



# E-commerce Personae

*Identity by Design*

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# E-COMMERCE PERSONAE

IDENTITY BY DESIGN

" Through the use of sound, full motion, animation, and morphing, our online Persona can be transformed from lifeless and static appendages, into dynamic and vital communication tools. And although brand identities must continue to be governed by rules and standards, they can transcend all previously accepted boundaries.

In order to harness the full potential of the new media at our disposal, it is important for us to consider an old but forgotten truism: our senses reinforce each other, as when a movie soundtrack conjures up images, and scenes from the movie bring to mind the music.

Together, sound and sight act as a powerful stimulus to memory. "

John Shenton - President - Global Millennia Marketing



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# E-COMMERCE PERSONAE

THE E-COMMERCE DESIGN EVOLUTION

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## THE E-COMMERCE DESIGN EVOLUTION

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**E**-commerce has eluded many small businesses.

Small businesses continue to establish home pages, with 2 million small firms now maintaining Web sites, according to study released today by market researchers at IDC.

The survey found that almost 75 percent of small businesses that own a PC is now live online. But, at the end of 2000, only 725,000 small firms were actively selling online, even though a far greater number had intended to.

Another survey by Arthur Andersen and National Small Business United shows that of the 53 percent of small and midsize businesses that have Web pages, only 23 percent use them to sell goods or services.

Most respondents said the biggest barrier to doing business online is lack of time and also the understanding of what is involved in producing a viable E-commerce web site.

As E-commerce evolves and users become more comfortable with the medium, new design requirements emerge.



E-commerce is no longer about clicks and customer details. Now it's concerned with the creation of a quality user experience that converts browsers to buyers, moving them through a logical sales process.

But first impressions last, and if your site has an amateurish Persona, you'll find it difficult to make sales or even hold those browsers who make it through the front door.

When it comes to designing an E-commerce Web site, storefront usability is one critical issue you should be loath to neglect. Beyond essentials like fast download times and intuitive navigation, an effective E-commerce Web site must boast equally intuitive catalogue and order-interface systems.

How you interface with your customers is critical, and as you design your site, you'll find that terms like 'usability', 'architecture' and 'flow' suddenly take on increased significance. Even your text and marketing content must be conceived in terms of design, global impact, and 'cognitive usability'.

Your corporate identity must be visibly stamped upon your online presence.

In other words, designing an E-commerce Web site today demands more care and attention to detail than it used to. Increased competition has raised the stakes, and now the expectations of Internet shoppers are much higher.

Though innovations like Flash have given Webmasters more options, the ultimate design objective remains the same - to guide site visitors on a fluid path from marketing point A to closing point Z. And to achieve this end, E-commerce web design must be considered holistically.

# E-COMMERCE PERSONAE

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SITE DESIGN

## HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SITE DESIGN

An effective Web site is one in which various technical and design features interact, working synergistically to generate customer interest, build trust, and facilitate a convenient, unimpeded transaction. Here, design aesthetics (layout, style, image, branding), Web content (marketing copy, product specifications, policies), and site technology (Web-based applications), should come together to create a seamless online shopping experience.

To neglect any piece in this complex puzzle will place your end goal, 'Sales' in jeopardy. An E-commerce Web site is not a static monument to your business. It's a process, an interconnected series of events that lead your customers from A to Z.

From the moment a visitor enters your site, is perhaps the most vital. Here, to design for flow and usability, you must understand what happens at the level of initial visitor perception.

What does the eye lock onto first - text or graphics? Where does the eye begin - at the top left, as with print media, or in the centre? And is there a total, or gestalt impression being made?



Typically poor impressions result from unattractive banners and mass of buttons across the top of the page, to large blocks of text without white space.

Without an immediate message, there is nothing about these sites that encourage interest from a customer who was not already determined to investigate the offering.

Other issues that can affect your web persona are:

- Visitors must read the text of navigation buttons individually, since there is no logical grouping of links.
- Low-contrast choice of text and background colours in buttons makes the text difficult to read.
- The images on a page clash with the style of the header and buttons.

- Where there is animated text it is amateurish, with no attempt to create smooth anti-aliased text.
- We pages utilise multiple fonts, none of which complements any of the others.
- The overall layout of the site does not have a clear purpose. There is no call to action, and no one message that stands out from the mass of information.
- Using Microsoft FrontPage to create a site has resulted in an easily identifiable "look", which would be immediately apparent to anyone familiar with the program and labels the site as "home grown". While that is acceptable for a personal or hobby site, it is not appropriate for a corporate site.

