL structure, how they should be used and how to ensure proper site and browser functionality.

Why this is important: The domain name is part of the identity of your business. The URL chosen can have a significant impact on brand identity and to a lesser extent, keyword ranking performance. However, how your site domain name and page URLs function can have significant impact on the crawl-ability of the site as well as overall visitor and traffic performance.

What to look for:

❑ **Multiple versions**
Purchase multiple versions of your domain name, including .com, .org, .net, .biz, hyphenations between words, common misspellings. Also purchase alternate domain names such as product names, brand names and any other keywords that might be typed in randomly.

❑.com, ❑.org, ❑.net, ❑.biz, ❑Hyphenations, ❑Misspellings, ❑Product names, ❑Brand names

❑ **Type-in keywords URLs**
Purchase and redirect URLs that are related to your products, services and industry that may get some random type-ins in the URL box.

❑ **Short and memorable**
Keep primary domain name short and, if possible, something easy to remember.
No: creative-widget-solution-factory.com
Yes: widgetfactory.com

❑ **Uses keywords**
Use targeted keywords in your business name, and therefore domain name.
No: degeyter-enterprises.com
Yes: batterystuff.com

❑ **Used in email addresses**
Don't use free email accounts for business, rather use your business domain name for all business communications.
No: pimpmcfly@aol.com
Yes: stoney@polepositionmarketing.com

❑ **Site.com redirect to www. version**
Set a canonical URL and be sure the other version 301 redirects.
site.com redirects to www.site.com or vice versa

❑ **Uses favicon**
Make sure your favicon shows in the address bar (create one if you must.)

❑ **Alternate Domain redirects**
Make sure all alternate domain names 301 redirect to the primary domain to prevent potential duplicate site issues.
batteryfreaks.com redirects to batterystuff.com

❑ **Home page redirect to root**
Your Home Page should be accessible from the domain root only, not the page file name.
www.site.com/index.html redirects to www.site.com

❑ **Hyphens not underscores page filenames**
Don't use underscores in filenames, go with hyphens instead.
No: /battery_chargers.html
Yes: /battery-chargers.html

❑ **Keywords in directory names**
Use keywords in directory names wherever applicable.
No: /category2568/product8954.html
Yes: /battery-chargers/samlex-24v.html

❑ **Multiple pages per directory**
Don't create directories for a single page but organize directories so multiple pages fit in a single directory.
No: honda-chargers/honda-chargers.html, yamaha-chargers/yamaha-chargers.html
Yes: chargers/honda.html, chargers/yamaha.html

❑ **Registered for 5+ years**
Keep your domain name registered for 5-10 years at a time, rather than renewing year to year.

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Browser Issues

What this is about: This list covers a handful of browser functionality and compatibility issues, as well as user interface with the site via the browser.

Why this is important: The browser is what we use to view websites. The goal is to give the visitor the best browsing experience possible, but we have to keep in mind that not all browsers are the same. We must make sure to accommodate different users, ensuring that they get the most value out of the site possible.

What to look for:

❑ **Visible address bar**
Make sure the browser's address bar is always visible to allow the visitor to know what site and page they are on.

❑ **Fully functional navigation tools**
Don't take away the user's ability to maneuver the site using the browser's navigational buttons (back, forward, view source, etc.)

❑ **Site works in multiple browsers**
Make sure the site functions properly across multiple browsers and various platforms.

❑ **No browser hi-jacking**
When visitors click a link, don't hijack their browser by opening new windows that automatically resize. Let the visitor control how they want links to open.

❑ **Visible status bar**
Don't take away the status bar at the bottom of the browser. Information here can be valuable to the user.

Logo

What this is about: This list contains a few items that pertain to site logo, how it's placed and its functional implementation.

Why this is important: The logo lends directly to brand identity and site identification. It also creates a certain element of appeal and professionalism in the mind of the visitor. It holds an important role in visitor assurance and navigation.

What to look for:

❑ **Displays company name clearly**
Your company name should not be lost in the logo. Eliminate unnecessary eye-candy so company name is proudly displayed.

❑ **Isn't hidden among clutter**
Don't clutter up your top navigation to the point that the logo is lost in the mess. Make sure it stands out from the rest of the header info.

❑ **Use tagline consistently across site**
If you don't have a tag line, make one and use it wherever your logo is displayed.

❑ **Links to home page**
Logo should always link to the home page. Even if you have a "home" navigational link many users attempt to click the logo first.

❑ **Unique and original**
Make sure your logo isn't copied or near-duplicated from others. Create one that is original and unique to you alone.

Design Considerations

What this is about: This checklist covers multiple elements concerning the visual aspects of the website development. Some of the information here can be dismissed, depending on the type of site, but overall these are good points to consider during the design process.

Why this is important: The site design is essentially the first impression that someone gets when they land on your site. You may have all your usability and SEO elements in place, but if the design is lacking then your visitor's impression of you will be lacking as well. A visually appealing site can not only bolster trust and credibility, but it can make you stand out among other less-appealing sites in your industry.

What to look for:

❑ Instant site identification
As soon as landing on any page the visitor must be able to tell what website they are on.

❑ Crisp, clean image quality
Don't use old or blurry images. Keep them neat, clean and sharp.

❑ Clean, clutter-less design
Avoid trying to do too much at once. Keep navigation and content areas clear of unnecessary clutter.

❑ Keep colors and type consistent
Use the same colors and font styles from page to page.

❑ Whitespace usage
Don't pack too much in, allow some breathing room so important areas stick out.

❑ Minimal distractions
Be careful of images, animation and even links that pull the visitor into unwanted directions.

❑ Visually targets intended audience
Make certain that your design targets your audience with appropriate colors, layout and wording.

❑ Meets industry best practices
Design to be the best site in your industry. If there are industry-specific guidelines to be followed, be sure to do that.

❑ Easy to navigate
Make it is easy for your visitor to find the links they need to take them to their desired pages.

❑ Descriptive links
All links should accurately describe the destination page.

❑ Good on-page organization
Put page information together in a logical way and keep information where it is expected to be found.

