

## The Persuasive Design Audit Sheet

1. Does your website meet the basic web design guidelines and ensures that the following are taken care of:
  - Complex and busy layout
  - Hard to navigate
  - Too much color
  - Too much contrast
  - Hard to read
  - Too many distractions (pop-ups, sliders etc.)
  - Slow loading
  - Big blocks of text
  - No way to know who is behind the site
  - Too formal and stiff
  - Not mobile optimized
  
2. Does your website have a clear value proposition in a prominent, cannot-miss-it-even-if-I-wanted-to spot?

Hint: Your Value proposition isn't what you offer but what you deliver. Benefits not Features always.
  
3. Does your site answer the following question in the first 20 seconds of browsing:
  - What topic is this website about and who does this cater to?
  - What benefit does a person get out of the website?
  - What should that person do to get that benefit?

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4. Is your design familiar or prototypical of your niche? For example a news or magazine layout may not be prototypical of a health & fitness niche and a portfolio layout may not be familiar for business consulting websites.
5. Does your website have a disruptive or unexpected element; a Call to Action, image or header copy? [I wrote more about disruption and its unique persuasion powers here.](#)
6. Does each page of your website inspire your desired action? Want them to sign up to your list, like your Facebook page or Tweet about your awesome site? Ask them!
7. Are you asking for one action per page? Don't ask them to like, subscribe and get you cupcakes all in one page? It only leads to confusion and the reader doesn't end up doing anything at all.
8. Does your site have markers of authority in place? Contributing to a magazine? Be sure to mention that. Affiliated with a respected organization? Make that clear. Won a medal for outstanding work? Throw that in there. Conversely, don't link to outside sites or mention entities that are not credible. Your site becomes less credible by association.
9. Does your website make sharing easy? Does it ask to share your content explicitly...and nicely?
10. Do all your blog posts pass the IIRFMP (is it relevant for my peeps) test?

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11. Does it have easy to understand navigation levels?

Hint: Please ditch the jargon when it comes to navigation bars and use familiar labels like Home, About, Contact etc. (a rule I personally don't follow...but then I'm a rebel like that)

12. Make sure you aren't using any stock images particularly those with fake-smiling men and spray tanned laughing women?

13. Is your Call to Action too generic? "Subscribe" or "Sign Up!" doesn't cut it anymore. How about "Join the Fun" or "Be One of Us!" or even first person CTAs such as "Let me in!" or "I want to be a VIP".

14. Is your hook copy straight out of your ideal buyer's mouth? This boils down to market research but a big part of your website depends on what you say in the hook copy and the hook copy should use words that reflect hopes, dreams and pains of your ideal buyer.

15. Is it easy to find your contact page and about page? If it's not, it may seem like you have something to hide.

16. Does your website look lived in? People assign more credibility to sites that show they have been recently updated or reviewed. Ideally the latest post should be no older than a month so a random visitor isn't put off by the site's lack of freshness. If you post more infrequently, consider hiding the posting dates.

17. Don't hide behind the pixels. Show them you, your team, your office (even if it's a desk against your kitchen wall). This reflects transparency and transparency equals trust.

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18. Boost credibility by providing citations, references and source material for all your content, especially if you link to this evidence. Even if people don't follow these links, you've shown confidence.
19. Make sure you are only using technology as an aid and not to show all you can do with it. The more bells and whistles you put in, the harder it becomes for people to interact with your site? Divorce the sparkly, light-up letters and ditch the GIFs (unless you cater to 13 year old boys)
20. Try not to have ads on your site. If you must, clearly distinguish the sponsored content from your own. Avoid pop-up ads, unless you don't mind alienating people completely and losing credibility.
21. If you have a signup form, make sure you are giving them a good enough reason to sign up? When your brand is a household name, you don't need to "sell" the signup but if you are like all of us, you need to give them a really solid, compelling reason why they should punch in that email address or click that blue alien-looking thumb to like your page. A description of what happens when they sign up (no, the promise of weekly emails doesn't make them lose their sleep if they don't sign up) , an image of what they get when they sign up or a quote from someone who signed up and discovered nirvana, are all compelling reasons.
22. Help your visitors take action. Include clear instructions on what they should do next. If you are catering to 2-3 different types of ideal buyers, having a section dedicated to each might be helpful (on my own site, I have online and in-person persuasion spelled out prominently on the home page)

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