As a contrast, these professional designs grab the visitor's attention and do not let go. There are a number of easily identifiable sections on the Home Page, each with a clear purpose that allows visitors to quickly find the information they are looking for.



www.1800flowers.com

The designs are very attractive and appropriate for the services being sold. Overall, the designs have the polished appearance and convey the message that they are valuable asset to their owners, and that the company is serious about doing business on the Internet.

## THE KEYS TO COMMUNICATION

It may come as a shock, but most studies indicate that text is the first thing that Internet users (consciously) latch onto when they arrive at a Web site. Only after they've located the words will users look at art, graphics, and images. Not surprisingly, distinct headings and captions draw attention first and those positioned near the centre of the page wield more visual authority.

Text-oriented sites, though less flashy, tend to have stronger E-commerce magnetism (*assuming their content is substantial, well crafted, and effectively formatted*).

To maximize immediate site impact:

- Content should be broken and built into an easily digestible scheme
- Text presentation should have a strong design component oriented toward the methodical 'information imprinting' of site visitors
- Use clear headings, tight paragraphing, highlighted benefits, bulleted central ideas, and strategic linking help content flow
- Information should be comprehensive, and shouldn't overwhelm

However, there is a more fundamental level of perception that takes place even before your visitors begin to unpack site content, appraise graphics and layout, or scan the index of your navigation bar, that is, the digital first impression.



# E-COMMERCE PERSONAE

DESIGNING THE DIGITAL FIRST IMPRESSION

## DESIGNING THE DIGITAL FIRST IMPRESSION

This level of impression is more global and less tangible than a critical Web site analysis, and it can't be measured by eye-tracking studies: it's the very moment when an online shopper evaluates your level of professionalism and your E-commerce credibility.

It's when a potential customer reads, so to speak, your E-commerce Personae.

A Persona is indeed a fitting term. The more we interact with the Internet, the more we seek out underlying indicators not simply of Web site usability, but of latent quality. We look for signs of investment and care, for traces of efficiency, stability, and history.

A homepage is a shallow mirror that reflects the wider soul, drive, and integrity of your E-business. Here, details and design minutia play a significant role in the creation of a larger gestalt impression of your site.

Elements like symmetry, balance, or the mere suggestion of design precision will impact positively upon your visitors.



Web design encompasses so much more than a few nice rollover effects and a photo of your office. Web design encompasses user interfaces, marketing, branding, navigation systems, web site architecture and data flow.

It encompasses intangible elements, such as how the human brain breaks up information elements into groups of seven, eye hand co-ordination and just plain old human nature.

In the same way, inadequate Web design, shoddy solutions, or poor usability will betray you and it only takes a millisecond after a visitor reaches your page for an irrevocable negative impression to be made. The groundwork for your persona is laid with your corporate identity.

## CORPORATE IDENTITY

Corporate identity is not just a logo or a name of a company, though these are the most visible of its components. Corporate identity is what makes a company special and unique. It expresses the company's approach to business, its values and business culture. It is reflected in everything from the quality of the products and/or services, marketing strategies, communication media, and working environment.

This Persona must also be the online part of your corporate identity. Corporate identities are important. Although names and logos should fit like a glove, often they don't. Many companies' products and services evolve while their identities lag behind.

Taking ones business onto the Internet can create even more of a gap between your current and online Persona.

Successful companies invest a lot of time and energy into managing how they are seen by the world. They do not leave anything to chance when it comes to their corporate identity. Developing an effective corporate identity does not necessarily mean investing large amounts of money - but it takes time and careful consideration.



Part of your Persona or identity is the Logo. The logo is the natural extension of a brand. It is the signatures that translate the substance and vision of a brand, while complementing and strengthening all the other aspects of its identity.

### LOGO DESIGN

Trademarks and Logos make up the most international language in the world. An excellent logo can cross many barriers and provide your organization with a means of delivering to your customers an unequivocal and uniform message.

Every successful company has its own Persona or "personality," and just as human personalities are complex, so too is your company's personality. A successful logo is a means of condensing a complex reality into a single, simple statement, one that can be controlled, modified, developed and matured over time. Your logo needs to be much more than just a distinguishing mark for your company. It must be an indication of quality, value, and reliability.

Does your logo do these things successfully?

1. IDENTIFY your company, product, or service.
2. DIFFERENTIATE it from the mass of other similar companies.
3. COMMUNICATE information as to your products value and quality.
4. ADD VALUE by causing you to provide a quality service in order to maintain your company's reputation.
5. REPRESENT potentially valuable assets. When people see your logo, can they tell by the design that your product or service is of high quality.