❑ Easy to find phone number
Phone number should be easy to find regardless of page the visitor is on. The header is a great place for the phone number.

❑ Clear link to contact info
Visitors should not have to dig to find a link to the Contact Us page. Make sure it is easy to spot.

❑ Font size is adequate
Don't use excessively small fonts. Larger fonts increase readability of content.

❑ Font type is friendly
Use fonts meant for the web, rather than fonts designed for print.

❑ Paragraphs not too wide
Don't allow paragraphs to get too wide. Use absolute widths if necessary.

❑ Visual color cues to important elements
Be sure important links and action items stand out visually from the rest of the content.

❑ Good overall contrast
Make sure text can be read (black on white) and colors don't bleed into each other.

❑ No saturated colors
Don't use colors that are too bright as to take emphasis away from other important areas.

❑ Low usage of animated graphics
Avoid animated graphics unless absolutely essential to the user experience.

❑ Uses obvious action objects
Calls to actions, links and subscribe buttons should be obvious at a glance.

❑ Avoid requiring plugins
Don't use plugins that visitors have to download before getting the full site experience.

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❑ **Minimize the use of graphics**
Don't make your site graphic heavy to the point where the visitor is overwhelmed with visual eye-candy.

❑ **Understandable graphic file names**
Name your images and other files in a way that makes sense if read.
No: /images/BDJ2330.jpg
Yes: /images/boys-denali-jacket.jpg

❑ **Don't link screen captures**
It's not a good idea to link screen captures to other pages. Use text links or buttons.

❑ **Consistent page formatting**
Use a consistent layout from page to page so the site feels like one cohesive unit.

❑ **No/minimal on-page styling**
Use external CSS for all on-page styling. Only keep on the page what is specific for that page only.

❑ **Uses trust symbols**
Better Business Bureau, site security and other trust symbols should be in obvious (and applicable) locations.

❑ **Avoid text in images**
Don't place quality keyword rich text in images.

❑ **Non-busy background**
site background unobtrusive to the main content areas of the site.

❑ **Clearly recognizable look and feel**
Your site design should be distinctive to you alone. Avoid templates that are mass reproduced.

❑ **Proper padding between images and text**
Give enough room between images and text so they don't bump up against each other.

❑ **No horizontal scrolling**
sure the design is not so wide that horizontal scrolling is required.

❑ **Works on variety of resolutions**
Test site to be sure it works on a variety of different screen resolutions.

❑ **"Skip" option for multimedia/flash**
If you use flash animations, have an option to skip it or turn it off all together.

❑ **Works on variety of screen widths**
Test site to be sure it functions correctly on different width screens and browser windows

Architectural Issues

What this is about: This list covers several elements regarding the architectural aspects of a website that focus on building a more search engine friendly site overall.

Why this is important: Website architecture can make or break the performance of a website in the search engines. Poor architectural implementation can create numerous stumbling blocks, if not outright roadblocks, to the search engines as they attempt to crawl your website. On the other hand, a well-implemented foundation can assist both visitors and search engines as they navigate through your website, therefore increasing your site's overall performance.

What to look for:

❑ **Correct robots.txt file**
Make sure robots.txt file is free from errors that can otherwise block search engines from indexing important pages.

❑ **Declare doctype in HTML**
Implement proper doctype declaration across all site pages and code accordingly.

❑ **Validate HTML**
You don't have to have 100% compliant code, but eliminate as many errors as possible throughout site.

❑ **Don't use frames**
Find alternate ways of displaying framed content.

❑ **Alt tag usage on images**
Every visual image should use alternate text.

❑ **Use LONGDESC att. to describe images**
Take the time to provide certain images with a longer description using this attribute.

❑ **Custom 404 error page**
Make sure broken links lead to a custom 404 page to keep visitors on the site.

❑ **Printer friendly pages or CSS**
Print a few pages to ensure that the result is readable. Create alternate CSS if necessary.

❑ **Underlined links**
Hyperlinks in body copy should always be underlined.

❑ **Differing link text color**
Linked text in body copy should be a different color than standard body text.

❑ **Breadcrumb usage**
Be sure breadcrumbs are used and are effective at letting visitor know where they are in the site.

❑ **Flat directory structure**
Keep page/URL directory structure as flat as possible while still intellectually organized.

❑ **Proper site hierarchy**
Ensure navigation and directory structure adhere to a sensible hierarchy structure.

❑ **Unique titles on all pages**
Each page should have its own distinct title in the tags.

❑ **Title reflects page info and heading**
Title tag should reflect page content and uppermost page heading.

❑ **Unique descriptions on pages**
Each page should have its own distinct meta description.

❑ **No description on long-tail pages**
Pages capturing long-tail keywords may not need a description at all.

❑ **Proper bulleted list formats**
Be sure bulleted lists use proper markup (i.e. / and <li>)

❑ **No code bloat**
Check for excessive code bloat and make pages as lean as possible.

❑ **Minimal use of tables**
Keep table usage to a minimum. Remove whenever possible.

❑ **Navigation uses absolute links**
All global navigation should use absolute links at all times. (http://site.com/page instead of /page)

❑ **Good anchor text**
Use keyword rich text in hyperlinks, both in navigation and in body copy.

❑ **Nofollow add-to cart links**
Any links pointing to shopping cart, or adding products should not be followable by the search engines. Add nofollow attribute if necessary.

❑ **Robots.txt non-user pages**
Any pages that are not intended to be listed in search results should be disallowed in robots.txt.

❑ **Review noindex usage**
Consider necessary usage of the robots meta tag for pages that should not be indexed.

❑ **Validate CSS**
Use proper markup for CSS to ensure proper rendering.

❑ **Check broken links**
Perform a broken link check and fix all broken links.

❑ **Text can be resized**
Make sure content can be magnified and enlarged by the visitor as necessary.

❑ **Key concepts are emphasized**
Make sure each page places appropriate emphasis on its key information.

❑ **CSS less browsing**
View pages with CSS turned off and make sure site can still be properly browsed.

