

Overview

Web credibility has become a very important topic today. Having a site should not make you rest on your laurels; on the contrary, your efforts should be more focused in order to provide the best experience for your site's visitors on the grounds of the fierce competition present in this field of activity.

In these times, when facts are certainly more important than promises, if you have an online business, one of the most important matters that you should give due consideration is online credibility: **you have to persuade web visitors** that there is truly something worth behind a good-looking, usable website: you have to convince visitors that the image you try to promote is trustful and that you intend to keep your promises as you say in your web advertisements.

Credibility results from evaluating multiple dimensions simultaneously; most of researchers identify "**trustworthiness**" and "**expertise**" as the two main components of credibility. At the same time, it is important to differentiate between trust, which is related more to "**dependability**" and **credibility**, which is connected to the idea of "**believability**".

Why is credibility important?

Credibility is essential in order to make people: register, click on your ads, download software, and eventually, resort to your services. Therefore, website credibility can be identified to some extent with the idea of a successful business. Credibility is vital in order to make users return to your page.

Very few people take credibility for a specialized issue to deal with; they concentrate their attention rather on factors like site design, most of the time resulting in a failure to complete all the requirements for a credible website.

Motivation of the paper

The motivation behind elaborating on this topic relies on the fact that web has become a strong means for delivering all kinds of information and services. Together with this gradual development, the need for security on the part of users has increased proportionally.

Not to mention that for a site that tries to sell something, credibility is of utmost importance.

The aim of this paper is to provide site owners with some hints about how they can gain more credibility and consequently, have more visitors or sell more (if it is the case). Although some researches mentioned the general look as a primordial factor in evaluating credibility, this presentation does not have as a main purpose to give some indications about ways to make a site design look more...credible. The reasons are:

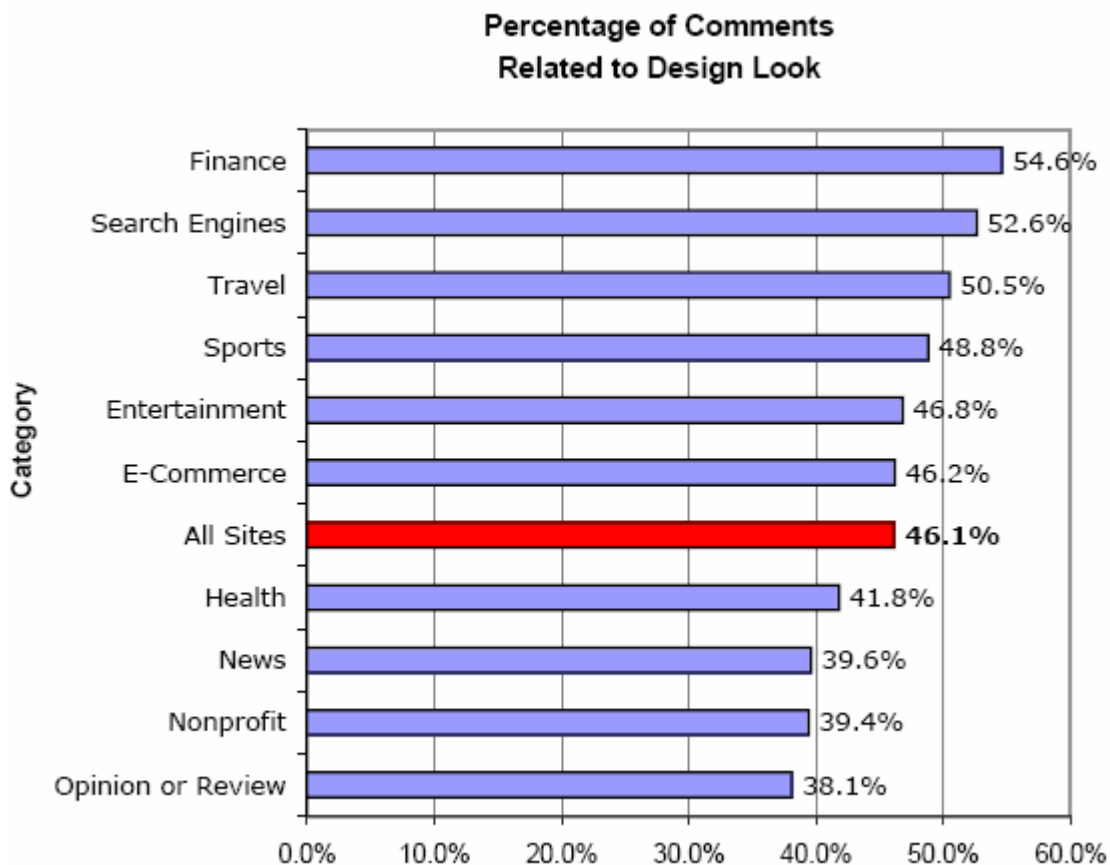
- Judging design is mostly a subjective activity and does not represent a solid criterion in evaluating credibility
- Everybody is aware that web can be easily considered as one of the most rapidly changing environments. There is little likelihood that the general look of a site will still have the greatest influence on credibility.
- It is highly unlikely that only a 'proper' design will lead to a credible website – there are several other factors, which might weight more.

The fact is that nowadays almost anyone could create a site without much knowledge or effort. Detecting how credible a site on the other hand is quite a difficult task. Credibility is not an easily measurable variable, if we were to talk in terms that are more 'technical'; conversely, people usually realize how credible a site is judging by other factors.

The most common element by which people generally judge a site is its **design look** – this was the conclusion drawn by a study conducted in 2002 by The Stanford University on a population of 2684 people who were required to assess from their point of view some health and news sites. The next elements were: **information** and the **general structure**.

As shown in the following figure, almost half of the interviewed people employed the visual appearance of a site to make statements about its credibility. On the left side of the following graphic (which was taken from the 105-page Stanford report [available free download](#)), one can observe the 10 categories of sites that the evaluators were requested to judge.

Apparently, the sites with the most appealing design are the most credible in the financial domain (54.6%), immediately followed by search engines (52.6%) and travel (50.5%) categories. With health (41.8%) and news sites (39.6%), the situation seems a bit different: the general look of the site does not offer users consistent hints in order to say whether a website is credible or not.



Source: <http://www.place1.co.uk/layout/docs/stanfordPTL.pdf>

The study also gave the interviewed people the opportunity to comment about two web sites in terms of credibility. As shown in this table, most comments were related to the design look of the site, that is 46, 1% of 2 440 comments. The comments were integrated in several categories from design look, information/design structure to readability and affiliations.