If your logo doesn't do these things, then you might need to update it, possibly seeking professional advice.

### IS LOGO DESIGN THAT IMPORTANT?

It is extremely important! Your logo is a part of the foundation on which you build your brand.

Especially since the recent explosion of Internet businesses, but even before that, consumers have an overwhelming variety of choices. Chances are that whatever you are selling, there is something similar to it available. Chances are there is someone in direct competition with you right now. Yes, there are very few products that are shielded from direct competition because of a patent or for some other reason.

It is because of this that much of your efforts in marketing and branding should be concentrated on building a distinctive and differentiated "brand personality" for your company.

Take the success of Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola. There is some difference between these two products, but this difference is very subtle. Plus, there are hundreds of other brands of cola on the market.

Even so, these two brands, Coke and Pepsi, are able to dominate the worldwide cola market. What is the main factor for their success? It is the strength and appeal of their brands.

And what is the foundation for their brands? It is their powerful Logos!



Your logo is the means by which you can distinguish your products and services and therefore serve both your needs and the needs of your customers.

Your logo is central to your company's "personality". Even if your company has a great personality, if your logo doesn't convey that, then people may get the wrong idea and never do business with you.

Within your logo and company name is held all of your investments, because it is this clear, identifiable aspect of your brand that the consumer uses in selecting your company or purchasing your products.

This Persona must be transferred to the web site as part of the online creative process.



### REMEMBER – FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

A first impression can be a capricious thing indeed, and a feeble E-commerce Persona can deflect potential visitors from your site in droves. Internet users have only one measure by which to judge your online business: the superficial appearance of your Web page.

Much of how a customer judges your site is determined at an intuitive level. Once a negative impact is made, no amount of content can overrule that initial signature.



A unique identity and online brand are vital. Template-driven or 'homemade' looking sites can make powerful impressions, but only in the worst ways. Everyone knows someone who just happens to be a Web design 'expert', and who will build you a Web site for free.

Unfortunately, free is not a virtue when it comes to commercial Web design and widely available template solutions signal shallow or 'generic' E-commerce.

Similarly, inarticulate content or overbearing copy can send the message that both intentionality and integrity may be lacking in your E-business.

Instead, E-commerce Web design must be viewed holistically as a process that balances design, technology, and content in an interdependent alliance.

Without a powerful first impression (and strong E-commerce Personae) your customers will not bother to delve into your site or take the time to see who you really are.



# MARKETING ON THE INTERNET

ABOUT GLOBAL MILLENNIA MARKETING

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## ABOUT GLOBAL MILLENNIA MARKETING

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**Global Millennia Marketing Inc.** is one of the first of a new breed of integrated Internet marketing communications companies and is comprised of four on-line divisions. Our ability to work closely at all levels optimizes synergy between the different divisions from the strategic planning stage right through to tactical execution of all our projects.



John Shenton B. Eng., President of Global Millennia Marketing, is a dynamic, adaptable and results driven Senior Executive with many years experience in building and operating companies in N. America & Europe, creating market presence and increasing sales throughout domestic and International markets worldwide.

His strong technical and analytical background is supported by comprehensive sales, marketing, operational, and general management skills in the computer, Internet and telecommunication industry.

He has a great deal of International experience, having lived and worked within the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland and Canada.

service on a global basis in English, French, Chinese and Arabic to a diverse range of companies from start-up to established corporations.

As the use of New Digital Media such as the Internet, CD-ROM's, DVD's, increases, the importance of coordinating its use with traditional printed media becomes paramount. We are uniquely placed to address this need, having evolved from genuine specialists in both fields. We work with our clients to develop effective, long-term partnerships, which encompass every facet of the management and marketing functions, from initial project consulting through creative design and production, to corporate presentation management.

Our teams have many years' industrial experience in the fields of Sales & Marketing, Finance and Information Technology in North America, Europe and Asia. This background allows us to quickly empathize with our clients to understand their markets, their objectives and to identify their business needs. Through strategic planning and the creative application of our skills and experience, we deliver effective total marketing communications solutions, which meet, and typically exceed, their pre-defined goals and expectations.

Operations are controlled from Montreal, Canada. From here we are able to provide

 **globalmillenniamarketing.com**  
...Taking your site in the right direction

Integrated Internet Marketing & Web Site Design

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A leading Internet Solution Provider

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Consulting, Promotion and Planning