❑ **View on mobile device**
View your site on a variety of mobile devices to ensure site renders properly.

❑ **View in text-only browser**
View your site in a browser that displays text only to ensure site can be properly read and navigated.

❑ **Image-less browsing**
Turn off images and browse site, making sure it can be properly navigated and understood.

❑ **Summarize all tables**
When using tables be sure to summarize it's contents.

❑ **Don't rely on graphics for ON/YES, etc.**
When using yes/no, on/off comparisons, don't rely solely on images to make the point.

❑ **Branded titles**
Use branded title tags when it makes sense to do so.

❑ **Page size less than 50K (8 second load)**
Keep pages small for fast loading.

Navigation

What this is about: This list covers issues related to a site's primary and secondary navigation menus, their effectiveness and how they are implemented from both a search engine and user perspective.

Why this is important: A strong, user-friendly and search engine friendly navigation is essential in helping people and bots through your site. You visitors need to find information quickly with minimal hunting and the search engines need to be able to follow the navigation to reach all site pages with the fewest number of jumps (clicks) necessary. If the navigation is broken or doesn't get people (or search engines) where they need to go, the performance of a site will suffer.

What to look for:

❑ **Location top or top-left side of page**
Typically primary navigation is found along the top header and/or down the left side of the page (except blogs which typically falls on the right.) Be consistent with convention.

❑ **Consistent throughout site**
Don't move or change the navigation from page to page. Be consistent in its implementation.

❑ **Links to Home page**
Make sure you have a link to your home page in an obvious location near the top-left.

❑ **Links to Contact Us page**
Keep an obvious link to a Contact Us page in a consistent location.

❑ **Links to About Us page**
Make sure site has and links to an About Us page.

❑ **Simple to use**
Navigation should not require much thought to use. Use headings that are easily identifiable and understandable links.

❑ **Indicates current page being viewed**
Through breadcrumbs or other means, make sure current page is easily identified in the navigation.

❑ **Links to all main sections**
Main navigation should contain links to all of site's primary areas.

❑ **Proper categorical divisions**
If navigation is robust, divide into sensible categories.

❑ **Obvious non-clickable elements**
Make sure non-clickable category headings don't look like the clickable navigation links.

❑ **Accurate description text**
Link text should adequately describe the destination page.

❑ **RSS Feeds Available**
Make sure RSS feeds are available for sites that update regularly, new products added, etc.

❑ **Links to Login**
If site has a login area, login link should be readily available in an obvious spot.

❑ **Absolute links**
Always use absolute links in navigation.

❑ **Provides Logout link**
Once logged in, a logout link should be readily available in an obvious spot.

❑ **Uses Alt attribute in images**
Any image-based navigation elements must use image alt text.

❑ **No pop-up windows**
Don't use pop-up windows. Please.

❑ **Avoid opening links in new window/tab**
Navigation links should not open into new windows or tabs.

❑ **Opens external links in new window/tab**
Links that point to external sites can open up in new window/tabs as a way to keep visitors on your site once they close that session.

❑ **Do not rely on rollovers only**
Don't rely on mouse-over changes to indicate a link is a link. Should be obvious without mousing over.

❑ **Avoid cascading menus**
Avoid complicated fly-out menus that go several levels deep.

❑ **Keep scent from page to page**
There should be a natural progression from page to page, even if multiple paths are used to reach a destination.

❑ **Easy for both expert and novice users**
Navigation should be workable for newbies just as well as for those who have more experience with your industry.

Content

What this is about: This checklist explores the development of your site's web content including readability issues, message and overall effectiveness.

Why this is important: Content is an essential part of the persuasion process. Pretty, image-based sites may be appealing to the eye, but it's the content that appeals to the emotional and logical centers of the brain. The inclusion of content as well as the effectiveness of the writing are all crucially important to the sales process.

What to look for:

❑ Grabs visitor attention
The headline and very first sentences should get the readers attention and make them want to keep exploring.

❑ Exposes need
Explain to the visitor what their need is for your product, service or information really is.

❑ Demonstrates importance
Explain why their need, and therefore your solution to it, is important to their way of life.

❑ Ties need to benefits
Talk about the benefits the readers gets from your solution. Put it in their terms.

❑ Justifies and calls reader to action
Justify the purchase and provide clear calls to action to compel the reader forward.

❑ Gets to best stuff quickly
Don't "save the best for last". Once you have their attention, get to the good stuff ASAP.

❑ Reading level is appropriate
Talk at your audience's reading level (or below it without talking down to them). Don't talk above them.

❑ Customer focused
Stay focused on meeting the customer's wants and needs. It's about them, not you.

❑ Benefits and features
Explain all the important features but also tell how those features will benefit them.

❑ Targets personas
Develop personas for your target audience and write in a way that speaks to those personas specifically.

❑ Provides re-assurances
Always reassure your visitors that what you offer is important/necessary/helpful/satisfying, etc.

❑ Answers WIIFM
Always answer the question "what's in it for me" from the visitor's perspective. Don't make them guess.

❑ Consistent voice
Speak in a clear consistent voice throughout the site. Don't change "personalities" from page to page.

❑ Eliminate superfluous text
Get rid of any text that doesn't specifically assist with the sales process.

❑ Short sentences
Keep your sentences short and digestible.

❑ Reduce or explain industry jargon
Avoid using industry jargon that is unintelligible to the average person. Talk in terms your visitors will understand.

❑ Don't over use parenthesis and asterisks
Overuse of these make reading cumbersome and less understandable. Keep content tidy.

❑ No typo, spelling or grammar errors
Eliminate all errors throughout your text.

❑ Contains internal contextual links
Look for opportunities to link to other pages and content within the body copy.

❑ Links out to authoritative sources
When warranted, link out to other authoritative websites that backup your content.

❑ Enhancing keyword usage (SEO)
Know and use important keywords throughout your body copy.

❑ Articles/news show date published
Timely articles should contain a date in which they were published and/or updated.

❑ **Web version of PDF docs available**
Convert PDF documents into HTML for easier accessibility.