	Percent (of 2,440 comments)	Comment Topics (addressing specific credibility issue)
1.	46.1%	Design Look
2.	28.5%	Information Design/Structure
3.	25.1%	Information Focus
4.	15.5%	Company Motive
5.	14.8%	Information Usefulness
6.	14.3%	Information Accuracy
7.	14.1%	Name Recognition and Reputation
8.	13.8%	Advertising
9.	11.6%	Information Bias
10.	9.0%	Writing Tone
11.	8.8%	Identity of Site Operator
12.	8.6%	Site Functionality
13.	6.4%	Customer Service
14.	4.6%	Past Experience with Site
15.	3.7%	Information Clarity
16.	3.6%	Performance on Test by User
17.	3.6%	Readability
18.	3.4%	Affiliations
(Categories with less than 3% incidence are not in this table.)		

At the same time, the results of the research emphasized that a site with **a rich and relevant content is not enough to draw the audience attention**. In other words, if a site visually disappoints a visitor, it is very likely that he/she will abandon the website.

B.J. Fogg in *Prominence-Interpretation Theory: Explaining How People Assess Credibility* (2002) has a very interesting approach on the way people tend to evaluate credibility. His theory can be reduced to the following scheme:



The Prominence-Interpretation Theory, also known as P-I Theory, asserts that a credibility assessment needs two elements: a person who **observes** an object and **reacts** through comments about it. What is worth mentioning is that both should exist in order for a credibility evaluation to take place.

Advice for credible web

Here are some of the most common methods employed by web users in order to make their site more believable; most of them are based on the current trends and partially on the previously mentioned research. What you should notice is the fact that these steps will help you improve your sales, and will aid you in creating a respectful image in eyes of your visitors.

1. Publish photos of real people (the team you are working with)!

This action has two beneficial implications on your business: on the one side, the team you are working with will have a growing self-respect, and on the other hand, visitors will think higher of your site. Consequently, the prospect of new clients will also be higher.

Doug
Hardware Test
Engineering
Management

Percy
Operations
Management

Christine
Media Production
Specialist

Tracy
Engagement
Management

James
Financial Analys
& Controls

Jose
Programs
Operations
Management
Xbox

Rich
Attorney
Management

Employee Profile

Tracy
Engagement Management
WA - Redmond

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"I'm Tracy, a premier support manager. I oversee the people who fulfill service contracts for large customers in the Southwest. I started at Microsoft about four years ago, doing technical training. I work in Issaquah, Washington, which is a short drive from the main campus in Redmond."

Campus Life
"My department has been known to decorate people's cubes for certain events. Once, our boss was on vacation for a few weeks, so someone on our team had the clever idea to go down to the recycling place and get a two-ton brick of crushed cans. We took out the boss's desk and replaced it with this smelly brick."

Fueling the Fire
"Because of Microsoft's size, if I have a strong desire to go somewhere or do something totally different, that opportunity is available to me. My husband and I are talking about transferring to Europe for a few years. That was a big consideration when I was interviewing, that I could have that in my back pocket if I wanted to."

Opening Doors
"When I expressed interest in being a manager, I was given lots of opportunity to explore that option: I was given some leadership roles on internal projects, I was offered management training, and I was invited to pertinent meetings."

On the Job
"If I'm working hard, it's in support of other people. Nobody here really does their job on their own; they rely on other people to bring things together."

Source: <http://www.microsoft.com>

In the above picture, you can see the example of Microsoft, which put a special section on their site about employees. One can clearly observe that the purpose is not necessarily a 'formal' one – the idea was to present Microsoft personnel the way they were almost in their everyday life.

The result, as we may notice is clearly a fresh, friendly and optimistic view of the people who work at Microsoft, in strong accordance with the general idea of friendliness that the site currently tries to promote.

The following elements are important to notice:

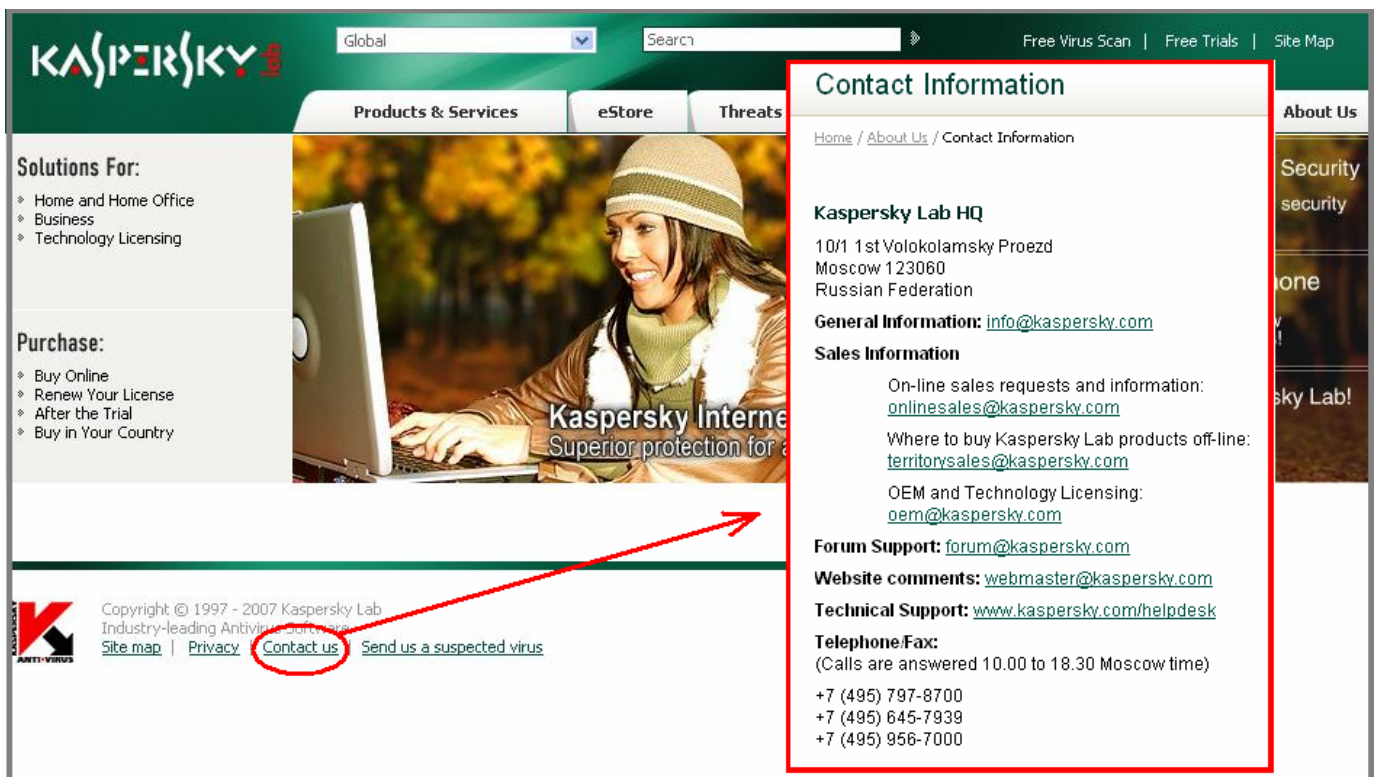
- names (in this case we have only given names – some companies prefer to mention entire names)
- name of the position
- photos of people (taken in ordinary happy circumstances)

- friendly descriptions of each employee (which can be seen when clicking on the photos); the entire profile description is a quotation, revolving around the employee’s experience with Microsoft (evidently with more emphasis on the upsides).

