



International Association of Facilitators
The Art and Mastery of Facilitation – Worlds of Change
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
April 27 – 30, 2000



World of Professional Discipline

REACHING YOUR NET POTENTIAL: CREATING CLICK ASSURANCE

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Reaching Your Net Potential!

Online success is established with "click assurance", the quality and quantity of user interactivity with your business website. Creating "clickola", as it's called in the trade, is guaranteed when you take a user perspective to Web planning, execution and marketing.

In the past, the more information you controlled, the more power you had. In the future, the more information and power you give away the more you will have. This means we cannot take for granted that the marketing assumptions of the past hold true for the Internet environment we face today and in the future.

It's well known that economic growth for any business requires an omnimedia approach to marketing and service delivery. This requires listening and meeting the needs of different audiences using media of all kinds. Being interrelated not repetitive, using the most appropriate medium for each segment of the market targeted is essential, with overexposure minimized if



relevant, useful information is provided in your newsletters, product promotions, teleclasses, focus group research, online seminars/ conferences, or other choices. However, the deepening and maturing of the Internet is revolutionizing business, focusing the need for greater investment of resources online.

Fundamental to surviving the future online and generating e-business is to capture the hearts and minds of consumers. Currently, driven by technological capabilities, designer-led and independent of knowledge-challenged and technologically intimidated corporate clients, website development has become an increasing exercise of "technology for technology's sake". The majority of websites are expensive and pretty, but provide little value and are difficult to use and navigate. In 1999, U.S.-based Forrester Research reviewed commercial and corporate sites, identifying strengths and weaknesses from a user's perspective. In general, business-to-business sites were badly designed, shoddily built and difficult to use. None of the sites tested stood up to scrutiny on the grounds of value, ease of use, reliability and relevance. Errors were frequently found on the sites surveyed and content was often missing or out-of-date.

Creating Click Assurance

Unlike other conventional marketing and advertising distributed, Internet success today is not measured by collecting site traffic statistics or even sales figures. It is established with "click assurance" as measured by the quality and quantity of user interactivity with your business website. This website usability or "clickola", as it's more commonly called, is guaranteed when you take a user perspective to web planning, execution and marketing.

Online, your priority is to know your user market, to cultivate user relations and to influence user behaviour in your favour, and to push or pull your clients to action. Commodity-based sites, such as book and music CD-ROM online sales centres are price competitive to

appeal to users. Branch-name corporate sites are offering a variation of the traditional branding theme, compelling consumer identification with labels and logos. Without the leverage of either commodity or brand, listening to what people want and content aligned to be centred on the consumer are the keys to realizing your Net potential and online success.

For the majority of current websites, hard-sell tactics, click-through advertising, lure gimmicks, and interactive technology "games" and design may win awards but they won't meet online business objectives. Regardless of size, strategic content is the only click assurance that will attract and retain users to your website by providing added value, reliability and ease of use.

To profit online, the goal is to create "clickola!" A website with clickola successfully meets user demands and expectations in real time. Everything you say, offer, promise and fulfill should be in consideration of your user market and their needs. In return, users will reward your Internet strategy promptly with:

- User feedback or response;;
- Consumer opinion;
- User marketing or intelligence data;
- E-sales;
- Opt-in e-promotions;
- Repeat user visitation or,
- Increased user market share.

The Internet will do for information what the remote control did for television: train people to move on quickly to another of any number of alternatives if they don't get what they want immediately. It is fast becoming a case of "so many people, so many interests, so little time". So choose wisely what you present and present it well online!



Remember "Clickola"

In the future, your business website will be a primary marketing and sales vehicle and e-mail will be your primary communications and promotions vehicle. To ensure your Internet content and e-communications targets and services the user market, create clickola!

Content: Write for the Web providing explicit context and concise, benefit-laden information rather than feature disclosures. The more information you share, the greater your return on that information.

Leverage your position, differentiating your perspective from that of competitors. Plan a site that showcases human expertise and real people but also provides genuine opportunities for the exchange of actionable intelligence.

Intuitive navigation that is logical and easy-to-use will ensure retention of visitors. Companies will need to be more generous with their information, showing all they have to offer right up front. For some diverse organizations, this may mean having smaller, linked sites, each specializing on a particular aspect of the company's business.

Commercial transactions are each one-to-one and must be offered with security assurances to ensure user confidence and reliability.

Knowing the user is the key to creating click assurance and knowing what information and format is most acceptable and meaningful will result in positive action. Always provide opportunities to learn from your customers and clients.

Online marketing will be driven by the interactive individual's desire for instant response and service as well as by a need for highly personalized information, products and services.

Individual response behaviours can even be analyzed and a forecast created that has broader use in the corporate organization.

Layout and design that gets your point across quickly and in a compelling manner will be remembered. Since most Internet users are even more savvy than corporate promoters, instill fun as well as education into your website.

Appeal to the needs of the user and provide value through superior service and relevant context to keep them coming back!

The Presenter

Stephanie Bolton, head of Catalyst Communications International, helps entrepreneurs and corporate managers create effective public relations and web strategies that enable clients to reach their Net potential in the global marketplace. Visit www.click-assurance.com.