❑ **Consistent use of phrasing**
Don't change how you reference certain things. Be consistent on a page by page basis.

❑ **No unsubstantiated statements**
Don't make claims that you can't back up and prove to be true.

Content Appearance

What this is about: This list covers aspects of how content appears on the website, focusing on the visual aspects of the content rather than the words.

Why this is important: Great content can get lost if it's not easy to read thrown into an otherwise cluttered page. Ensuring that your content fits visually into the site is just as important as having good content to begin with. If you want the sales message to get across, your visitors will need to read it.

What to look for:

❑ **Short paragraphs**
Keep paragraphs relatively short. No more than seven lines each.

❑ **Uses sub-headings**
Break content up using headings and sub-headings as warranted.

❑ **No overly small text for body**
Font size should not be too small. No less than 10pt but bigger is better.

❑ **No overly small text for headings**
Headings and sub-heads should be visually bigger than the rest of the body content.

❑ **Good contrast (& with background image)**
Make sure content can easily be read, contrasting well with the background color or image used. Keep images in content unobtrusive.

❑ **Keep link options in close proximity**
If you link to something referenced in the copy, keep the link in very close proximity to the reference.

❑ **Uses bulleted lists**
Use bulleted lists wherever possible to break up monotony of the text.

❑ **Skimmable and scannable**
Text should be very easy to skim read and scan for important/interesting bits of information.

❑ **Calls to action on all pages**
Make sure each page has a distinct call to action, both visually and textually. These can be littered throughout the content.

Links & Buttons

What this is about: This list covers a few aspects of textual links and call-to-action buttons, and how they should be implemented on your website pages.

Why this is important: Links and calls to action are a great way to allow visitors to navigate from page to page, finding the information they feel is important to helping them make the purchase decision. Without these calls to action many visitors will simply not know what they are expected to do next.

What to look for:

❑ **Avoid small buttons and tiny text for links**
Text links should not be smaller than standard text and call to action buttons should stand out significantly.

❑ **Avoid using images as the only link**
If you use image calls to action be sure to accompany that with a textual call to action nearby as well.

❑ **Link important commands**
If there is something the visitor is expected to do then say so and link it to make it obvious and easy.

❑ **Leave space between links and buttons**
Don't crowd your calls to action. Make sure there is enough space around them to draw the eye.

❑ **Limit the number of links on a page**
This varies from page to page, but there is a

threshold that, once crossed, creates too many decisions and renders the page ineffective.

❑ **Underline all links**
Links in body text areas should always be underlined. People expect it, so do it.

❑ **Accurately reflects the page it refers**
Every link should give the visitor a basic understanding of what information they'll find once they click the link.

Home Page

What this is about: This list covers just a couple of points relevant specifically to a website's home page to assure that specific and necessary functions of the page are met.

Why this is important: The home page is often the single largest entry-point. It is the page that gives the visitor the sense of who you are and what they can expect. Go wrong here and it can be all over before it begins.

What to look for:

❑ **Provides overview of site**
It is the job of the home page to provide a quick overview of who you are, what you do and what the visitor will find… and then lead them to it.

❑ **Robot meta: NOODP,NOYDIR**
Add this robots meta tag to the home page to prevent the engines from using whatever title and description are found in your Yahoo and DMOZ directory listings.

❑ **No splash page**
Just get to the content, don't bore your visitors with a "clever" splash page that just wastes their time.

❑ **Instant page identification**
Make sure the visitor knows they've landed on your home page. This should be obvious.

❑ **Site purpose is clear**
Make sure you clearly outline the purpose of the site and why the visitor needs to be there.

About Us Page

What this is about: This checklist covers the "About Us" or "Company" page on the website, providing keys as to what visitors typically look for and should find when visiting this page.

Why this is important: Studies have shown that conversion rates for visitors who have visited the About Us page increase measurably. Those who visit here are looking for a few extra elements of trust that will help them decide whether to continue on or move on. What they find can mean the difference in a conversion or the visitor leaving your site for a competitor's.

What to look for:

❑ **Links to support pages:**
This is a great place to link to other support pages. Often this page is often a first stop to more pertinent information.

    ❑ **Contact page**
    Link to your "contact us" page. Yeah, the link is probably easy to find elsewhere, but a link here is worthwhile.

❑ **Registration info**
If you have a members section, provide a link to where new visitors can sign up.

❑ **Investor relations**
If you have investors, this is the page to provide a link to the information that is relevant to them.

❑ Company news
If there is something newsworthy about your company either display it here or link to a page that covers that information.

❑ Job opportunities
List or link to any job opportunities your company may currently have.

❑ Newsletters
If you send out newsletters, provide links to the main newsletter page and/or past issues.

❑ Adequately describes company
Be robust in your company information. Visitors may not read everything, but they are here to find out all they can. Give them what they came for.

❑ Shows team biographies
Provide information on individual team members or executive management. Give them a face and let your visitors know who they are dealing with.

❑ Shows mission statement
If you have a purpose (and you should) let your visitors know what it is. Spell it out for them.

❑ Up to date information
Keep information up to date, whether that be current biographies, news, etc. Don't let the page get out of date.

❑ Link to social media profiles
If you have profiles on sites like Facebook, MySpace, etc., provide links to those profile pages here.

❑ Note associations, certifications & awards
Document any particular noteworthy associations your company has with community or other important groups, along with worth certifications and awards.

Contact Us Page

What this is about: This list covers various aspects which are important to visitors who land on your "contact us" page, including what information they expect and how to make contacting you easy for them.

Why this is important: Those who land on this page are showing clear intent in wanting to get in touch with you. Providing only a few ways to contact you can alienate visitors who have a particular preference. Providing robust contact options and information ensures that you capture as many would-be customers as possible.

What to look for:

❑ Multiple contact options
Don't limit your contact options to your preferred method. Unless you just have too much business and don't need the "hassle" of having customers.

❑ Phone
provide local and toll free numbers.

❑ Fax
Not many people will try to communicate by fax, but it's still an essential number to provide for those that need it.