2. Give your contact details online!

Be sure to introduce in a different section on your website the physical address of your company and the telephone number; the existence of a real organization behind a website is essential.

The following example is that of Kasperski.com, an antivirus provider:



Source: <http://www.kasperski.com>

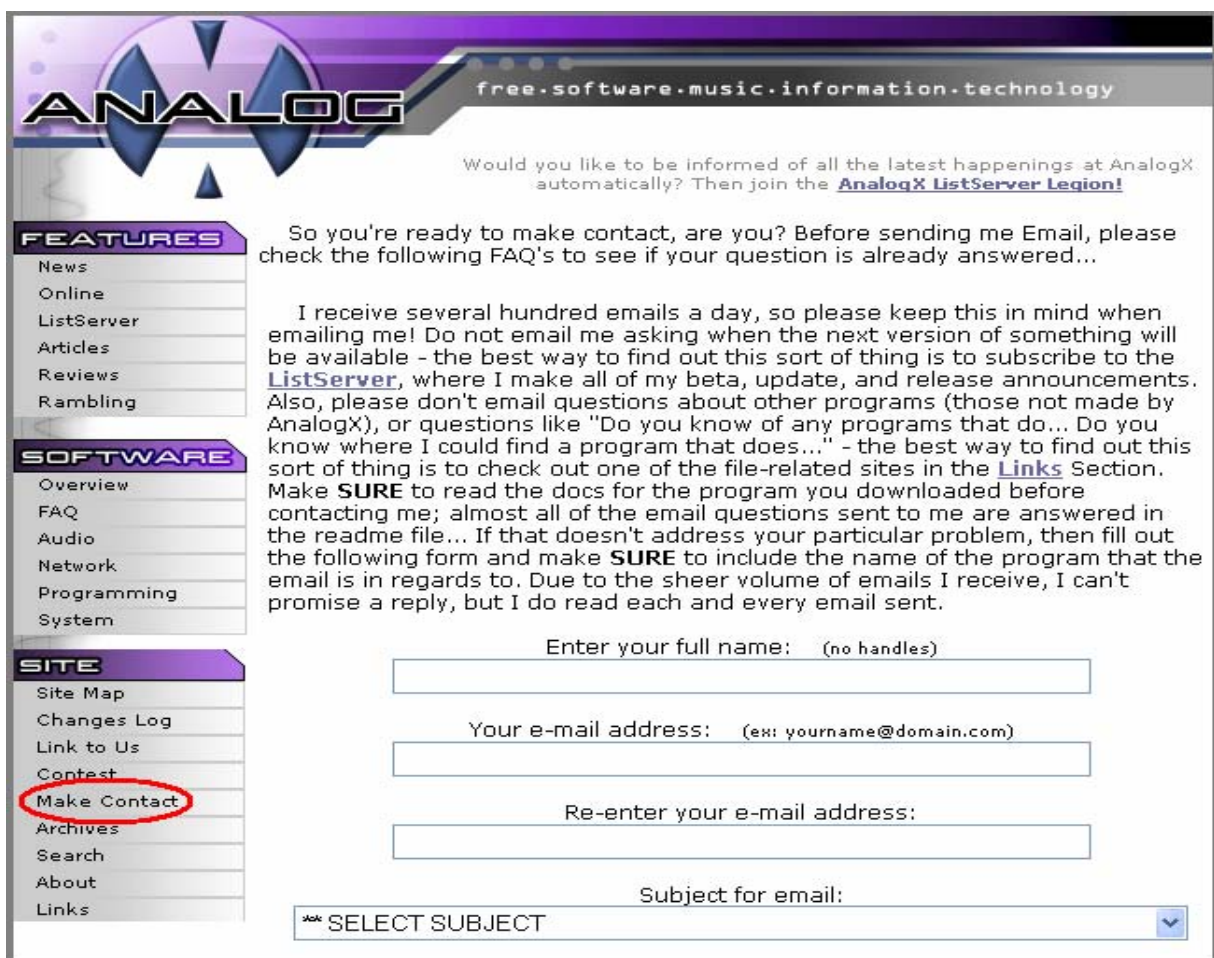
This is a positive example of the way a contact page should look like. It contains elements such as:

- exact name of the company
- physical address details (with street address, number, city, zip number, country)
- a general information email address

- various support email addresses (designed for different types of needs that clients might have)
- several phone numbers (the availability for answering and the geography of numbers are present).

What is also worth mentioning is that a contact page can contain more or less information than the example shown, depending on the type of site and on the type of information, services or business that the site promotes. The bottom line is that visitors should clearly spot the location of your contact details and that they should be clearly presented.

The following example is that of an audio software provider, which has the following contact page:



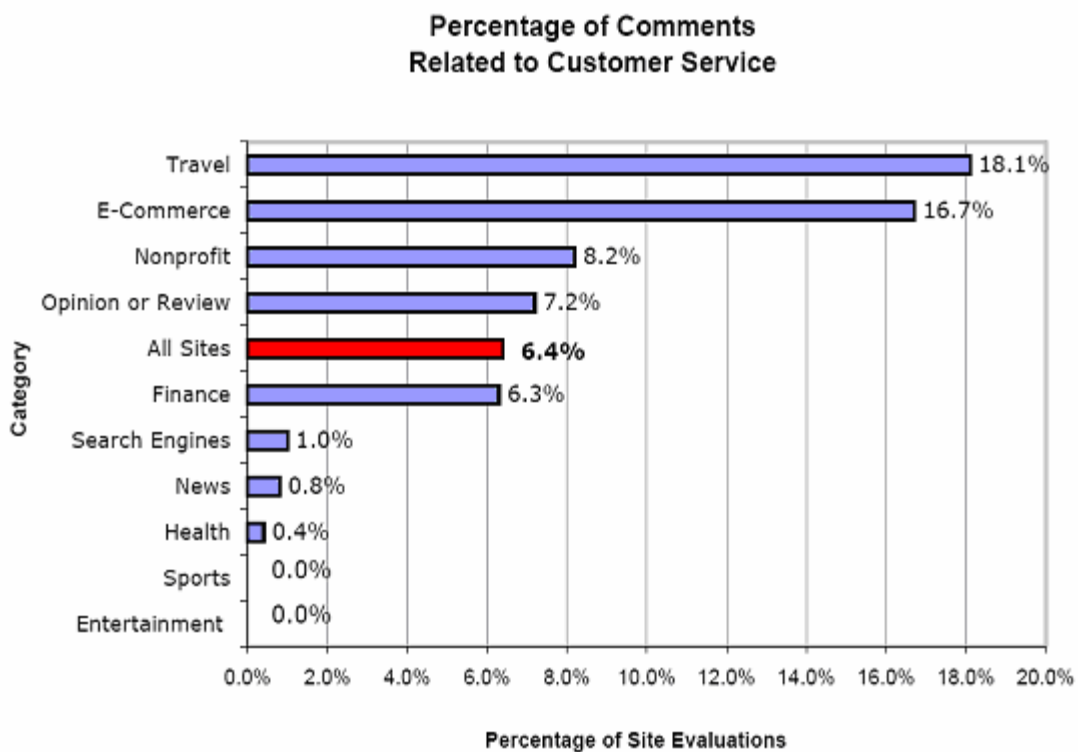
Source: <http://www.analogx.com>

Instead of giving details about how clients could get in touch with the company, a registration form is present on the "Make Contact" page. This is sure to decrease credibility.

3. Provide the clients with quick, flexible answers to their needs.

Every client needs to be shown respect and care. Make sure you provide them with individual, flexible treatments (auto responders are sometimes annoying). Think there wouldn't be any business, any financial gain on your part but for the clients. In order to have better results in your business, it is highly advisable to be very attentive and respond promptly to their needs.

As shown in the next figure provided by the same study mentioned before, 6.4% of all site assessors mentioned customer service problems or other issues as a factor in determining credibility. In all likelihood, these kind of problems are to be encountered more with business. Not surprisingly, these comments appeared more often to sites that implied online transactions like travel or e-commerce.



Also, transaction-based websites had much to gain where the operations and all the steps in order to complete a successful transaction were clearly explained. The conclusion that the researchers reached is that a clear border must be placed between information (like news, encyclopedias, and data bases) and service sites.

Companies that do provide excellent client care are likely to attain several goals like:

- increased profitability
- 'word of mouth' recommendations on the part of the satisfied clients
- high satisfaction rate on the part of the clients
- client loyalty

On top of that, the provision of excellent client care is sure to enhance the company general reputation.

A good client care policy should:

- clearly identify the client;
- clearly define client's objectives;
- clarify the options available to the client;
- give the name and status of the person who will be dealing with the matter in the company and the name of the main responsible for its overall supervision;
- give the name and status of the person whom the client should approach if there is a problem.

The main question that most of the companies ask is: 'Why do clients complain?' The answer is very simple; they complain about not having their expectations met or let's say that the expenses (not necessarily in a financial sense) were too high in comparison with the quality of the service/product that you provided.

Situations in which a company could be accused of poor service include:

- lack of client care information;
- unusual delay in delivering products or services;
- delivering erroneous information on bills which might cause serious inconvenience to the clients;
- failure to give written information about costs;
- failure to respond to enquiries that come from the clients;
- failure to return phone calls or reply to faxes and emails;
- not treating each client with fairness and respect;

How to handle complaints – things **to do** and **not to do**:

- + Be friendly, positive and honest to the client;
- + Respond promptly to their enquiries;
- + Evaluate thoroughly the client's complaint and tell him/her clearly what measures to take;
- + Review again your answer to the client in order to see whether it was clear and complete;
- + If a complaint is well grounded, it is often recommended to offer that particular client a reduction to a certain product or service or to provide some other professional service;
- + Learn from every complaint as much as you can in order to prevent new ones; make your staff aware of the problems that they should avoid;
- + Keep always in mind that a happy client could bring new ones;
- Do not give aggressive answers or totally reject complaints.
- Do not give the client the impression of self-centrism; you do not possess all the answers.
- Do not take a critical approach when a client asks for financial refunds as a remedy for the inconvenience.
- Do not leave any complain unsolved.

4. Make your site useful to visitors!

If you have a business and if you have a new website, you may find it difficult to get customers right away. A tip that you could consider is the fact that websites have to provide visitors with information they need. So, do not only try to promote the product or services you offer, but also give helpful hints on various matters (for instance having a section of articles or of interviews might be a good point to start).

A good example is that of the Adobe.com which does not try only to promote its business but rather to offer its visitors relevant news in its field. Although some might not regard those who visit these sections as targeted traffic, there is a great chance that a person who comes just to see that information might result interested in the products/services you have to offer.

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Source: <http://www.adobe.com>

5. Publish information that can be easily verified

Indicating resources or references leading to trustful websites on your web page is certain to persuade clients of your "good intentions" and your position on the market; not only will you prove your analytical sense, but you will also show interest for placing information in contexts.

The example of ZDnet.com is another good illustration of placing credible links in articles. The role of these links is to offer readers the opportunity to read more details about certain aspects presented in the material on the one hand, and to reinforce the authority and credibility of the writing, which is based on other material coming from credible sources.

October 15th, 2007

The iPhone impact: Treo, T-Mobile take biggest hit

Posted by Larry Dignan @ 7:22 am

Categories: [General](#), [Personal Technology](#), [Mobile](#), [Apple](#), [iPhone](#), [Palm](#), [Research In Motion](#)

Tags: [Apple iPhone](#), [NPD Group Inc.](#), [T-Mobile](#), [Palm Treo](#), [Handhelds](#), [Cellular Phones](#), [Hardware](#), [Consumer Electronics](#), [Personal Technology](#), [Larry Dignan](#)

Initial iPhone buyers were 10 times more likely to previously own Palm's Treo. Early iPhone buyers were also three times more likely to previously own T-Mobile's Sidekick, according to a report from the NPD Group.

NPD's report is designed to gauge Apple's impact on the mobile phone market. What's bad news for Palm ([related posts](#)) and T-Mobile ([related posts](#)) is apparently good for Research in Motion, [which has strong sales momentum](#). Blackberry users haven't defected to the iPhone, says NPD. Why? "The iPhone's lack of corporate email support appears to make it less appetizing to current Blackberry owners," NPD analyst Ross Rubin [in a statement](#).

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Enter Symbol(s) **GET QUOTES** » [Symbol Lookup](#) » [Finance Search](#)

Press Release Source: The NPD Group

The NPD Group: iPhone's First Round Punch Lands Hardest on Treo and T-Mobile

Monday October 15, 10:00 am ET

iPhone is bridging the gap between consumer-focused feature phones and productivity-focused smartphones, according to new report

Source: <http://blogs.zdnet.com>

6. Update your site on a regular basis

New information always attracts new visitors. Sometimes, adding some indicators with the inscription "new" (icons, special signs) or even creating a separate section with 'new articles' can be a good idea for drawing the attention of web visitors.

In this respect, the news sites are the most typical; actually, when dealing with news or article sites, placing dates and even hours is of vital importance.

The screenshot shows the EzineArticles website interface. At the top left is the logo 'EzineArticles' with a registered trademark symbol. To the right is a search bar with the text 'Google Search'. Below the search bar are links for 'Ads by Google', 'Ezine', 'Business Loan', 'Business Week', and 'PPC'. On the left side, there is a navigation menu with two sections: 'EzineArticles For Authors' and 'For Publishers'. The 'For Authors' section includes links like 'Submit Articles', 'Members Login', 'Benefits', 'Recent Articles' (circled in red), 'Expert Authors', 'Experts By Location', 'Read Endorsements', 'Editorial Guidelines', and 'Author TOS'. The 'For Publishers' section includes 'Terms of Service', 'Ezines / Email Alerts', 'Manage Subscriptions', and 'EzineArticles RSS'. The main content area is titled 'Recently Approved Articles:' and features several social media sharing icons (XML, Yahoo!, My MSN, Newsgator, Sub Bloclines). Below the icons are two article listings. The first article is 'Selecting A Tattoo Design For Female Tastes - Artwork That Fits' by Adam Woodham, with a date of 'October 15, 2007' circled in red. The second article is 'Bon Jovi Have A Nice Day Rock Music CD Review' by Clyde Lee Dennis, also with a date of 'October 15, 2007' circled in red.

Source: <http://www.ezinearticles.com>

7. Design your site in a professional (first and foremost) and aesthetical (second) way

A good website layout is always indicative of a good structural organization. The benefits that are worth considering are: site usability and web credibility. Notice that a beautiful graphic design will not save a poorly functioning site.

The most common examples that are to be frequently met nowadays are the websites that promote strong brands, from PC games and movies to shoes and cars. The main goal of these websites was set in advance on impression – the idea was to impress as much as possible visitors. These kinds of sites usually have usability as a secondary goal.

A concrete example is that of foxinternational.com, which creates a quite poorly usable website for the movie, *Die Hard 4* but which might catch the audience attention due to the high quality picture that is to be found on the site's background.



Source: <http://www.foxinternational.com/diehard4>

In the same example, it is very unlikely for the users to know what to expect if they press buttons like “share”.

Another idea worth mentioning that could be easily applied for the current web status is adequacy – many websites do not have content in accordance with site design. Very often businesses lose prospects just on this account.

Before building a website, the owner has to answer some questions:

- What is the main field of activity of the company?
- Does the company have an existing logo or brand?
- What is the goal in developing a web site?
- What information does the owner wish to provide online?
- Who is his target audience?
- How are competitors and do they have any web site?

There are two main points that people have in mind in order to categorize a web site design as "good" or "bad." There's a firm usability point of view, which revolves around site functionality, the effective presentation of information, and efficiency. The other point of view is purely aesthetic – it refers only to presentation, attractive animations and eye-catching graphics.

The main problem that many sites have is that they either forget about users in favor of aesthetics or some usability experts get lost in their user testing and forget to take into account visual appearance. The bottom line is that in order to reach people and keep them more on your site, it's essential to take into consideration both aspects.

On the other hand, it is very important to keep in mind that design relates more to communication. If you make up a site that works and presents information in a reasonable way, but looks unpleasant or doesn't fit with the users' expectation, it is highly unlikely that there will still be anyone to use it.

Similarly, if you make a beautiful web site that is hard to navigate, people may not be able to use it.

The most important ideas relating to web design that must be given due considerations are:

- Users should be able to recognize each page as belonging to a unitary site
- Users should be pleased by design but lured by content
- Users should be able to move round the website being provided with intuitive navigation hints.

8. Be careful when employing commercial content on your site!

By and large, usability experts have proved quite reluctant when dealing with advertisements on the web. For instance, Jakob Nielsen, one of the most important personalities in usability reached the conclusion in 1997 that web banners are to be avoided most of the time.

Things have been changing a lot nevertheless since then. Some banners could be pleasant if placed correctly. Later on, Nielsen observed that one of the most frequent methods of web advertising were the unethical ones, i.e. web owners tended to put banners with a misleading content on their site (for instance banners stating "You won! Click to claim the prize!" or just imitating dialog boxes with 'OK' or 'Cancel' buttons on them).



People are most of the time lured by elements like: plain text, faces and intimate parts of the human body. On top of that, they might pay more attention to an ad when the ad is regarded as a site element or an important component of the site. This unethical method is again to be disapproved; there should still be a clear distinction between advertising additions and editorial content.

What is important to remember is that visitors rarely loose their attention in favor of advertisements and that they actually rarely care about them.

Tips to keep in mind when creating ads

The most important thought that you should have in mind when beginning to design ads is that you don't have to be an expert designer in order to create efficient banners. Nevertheless, some basic knowledge on using programs like Photoshop or Corel will be enough. So the major ideas are:

- Text should be brief, clear and simple.
- Text should be easy to read; in this respect, some other advice is: using contrastive colors, readable fonts and making good use of empty space.
- When delivering longer texts, you could employ multiple animated gif frames or just flash (nevertheless it is not recommended to use more than three or four frames due to over- segmentation of information).
- Animations should be limited to 3 or 4 seconds.
- The banner should be linked to a certain page.
- Radical ideas should be implemented (at least in the beginning) in order to stand out of the crowd; they should be tested for a while in order to see their worthiness.
- Graphics just for the sake of impression is to be avoided.

9. Convince satisfied customer to give you a testimonial

A testimonial could be defined as a kind of a spoken or written statement, which comes from a public figure who practically praises something. Another similar term in meaning is endorsement, which stands for a praise made by a celebrity.

Testimonials could be interpreted to some extent as a *social proof*, which plays a vital role in marketing and in generating more sales. Apparently, the current tendency is for people to believe what other people believe, especially people that are recognized as values such as opinion leaders. Other forms of promotion based on social proof are case studies, reprints of articles, which have a company as a main character.