❑ Email
An email contact is essential to making sure visitors can feel as if you are accessible. It provides assurances that forms can't.

❑ Form
Provide a contact form that'll deliver messages to your email box.

❑ Chat
Instant chat can allow you to quickly take care of customers needs without them having to wait hours or days for a response.

❑ Customer feedback
Provide a way for customers to provide feedback regarding the site, products or services.

❑ Ad-free
Keep this page completely free of ads.

❑ Easy to find
Make sure your visitors can find your Contact page easily. Don't make them hunt, scroll and rollover multiple dropdowns just to find it.

❑ Street map
Showing a map of your location can help locals know that you are truly accessible and where to find you if they want to check out your operation.

❑ Multiple points of contact
Give your visitors options for who or what department they contact.

❑Customer service, ❑Tech support, ❑Inquiries, ❑General info, ❑Job applications, ❑Billing, ❑Management team

❑ Hours of operation
If your hours are limited then post hours of operation (for at least phone support) on this page.

❑ Final call to action
Give one last call to action to spur the visitor to take that next step.

❑ Requires only essential info on form
Make sure any web forms require only the

information that is absolutely essential to helping them. Keep it easy and succinct.

E-commerce Considerations

What this is about: This list covers general points related specifically to ecommerce websites. While not everything here will apply to other sites, there is information that can be gleaned and applied to service related websites, as well as others.

Why this is important: Being able to convince the shopper to follow through on the purchase is essential to being profitable. The visitor looks for specific cues that help them assess the creditability of the site and the security of their information. Providing these cues will help you provide a better experience that leads to deeper customer satisfaction.

What to look for:

❑ Mini-product basket always available
If you use mini-baskets that update in real time as products are added, make sure they are available throughout the entire shopping process.

❑ Displays payment options
Whatever payment options you provide, let the visitor know what they are long before they add their first product to the cart.

  ❑ CC
  If you accept major credit cards, display their icons in a conspicuous place.

  ❑ Paypal
  If you accept Paypal, be sure this is a known option early in the shopping/checkout process.

❑ Google Checkout
If you accept Google Checkout, be sure this is a known option early in the shopping/checkout process.

❑ No multiple paths to dupe product pages
Make sure there is only one workable URL per produce, even if there are multiple paths to each product.

❑ No tracking IDs in URLs
Avoid using tracking and session IDs in URLs. Look for more search engine friendly means of keeping track of a visitor's session.

❑ Exclude shopping cart pages
Keep the search engines out of all shopping cart pages. These aren't the pages they are looking for. Move along. Move along.

❑ No (or nofollowed) links to secure pages
Avoid linking to secure versions of product pages (using absolute links in cart helps prevent this.)

❑ Keep secure cert current
Make sure that your secure certificate is kept up to date. Expired certificates create security warnings that scare off would-be customers.

Product Pages

What this is about: This list covers multiple issues for individual product pages. These are the pages which generally provide information on a single product only.

Why this is important: The product page has a very singular focus: one product. Its job is to provide the visitor with the information about that product they need to be convinced that it is exactly what they are looking for. If your product pages cannot convince visitors to buy, then you're simply dead in the water.

What to look for:

❑ Visible calls to action
Make sure you place strong visual calls to action where they will be most beneficial (near the product).

❑ Clear contact info (phone #)
Provide a means to contact you should the potential buyer have a question. A link to a contact us page is good, a phone number is better.

❑ **Consistent layout from product to product**
The layout of the product pages should be consistent from page to page.

❑ **Clear pricing**
Pricing should be clearly distinguishable from the rest of the product content. Bigger and bolder is better.

❑ **Show additional fees**
If there are any additional fees associated with the product, make them clear now.

❑ **Clear product presentation**
Keep page neat and tidy with the focus on the product itself.

❑ **Show shipping cost**
If shipping is fixed, or there are a variety of shipping options, show the additional costs.

❑ **Show availability**
If products have a tendency to be sold out, on back order or otherwise unavailable, make sure availability is clearly displayed.

❑ **Provide delivery options, details**
Provide multiple delivery options and the associated details (overnight, standard, etc.)

❑ **Estimate delivery date**
Provide an estimation of delivery date so customers know when they can expect to receive the item.

❑ **Link to site security info**
Provide links to your security and privacy policies.

❑ **Return / guarantee info**
Provide, or link to, details regarding return and or/ guarantee policies. Shoppers feel better knowing you have such policies, even if they don't read them.

❑ **Allow "save for later"**
Not every visitor wants to buy right now. Allow an option to save the item for a later time.

❑ **Related products & up sells**
Show similar or related products and use product pages for additional up-sell opportunities.

❑ **Clear product image**
Make sure product image is clear and clean. No blurries.

❑ **Describe images**
Use word to describe what the visitor sees in each image, don't just rely on the image to do the selling.

❑ **Enhanced multiple image views**
Provide alternate image views of the product. Larger, different angles, etc.

❑ **Product description**
Provide a compelling description for each product. Be sure it's unique, even among similar products.

❑ **Product details & specs**
Give the visitor as much information as possible, including specifications, visual details, how to use it, etc.

❑ **Product selection options**
If the product comes in various flavors (colors, sizes, etc.) be sure to provide those options, and note pricing differences for each.

❑ **Customer product reviews**
Create the option for shoppers to review your products or link to other sites that review the products you sell.

❑ **Product comparisons**
Provide comparisons with your own products as well as comparisons of your products against other, similar products. Be honest in your assessments.

❑ **Printer-friendly option**
Provide a printer-friendly link for those who want to show the product to someone else before purchasing.

❑ **"Add to cart" button close to item**
Keep the "add to cart" button very close to the item itself.

❑ **Second "add" button at bottom of page**
If product pages contain lots of information, a second "add to cart" button is valuable at or near the bottom of the page.

❑ **Standardized product categorization**
When categorizing your products, be careful to use categorizations that others can follow. Use standardized conventions where possible.

❑ **Clutter-free page**
Keep product pages free of excessive clutter. Eliminate all non-relevant information.