As far as the fields of activity in which testimonials are most effective are concerned, one can easily say that the health industry is the most relevant. It is quite often that people take a medicine without any prescriptions just due to rumors or just because a known person has recommended a specific product.

A good testimonial could be briefly characterized as descriptive, employing words that describe satisfaction and the effect or the influence that the product/service had on the customer.

References

"I was just amazed. The price for the corporate AVG product was 75% LESS than all of the other bids we received and included features that we normally paid extra for."

*Owen Stevens, IT Manager
Overton's, Inc.*



An example in the software industry is that of Grisoft.com, an anti-virus provider that has on the homepage a brief quotation from a satisfied client. The comment relates more to the price of the antivirus product that Grisoft sells in comparison with other similar products from competitors.

The following elements are to be noted:

- the title of the section (in this case, this section is called 'References')
- the comments from the client (only two sentences)
- the name of the person making the comments
- his job title
- the company in which he works

How to make your testimonials more believable?

- Add pictures near the comments in order to increase reader's awareness of the authority of the one making the comments.
- Be aware that testimonials with text signatures are preferable.
- You could record the client's praises on the phone and afterwards, post the audio file on your site (with permission of course).
- You could publish the entire email in which clients praise your company (again, with permission).
- When you add a testimonial, ask the one that recommends you whether you can include his contact details
- Ask the person that recommends you to video record his testimonial.

10. Ensure you add some terms and conditions on your website!

In this respect, usually the help of a solicitor is required. Broadly speaking, terms and conditions should tackle aspects like:

- who is the rightful owner of the material promoted
- description of services
- the fact that the rightful owner is entitled to change the content published on the site
- to whom the site/ program/ service is destined
- privacy and protection of personal information
- acceptance of terms
- ownership of trade marks (different from a company to the other)

Terms and conditions should account for the services provided. On top of that, they have to be brief and to-the-point without leaving any room for interpretations. What is also worth mentioning is that the length of this part may differ much, depending again on the type of site that you have.

Although terms and conditions are rarely read by visitors, writing them should never be ruled out. Firstly, someone could claim what you have and secondly, their absence might result sometimes in a total loss in credibility, not to mention their faulty writing.

11. Submit your site to trustful websites!

A good promotion policy is always constructive; people will certainly think higher of your website if it is linked or recommended by a website that they already knew or that they regarded as a trustful source.

Web visibility is one of the most important elements in a web marketing strategy. The number of outbound links (links that lead to your site) is an important element in the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) process.

At the beginning of the web, these directories were the only possibility for web users to find certain sites, which belonged to specific categories. Nowadays, their place has been taken by search engines but they still play a major part in SEO.

The most important role in the directory submission process is held by the site editor who decides whether your site is relevant for the category in which you submitted to and he will decide on its *uniqueness*. The presence of your site on such directories establishes from the beginning a certain level of credibility to which search engines will give due consideration. At the same time, search engines will judge your site basing on its quality.

Most of the web directory submission web sites are general ones comprising several categories; others on the other hand are more specific addressing only to certain kinds of sites. In terms of costs, internet is populated with both free and fee-based directory submission websites. The idea is that sites that require paying certain taxes assure providing your site with more visibility. At the same time, there are certain businesses offering this service: site directory submission.

Some free examples of these kinds of sites are provided below:

No.	Site URL
1	http://www.domaining.in
2	http://www.jamjaa.com
3	http://www.searchtheweb.com/
4	http://www.bys.net
5	http://www.reflectionsss.com
6	http://www.a2adir.info

- 7 <http://www.crazyleafdesign.com>
- 8 <http://www.toprankedsite.com>
- 9 <http://www.fxdir.com>
- 10 <http://www.hopunloppu.fi>
- 11 <http://www.dynn.org>
- 12 <http://www.flexengine.com>
- 13 <http://www.maxibeat.com>
- 14 <http://www.ismip5.com>
- 15 <http://www.allbusinessdirectory.biz>
- 16 <http://www.dbuj.com>
- 17 <http://www.thalesdirectory.com>
- 18 <http://www.zorkk.com>
- 19 <http://directory.seoexecutive.com>
- 20 <http://www.creativeagency.eu>
- 21 <http://www.maix23.info>
- 22 <http://www.blisswolff.com>
- 23 <http://www.directoryvault.com>
- 24 <http://www.a2adir.info>
- 25 <http://www.digitaldir.eu>
- 26 <http://www.abkdir.com>
- 27 <http://www.aaawebdirectory.com>
- 28 <http://www.cyborginfo.com>
- 29 <http://www.beedirectory.com>
- 30 <http://www.fat64.net>
- 31 <http://www.jtob.com>
- 32 <http://www.submit-url.org>
- 33 <http://www.directory.pkdesign.sk>
- 34 <http://www.achx.com>
- 35 <http://www.viseox.net>
- 36 <http://www.allsitessorted.com>
- 37 <http://www.riodirectory.com>
- 38 <http://www.anaximanderdirectory.com>

- 39 <http://www.global-markings.com>
- 40 <http://www.alistsites.com>
- 41 <http://www.piseries.com>
- 42 <http://www.viesearch.com>
- 43 <http://www.niche-listings.com>
- 44 <http://www.a1dir.com>
- 45 <http://www.hcdc.ws>
- 46 <http://www.resources.eu.com>
- 47 <http://www.buzz-directory.com>
- 48 <http://www.lookup.ws>
- 39 <http://www.purple-directory.com>
- 50 <http://www.sc3m.com>

12. Choose a suitable domain name

A wise-chosen domain name is of utmost importance for the success of a website. Not only will it provide the impression of a unique entity to your brand and company, but it will certainly have a major impact on the way people and search engines perceive it. Nowadays, the importance of having a website for a business has increased dramatically. A company without a website could be regarded as rather amateur possibly having serious consequences over a company.

When choosing a domain name, the first criterion, which should be taken into consideration, is that it should be easy to memorize. In order for a name to be memorable, some other requirements should be fulfilled. The name should be:

- short and concise
- easy to spell
- containing generic nouns (if possible)
- familiar
- unusual (as much as possible)

Also the domain extension must be given due consideration. Having a great name but not easy to memorize domain extension might result in a failure on the part of visitors to access your site; for instance, they might keep

in mind your name, but they would forget that the extension is '.org' not '.com'. The result – they access another site thinking that it's your own. So, the visitor should be able to associate the name of the site with its extension. Extensions mostly should be selected basing on the targeted audience.

When choosing a name for your site, an important role is played by keywords, especially if the keywords are specific for a certain industry. Avoid *extravagant* site name URLs: for instance, if a site is called "All for Me", it is recommended that the site should not have as a URL 'all4me.com'. Failure to do so will result in confusion on the part of those who access your site.

13. Make your web pages printer-friendly

Creating printer-friendly pages might prove quite problematic in its essence. When printing a page, users are obliged to print also some irrelevant and unneeded design elements. The main goal of creating printer-friendly versions of web pages is to provide visitors with informational content.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that printed papers were originally thought with 8.5" x 11" in dimension, which is in contrast with the current tendency of monitors to provide viewers with a 'landscape' vision. Therefore, if a visitor was to print a page the way it is, the text would certainly appear cropped on the right side. Nowadays most websites tend to have a fixed-width size but which is still wider than a printed page.

How to create printer-friendly content?

➤ *Through Content Management Systems*

This is the most costly way of creating printer-friendly versions but the content is certain to be generated dynamically and to appear beautifully on the screen.

➤ *Through printer-friendly versions*

If visitors want to print a page, they can press a 'printer-friendly' button and they get a brand new page with fluid text that can be easily printed.

➤ *Through PDFs*

Portable Document Formats give visitors complete control over the page appearance. The main disadvantage is that they do not update automatically and that they might require some time to be downloaded.

➤ *Through fluid pages*

Creating such pages will result in content that can be wrapped to any width. Users just need to press the print button and they get a clean printed page.

Creating printer-friendly versions of your site is sure to provide more availability for the users. In addition, this is a considerable pace in terms of usability. Be aware that it is strongly recommended that you put your identifying *elements* (logo, contract details, or even a slogan) on the printer-friendly versions in order to tag your work.

14. Improve your search engine status!

This is maybe the hardest step that you have to deal with in building web credibility; a high rank in search engines is quite hard to achieve due to a long and "tiring" process, which involves a great deal of steps. About SEO, many books and studies have been written. Broadly speaking, improving search engine positioning is a certain way to develop trust and increase your general reputation especially on the web.

Here is a scarce list with the most important tips for SEO.

I. Provide original content

This might be one of the most important requirements in order for you site to be indexed. Keep your content fresh and update it on a regular basis. Search spiders seem to have a tendency to like sites that are updated frequently with quality content.

II. Rename every page on your site (if necessary)

Keep in mind that each page on your site must have a unique name and that this is the first aspect the search engines look at. Titles must be kept short, descriptive, different from page to page, written in plain language, clear (without ambiguities), avoiding unneeded keywords, without containing *stop words* such as 'the', 'and', 'a', 'an' (instead, using separators like "-" or "|" is strongly recommended).

III. *Pick suitable keywords*

Selecting terms that best describe you and your business is of vital importance. Do not just employ words that are the most *popular* on the internet (you could employ [Keyword Selector](#) to see how many people searched particular words or expressions); using only popular words that do not suit you, will only generate traffic without any conversions or actions. People will only come to your site because they think they will find what they are seeking. Choosing proper keywords will help you with your rank in Google, Msn, Yahoo, Ask etc.

IV. *Optimize page content*

Write texts in a friendly manner, using simple phrases that can be easily understood by everyone. At the same time, if the context allows you, make sure you scatter keywords in a natural way. Pay attention not to fall into the other trap: using too many keywords which does not bring any benefit. By and large, the percentage of keywords used should not surpass 5% of the total content (no more than 3 word per page). Take into consideration not to repeat keywords.

Where to place keywords?

- Titles
- headings and subheadings
- within the paragraph content
- within links (anchor phrases)
- meta description and meta keywords
- images (alt tags)
- link titles

V. *Name links and images in a descriptive way*

This practice is one of the most valuable in usability. Visitors will have better knowledge of the destination of a link. Labeling a text with “click here” is sure to draw confusion. The major asset that you have when describing anchor texts and ALT attributes is that you can describe the page you are linking to with its main keyword. Look at Nilsen’s positive and negative example in this respect:

No (too vague):
Resources
Subjects
Services
Yes:
Search Our Collections:
databases you can search for books, journals, e-journals, theses and more
Subjects + Courses:
pages related to specific subjects & courses at MIT
Borrowing + Ordering:
borrowing FAQ, ordering articles from other libraries, requesting books from remote storage, and more

Source: <http://libstaff.mit.edu/webgroup/writing/examples2/descriptive.html>

In a nut-shell, the benefits are: visitors know exactly what to expect and they will certainly find them more useful.

VI. Avoid Flash and JavaSripts

Indexing spiders haven't been able to crawl correctly this kind of pages so far. At the same time another reason is that flash usually takes some time to download. The main suggestion is to provide navigation alternatives. Do not forget that content is the most important about a website. It shouldn't contain java script or any other over-decorative elements. Old fashioned HTML is the most secure way for your site to be indexed. You will also do fine with PHP and other things but used with caution.

15. Links in your site must be credible

Credibility goes like in circle: you are either linked by trustful sites or you are the one to link other sites; both ways are necessary but not sufficient.

Additionally, the idea that outgoing links (links from your site to another) are bad with reference to gaining traffic is one of the worst mistakes. Outgoing links are seen as rather beneficial by certain search engines like Google. Not to mention that they become valuable once they lead to quality websites that are of service to visitors.

Although you might observe a minimal loss in traffic, in long run your site will be regarded as a site with a certain authority in its field. This way, visitors will visit your site again because they know you make good recommendations.

Generally, having inbound links could be seen as a way to express your vote to a certain source. Actually, this is the way PageRank works. By linking to relevant websites, you increase the relevancy of your own website.

16. Make your site accessible and easy to navigate

Site usability is very important with a view to make users come back again. Ease of finding information and good site structure make users believe more in you. Most of the times you realize that a website is not easy to navigate is when you access it and you don't know what to find and where to find. In other words, we could go so far as to assert that usability is closely related to users' expectancies.