❑ **Provide International pricing**
If you ship internationally, make sure international pricing is available.

❑ **Provide product search**
Provide an option that allows shopper to search for other products to their liking.

- ❑ **Emphasize brand quality and trust**
  If you sell brand name products, use that to your advantage.

- ❑ **Compare to offline competitors**
  If you compete against trusted offline stores, make

the argument why customers should buy from you rather than them.

- ❑ **Short URLs with keywords**
  Keep product page URLs short and use keywords rather than product IDs.

Basket Page

What this is about: This checklist covers items pertaining to the actual shopping basket page where products are accumulated before the shopper checks out and finalizes their purchase.

Why this is important: Visitors place items in their online shopping basket for many reasons, one of which is with the intent to buy. But they don't always complete the purchase, often abandoning the cart with products left in it. Being able to close holes in the checkout process can increase conversion rates, getting more sales and higher return on investment.

What to look for:

- ❑ **Obvious checkout link**
  Once the visitor hits this page they need to be driven toward the purchase. Don't hide the checkout link on the page.

- ❑ **Product descriptions**
  Provide a recap of the products they have in the basket, including short descriptions of each.

- ❑ **Product image**
  Include an image of each product they have added to the basket.

- ❑ **Show availability**
  If availability is in question, make sure the visitor knows this when they are reviewing their order.

- ❑ **Updatable quantities**
  Shoppers should be able to increase or decrease quantity of each individual product.

- ❑ **Ability to remove items**
  Be sure that products are easy to remove from the basket should the shopper change their mind about any single item.

- ❑ **Link to products**
  Link each product back to its product page to allow shoppers to revisit the details of the product easily.

- ❑ **Product price**
  Price for each product should be clearly displayed, along with totals if multiple quantities are added.

- ❑ **Payment options**
  Provide a list of your payment options for the shopper.

- ❑ **Promos/vouchers explained**
  If you offer any promos or discount vouchers, be

sure to explain this, allowing the proper information to be entered.

- ❑ **Link to security**
  Link to pages outlining information security policies.

- ❑ **Link to guarantees**
  Provide a link to any warranty or guarantee information as it pertains to each product.

- ❑ **Show delivery costs**
  Provide delivery cost estimations with various delivery options.

- ❑ **Show delivery date**
  Allow visitors to see expected delivery date for each item or entire shipment.

- ❑ **Shipping questions answered**
  Do your best to provide, or to link to, answers regarding shipping and delivery questions.

- ❑ **International shipping**
  Let shoppers know if you do or do not ship internationally.

- ❑ **International address forms**
  If you do ship internationally, make sure your address forms can accommodate the unique addressing requirements of other countries.

- ❑ **Allow gift options**
  Where applicable, allow option for products to be presented as gifts to someone other than the purchaser.

- ❑ **Provide "save / print / email" options**
  Make it easy for visitors to print and save the product information. Using CSS for this makes it easy.

❑ **"Continue shopping" link or options**
Provide a link to allow the visitor to continue shopping if they are not ready to checkout.

❑ **Show contact information**
Provide contact information on basket page allowing shoppers to ask questions about any products they still may be hesitant about.

❑ **No advertising/upselling**
Don't use the basket page for additional advertising

or upselling. Securing the sale of the already-added products is most important.

❑ **Don't keep personal info unless authorized**
Before storing personal information such as credit card data, be sure shopper approves of that information being stored.

❑ **Make new products added obvious**
When a new product is added to the cart, make sure it's obvious. Don't bury the new product at the end of the list, instead, place it at the front.

Mini Baskets

What this is about: This list covers a few items regarding mini-baskets. These are the portions of the page that show real-time updates to the information added to the shoppers cart.

Why this is important: Since mini-baskets are ever-present through the shopping experience, the information here can be vital to the visitor, helping them keep track of items, total costs and links back to products already added.

What to look for:

❑ **Make new products added obvious**
When a new product is added to cart, the mini-basket should be updated showing the last item added.

❑ **Link to full basket page**
Mini-basket should provide a link to the full basket page providing a quick access to make the purchase.

❑ **Allow removal of products**
Allow visitors to remove products from the shopping basket without having to go to the full basket page.

❑ **Show order total**
Keep a total of all items added to the cart.

Checkout Process

What this is about: This list covers items regarding the actual checkout process of the shopping experience, after products are added and the visitor moves to complete the purchase of the items in the cart.

Why this is important: If visitors only add products to the cart but abandon the cart or get confused in the checkout process conversions will be low as will profit. The more proper cues you can provide that give the shopper confidence and assurances about their purchase, the less likely they will be to dump the cart or lose interest before closing the deal.

What to look for:

❑ **Receipt / Confirmation**
Provide a order confirmation receipt allowing the shopper to review the order, pricing and products purchased.

    ❑ **Printable**
    Receipt should be web-based and printable for easy record keeping.

    ❑ **Emailed**
    Email a copy of the receipt to the shopper.

❑ **Order number**
Receipt should have the order number for easy follow up reference.

❑ **Thank you message**
Provide a strong message of thanks for the shopper. Providing additional information about customer satisfaction is a good idea.

❑ **Order date**
Provide the date the order was placed with the confirmation.

❑ Items purchased
List all items purchased including descriptions and links.

❑ Expected delivery date
If order cannot ship right away, provide a date in which shipment can be expected to go out.

❑ Payment method
Note method of payment, including credit card type and last numbers of credit card if applicable.

❑ Cancellation policy
Provide information or links to order cancellation policies.

❑ How to cancel
Provide additional information on the steps necessary to cancel the order if necessary (different from policies.)

❑ Return policy
Provide information or links to order return policies. This should also include a return address.

❑ Address return costs
Be sure to address all concerns regarding the costs of returns as applicable.

❑ After-sale guarantees
Provide information on your customer satisfaction guarantees as well as any warranties provided.

❑ No hidden fees
Don't use the checkout process to add additional hidden fees. All fees should be spelled out in the basket page.

❑ No pre-registration
Don't require shoppers to register before purchasing. Let them fill out the form and then add a password at the end of the process.