Some tips to make a site easier to navigate:

a) *Using standard icons and conventions*

Users should be able to clearly realize the destination or what pressing a certain button will imply. The text link must be clearly explained in order for the users not to be obliged to look at the context.

b) *Avoiding irrelevant links*

They will result in a loss in credibility if links are not correctly placed on your site.

c) Providing ALT tag for images

In case some people won't be able to download certain images, they will still be able to tell what the image is about.

d) Not replacing text with images

Choosing to replace text with images usually reduces web site design accessibility. By and large, text is more flexible providing users the possibility to choose font.

e) Using contrastive colors

The main advice is that text should clearly stand out, meaning that there should be a high contrast between text and background.

f) Employing relative font sizes

Not specifying absolute font sizes will allow users to change font easier the way they like, giving them more flexibility. At any rate, if by any chance you forget and you specify a value, note that 12 pixels font size should be the minimum size for reasonable reading.

g) Having a clear page organization

The site must have a relevant content structure, be using CSS for faster loading pages and for better visual impact (nevertheless this also depends on the type of site), have a site map (in case visitors get lost), a logo on the right side of any page that can be clicked in order to go to the homepage, and also a search engine so that users can easily find what they need (it is best if your search engine checks automatically spelling and also provides alternatives)

17. Rewrite your URLs if necessary

There are two reasons for you to [rewrite your URLs](#). One of them is related to Search Engine Optimization; search engines are much more at ease with URLs that do not have long query strings.

Secondly, the search engines can better distinguish folder names and can establish real links to keywords.

Thirdly, there is also an increase in usability for users and maintainability for webmasters. Static links are more difficult to hack and easier to maintain. At the same time, webmasters cannot fail to admit that in the case of dynamic links the prospect of broken links is higher and that with static links it is easier to migrate from one programming language to another.

The following signs are considered inappropriate for a SEO-friendly URL: "?", "+", "&", "\$", "=", or "%". Conversely, "/" (slash) is undoubtedly more friendly.

Tools to rewrite URLs are quite diverse, some free, others fee-based. Here are some free tools that you will find useful:

- [free online URL rewriting](#)
- [open Source URL Rewriter for .NET / IIS / ASP.NET](#)
- [open Source rewrite-module tuned for ASP.NET 2.0](#)
- [mod_rewrite](#)

URL transformation examples:

- Dynamic URL:

<http://www.companyname.com/products/items.php?id=x&model=y&variety=z> (*before rewriting*)

- Static URL:

<http://www.companyname.com/x/y/z.html> (*after rewriting*)

On the other hand, in connection with links, one must be very attentive with broken links; they could be interpreted as a sign of negligence.

18. Display any awards you won!

Awards are recognition of your merits, which are certain to increase your notoriety that eventually will lead to more traffic to your site. A quality award can also raise your own confidence leading you to carry on developing your site's look and content.

The fact is that when you submit a site to a directory, you practically apply for an award. Moreover, sometimes you could find yourself the winner of an award without even expecting.

The main advice worth taking into account is that you shouldn't expose any award on your site, unless it comes a trustful source and that there are some well-grounded quality criteria that you met.

Some of the most reliable awards are:

- Australian Internet Awards
- World Best Websites
- Gold Perfect Vision Award
- Surfers Choice Internet Awards
- Chicago Internet Review
- International Web Page Awards
- The Webby Awards
- Web Marketing Association award.

What you should know though, is that these awards generally go for web design and content structure and that competition is fierce, these recognitions being awarded to sites where a lot of money has been invested. There are nevertheless other quality awards that are addressing smaller companies which come from credible organizations such as: International Association of Web Masters and Designers.

Keep in mind that when you submit your site for an award, your site should be at least in a *healthy* condition.

On the other hand, should you be a producer (of anything) or a service provider, it is always good to display the award or a positive review you earned on your homepage. In the next print screen, you see the example of bitdefender.com, which places three positive reviews from 3 famous online software reviewers, which is sure to increase the trust of those who intend to buy the product.

The screenshot shows the BitDefender website homepage. At the top left is the BitDefender logo. To the right are navigation links: "My BitDefender", "Contact Us", "Forum", and "Cart". Below these is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "All Countries/Regions" and a "Go" button. A horizontal menu contains links for "Company", "Defense Center", "Downloads", "Solutions", "Support", "Partners", and "Buy Now".

The main content area features a large banner for BitDefender Total Security 2008. On the left side of the banner, three quotes are highlighted with red circles:

- c|net: "It is fast and light"
- PC MAGAZINE: "If this suite were in the military, its uniform would be bristling with medals"
- PC ADVISOR GOLD: "great value for your money"

On the right side of the banner is an image of the BitDefender Total Security 2008 software box. Below the banner are four columns of content:

- The Defense Center:** Includes a "CURRENT THREAT LEVEL" indicator with four red circles, a link to "Visit the defense center", "Latest Threats" (listing "Adware.Toolbar.MyWebSea" and "Adware.Mywebsearch.G"), and a "Scan Online" button.
- Quick Links:** Lists "Product Comparison Chart", "Renewals", "Online Shop", and "Products". Below this is a "Free Trial Download" section with links for "HOME" and "Business".
- Featured Products:** Lists "Internet Security 2008", "BitDefender Antivirus 2008", and "Enterprise Special Offers". Below this is a "PC ADVISOR GOLD" badge and the text "Total Security 2008".
- News & Updates:** Lists "BitDefender Opens U.S. Global Marketing Headquarters in Silicon Valley" and "BitDefender Lab's Top 10 Malware Chart for September Reveals a Flatter Curve".

Source: <http://www.bitdefender.com>

Conclusions

World Wide Web Credibility is a controversial issue, especially nowadays. On the one hand, we could state that people believe in web because they do transactions online (the proof revolves around the general development of e-commerce websites) and on the other hand, they do not because of the increasing number of online transactions, the fraud rate has increased almost proportionally.

The main conclusions (tips for gaining credibility) that could be drawn from this paper are:

- Publish photos of your staff
- Provide contact details
- Give most attention to customers
- Provide useful information
- Publish easily-verifiable information
- Update your site regularly
- Design your site in a professional way
- Make a clear distinction between advertisement and content
- Obtain testimonials from satisfied customers
- Add terms and conditions to your site
- Obtain links to your site
- Select a suitable domain name
- Create printer-friendly pages
- Optimize your site for search engines
- Give links to credible websites
- Make your site accessible
- Provide SEO-friendly URLs
- Display awards or positive reviews

The above mentioned steps are in no particular order. You should keep in mind that credibility is the result of a time-consuming process, which can be destroyed in the blink of an eye; once lost credibility is quite hard to be achieved again. All these steps are legitimate for the time being. Probably, in the next year, another checklist might be required – things might change radically. We shouldn't forget that Web is one of the most dynamic and rapidly changing environments.

In the last few years, we cannot fail to notice that low-quality information websites still exist. Paradoxically enough, valid content is more and more difficult to recognize.

Therefore, the need for further studies becomes more and more obvious. **Credibility** is one of the most important objective and subjective components of believability and one of the most important steps to be achieved at an early stage of a website. Credibility means trust and truth and once achieved, the success of your business is almost guaranteed.

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More information can be found on the corporate website, at www.avangate.com

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