❑ Provide benefits of registering
At end of process, show benefits to being a registered customer:

❑ Faster checkout for future purchases
They won't have to fill out all the information each time they order.

❑ Access to order history
Shoppers have access to complete order history at any time.

❑ Check order status
Status of order is available anytime shoppers login.

❑ Saved for later information
They can buy some products now and save others for purchase another time.

❑ Access to special promotions
Shoppers will be provided special offers and discounts that they can benefit from.

❑ Personalization
They will have a more personalized shopping experience based on their order history.

❑ Joining a community
If fitting, point out the community that user will join once registering.

❑ Show checkout progress meter
When checking out requires multiple steps, make sure the number of steps is mapped out throughout the process, identifying each current step along the way.

❑ Keep checkout process short
The fewer steps the shopper has to take to purchase the less likely they will be to abandon the shopping process.

❑ Effective after-order follow-up
The order is not the end, be sure to provide sufficient after-order follow-up to keep involved with the purchaser.

Login & My Account Pages

What this is about: The list covers items that have to do with the process of logging into or accessing "my account" pages, and the information found on those pages.

Why this is important: Ensuring visitors can easily login and find the information they need is essential to providing a good customer experience. Since this is your engaged audience you want to make sure that you can keep them engaged without additional frustrations.

What to look for:

❑ **Easy to find login access**
Logging in should be easy. Either a link or a login form should be readily available from any page.

❑ **Use security protocols**
Keep necessary information secure at all times.

❑ **Provide security assurances**
Make sure visitors know that their information is secure by providing necessary security assurances.

❑ **Link for new registrations**
If visitor is new, be sure to provide a link that allows them to register for full access.

❑ **Outline account benefits**
Outline the benefits of registering to all potential new registrants.

❑ **Reclaim lost password option**
Provide an option for visitors to reclaim forgotten passwords.

❑ **"Remember me" option**
Allow visitors to stay logged in for a certain period of time without having to re-input their information.

❑ **Confirmation of change info**
When information is changed, be sure to follow that with a confirmation of the new information.

❑ **Link to privacy policy**
Link to company's privacy policies.

❑ **Logged-in status clearly displayed**
Provide a clear indication of the visitor's login status.

❑ **Links to financial info**
E-commerce sites should provide links to shoppers' financial and order information.

  ❑ **Transaction history**
  Show a complete record of all shoppers' transactions.

  ❑ **Invoices**
  Link to all past invoices and orders with complete order information.

  ❑ **Balances**
  Show balances, if relevant, including amounts due and/or credits.

  ❑ **Payment methods**
  Allow shoppers to change their payment information and/or default payment information.

❑ **Account info change access**
Provide options for users to change their account information, including passwords, addresses and other relevant information.

❑ **Choose method of delivery**
Certain purchases can be delivered multiple ways, provide various delivery options.

❑Text email, ❑HTML email, ❑Snail mail, ❑Overnight, ❑ Etc.

Help & FAQ Pages

What this is about: This list covers a range of items dealing with pages dedicated to helping your customers with various needs and answering important questions they have regarding your site, products and services.

Why this is important: If your customers are digging through your help and FAQ pages, chances are they are close to making a decision to purchase, they just need a little extra bump. These pages are essential to these visitors seek by providing answers to questions and other helps that will push them through the conversion process.

What to look for

❑ **Link to additional resources**
This is a great place to provide links to other common areas of the site such as:

❑ User guides, ❑ Product support, ❑ Downloads, ❑Customer Support

❑ **Allow Help search**
If your Help section contains a lot of information

and/or pages, allow your visitors to search just this section of the site to find what they need.

❑ **Provide printable text**
The information on these pages should be able to be printed appealingly Avoid marketing hype
These are not pages that should be filled with hype or sales-y talk. Be factual, but still enticing.

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Forms & Errors

What this is about: This list covers how web forms should be created as well as basic functionality, including how errors are handled when something goes awry.

Why this is important: Forms are a standard method of allowing visitors to communicate with you, including the placing orders. If forms don't work properly, frustrate your visitors or create additional roadblocks that the visitor must hurdle over, the contact/conversion rate on your site will drop drastically.

What to look for:

❑ **Flexible data entry requirements**
Keep requirements for how information is entered as flexible as possible. For example don't force phone numbers to require a dash.

❑ **Allow for tabbing between fields**
Allow visitors to tab from field to field to minimize having to use the mouse.

❑ **Keep tab order consistent with fields**
Make sure tab order coincides with the order the fields are on the page.

❑ **Clear field labels**
Labels for input fields need to be clear as to what information is actually being required.

❑ **Text label above field box**
Place the text field label above the filed, rather than beside it.

❑ **Only require necessary information**
Don't require visitors to enter information that is not absolutely necessary for you to meet their needs.

❑ **Minimal instructions**
Minimize the use of instructions. Use them only when necessary. Remember that they are not likely to be read.

❑ **Instructions above field**
When instructions are necessary, place them above the field, not below.

❑ **Friendly error output**
When an input error is made, keep the error message friendly and polite.

❑ **Errors obviously indicated**
Make sure the field with the error is indicated in a visually obvious way.

❑ **Errors describe remedy to problem**
Error message should describe exactly how the visitor can fix the issue.

❑ **Provide pre-selected choices**
When applicable, provide pre-made selection choices for certain fields.

❑ **Error message provides contact for assist**
It is helpful for error messages to provide ways for visitor to contact someone in case the error is from no fault of their own and impossible to get past.

❑ **Entered data preserved with errors**
When errors are made, all inputted data should be preserved so visitor doesn't have to fill out the form all over again.

❑ **Don't overdo choices**
Choices must be broad enough so visitors don't fall outside of the range offered.

❑ **Note required fields visually and textually**
Indicate which fields are required vs. those that are optional.

❑ **Progress indicator for multiple page forms**
Forms that span multiple pages need a progress indicator showing visitors where they are in the process and how much more is involved.

❑ **Progress navigation to correct past errors**
Visitors should be able to navigate back to previous form pages to fix information they may have inputted incorrectly.

❑ **Remove navigation from multi-page forms**
It can be a good idea to remove standard site navigation elements from form pages.

❑ **Link to privacy information**
Link out to privacy policy pages.

❑ **Final info verification check**
Provide a screen which confirms all the information entered before finalizing the process.

❑ **Confirmation/thank you page**
Once form is complete, drive visitors to a page that indicates the process is complete. Can be same as verification page.

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❑ Stack fields vertically
It's a good idea to stack fields vertically rather than side by side.

❑ Proper use of radio buttons / check boxes
Use radio buttons only when a single option is acceptable.

❑ Keep "submit" button close to fields
The final submit button should be kept in close proximity to the input fields.

❑ Field boxes leave room for visible info
Make sure input fields are wide enough to encompass the information being inputted.

❑ No "reset" or "cancel" buttons
Ditch the reset or cancel buttons. Those get accidentally pushed and really frustrate people.

❑ Autocomplete=off used on sensitive fields
Turn auto complete off on fields that should not be auto-filled in.

❑ Buttons denote action "go to ..."
Submit button should provoke some kind of action such as "place order," "go to," etc.

Site Search

What this is about: This list covers in-site search, what features should be included, what is expected by visitors and how the results should be laid out.

Why this is important: Site search is an important element of on-site usability, both in its ability to help visitors find the information they are looking for, or by being absent if it doesn't produce accurate results. Site search must be able to improve the visitor's experience in your site; otherwise it does more harm than good.

What to look for:

❑ Located in top-right corner
The typical place for site search is in the top right corner or middle of the top of the page. If it's where it is expected to be it'll get used.

❑ Search not case sensitive
Don't make your search sensitive to caps or no caps, default all searches to all lowercase.

❑ Properly labeled as "search"
The search box needs to be properly labeled so visitors know what it is.

❑ Link to "advanced search"
If you can provide advanced search options include a link to it at or near the search box.

❑ Forgiving of misspellings
Search results should be able to account for misspellings of keywords and product names.

❑ Shows similar products in results
Search should not just return the exact results of the products searched for but also return results with similar products.

❑ Shows related items in results
Results should also produce results with non-similar but related products that the visitor might also be interested in.

❑ No "no products found"
Never return empty results. Site search should always be able to produce some kind of result.

❑ Provide refinement options
If search produces too many, or too few results, provide options to refine the search.

❑ Provide alternate spellings and searches
Seek to correct misspelled products, brand names or other keywords.

❑ Provide links to other relevant pages
Site search results pages are a good opportunity to provide generic links to other relevant portions of the site such as Help pages and other helpful resources.

❑ Re-iterate search string in results
The results should clearly indicate the actual search string used, preferably in the page heading.

❑ Don't place results in tables
Avoid tabling the results as in non-traditional browsers this can create confusion to the visitor.

❑ Display exact matches first
Exact matches should be displayed first at the top of the results.

❑ Display close matches second
Any results that are not exact matches should come after those that are.

❑ Bold or highlight query words in results
Bold or highlight the query as it appears in the results.

❑ **Display page titles with descriptions**
If possible, display both a title and description with each result link.

❑ **Display no more than 20 results per page**
Don't allow search to produce more than 15-20 results at a time.

❑ **Add option to increase result per page**
Provide visitors an option to easily increase the number of results displayed per page.

❑ **Link to additional results pages**
Provide links to second, third and more results pages as needed.

Privacy & Security Pages

What this is about: This list covers issues regarding site pages that outline your privacy and security policies as they relate to the site visitor's needs.

Why this is important: While most visitors won't read Privacy and Security pages, they do provide necessary assurances that visitors look for in terms of being able to trust you. However, when visitors do click into these pages need certain information needs to be presented to them to ensure their needs are met.

What to look for:

❑ **Present info in easy to read format**
These pages should be well organized so that information is easy to read and understand.

❑ **Provide additional protection tutorials**
This is a great opportunity to provide additional tutorials on how visitors can protect themselves. Link to these articles at will.

❑ **Provide links to contact info**
Be sure to provide links to your contact page to provide any additional information that visitors may want.

❑ **Make information easily scanable**
Organize your page so information can be easily scanned allowing the visitor to find issues that concern them quickly.

❑ **Explain how user information will be used**
Explain in detail how you will use or not use any of the information you collect.

❑ **Explain how info will be protected**
Provide details on the methods you use to protect the data collected.

❑ **Link to these pages in footer**
Provide links to your privacy and security pages in your site's footer.

❑ **Provide section summaries**
Divide your pages into sections and information groups with summaries for each section.

❑ **Identify information types collected**
Identify and explain all the different types of information you collect from the visitor.

❑ **Explain how cookies are used**
Explain cookies and how they are used, if applicable, on your site.

Site Map

What this is about: This list covers issues related primarily to on-site site maps but can also be relevant for xml site maps.

Why this is important: Site maps provide a one-click path to any destination within the site and a way for the search engines to quickly find and index all site pages. Ensuring that your site maps function properly is an important part in ensuring your visitors can find what they want quickly and all site pages get properly indexed.

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What to look for:

❑ **Keep information current**
Site maps are often neglected. Whenever pages are added or removed from your site make sure the site map gets updated as well.

❑ **Link to site map in footer**
The footer is the natural place to provide a link to the site map. Header works also, but footer is more common.

❑ **Descriptive text and links**
Provide more than just links, but make sure link text is descriptive and/or provide descriptions with each link.

❑ **Linked from help and 404 pages**
Your Help and 404 pages are a great place to provide helpful links to your sitemap.

❑ **Provide overview paragraph**
Place an introductory/overview paragraph at the top of the Site Map page.

❑ **Provide intro to main sections**
If site is divided into sections, provide a quick intro to each section.

❑ **Visible site hierarchy**
The layout of your site map should correlate to the hierarchy of the site itself.

❑ **Link to xml sitemap in robots.txt file**
If you created an xml site map for the engines, be sure to link to it in the robots.txt file.