

# Extreme MAKEOVER WEB EDITION

Does your Web site need to reboot?

BY NICK SOGGU AND JEFF MCPHERSON

If you've caught any episode of the feel-good weepfest that is *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* on Sundays, you know the big payoff comes when host Ty Pennington, bullhorn in hand and standing with the family, tells the bus driver, "Move that bus!" That's when they find their dilapidated house has morphed into a fantasy home and the tears flow both on and off screen.

The tears flowing at your business on Monday are probably not from your employees reliving that moment. Instead, the water works are caused by the fact your Web site more resembles the broken-down shack than the high-class home. If your Web site has become an afterthought of tacked-on additions and "someday we'll fix that" patches, maybe it's time to give it a makeover. And you don't need Ty to make it happen.

Whether it's a home or a home page, a successful redesign begins with planning. So, before you start designing buttons, think about what you want to achieve with your Web site. Do you want to increase on-line sales? Establish your brand? Drive more traffic to your physical location? Start

by deciding on your goals and then build your Web pages to support them.

Think about the expectations customers will bring to your site and how you will meet them. For example, if a customer communicates through your Web site, how will you respond and how long will it take? If you keep a customer waiting too long for a response, that may be a customer lost.



Once you set your goals, then you can get creative. As you do, design for the end user, not for yourself, your staff, or industry insiders. That means using language

that makes sense to your intended audience. Translate Web terminology (and any other jargon) into plain English that users will understand.

There's a difference between designing a Web site and designing a print piece. Print media offers a world of fonts, but your choices are limited on the Web. If you try to get around that by displaying fancy text as a graphic, search engines won't be able to find it. Those search engines are crucial as they can bring in a big chunk of Web traffic.

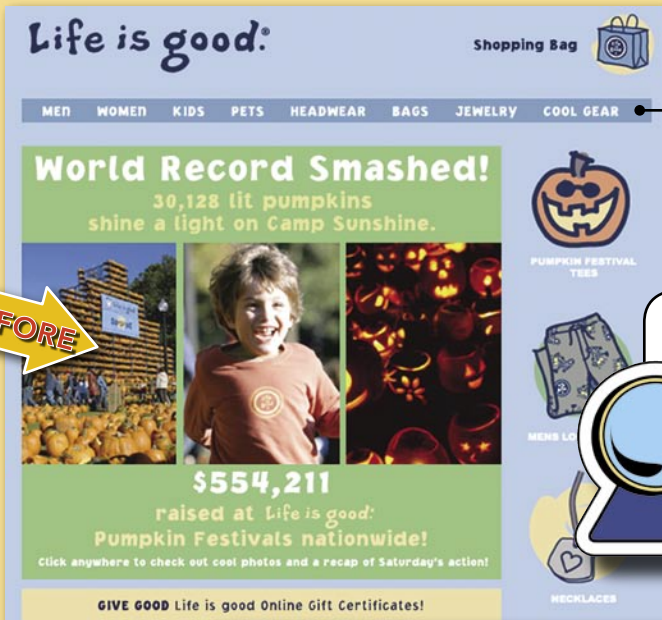
Search engines often link users through the back or side door of Web sites rather than the home page. Make sure you optimize those pages for search engines as well. A few simple tricks can mean the difference between Web anonymity and search engine stardom.

Balance the need to be "cool" with practicality. Some design elements, such as Flash graphics or oddly-shaped photos, may look great, but could cause an endless array of prob-

lems. Sometimes, keeping it simple is still the best advice.

At some point, you have to decide where the buck stops. It's okay to have a commit-

# Extreme MAKEOVER: Life is good



**BEFORE**

Before, customer service took place by phone. The redesigned site highlights customer service information and lets customers track orders, view order history, manage gift certificates, and even make returns.

Beyond clothing, **Life is good** sells a variety of home and sporting goods. The new site makes these easier to find, with a multi-tiered navigation structure that lets users browse by audience type, category of product, or area of interest.



**AFTER**

**Life is good** customers are drawn to its optimistic slogans and characters having fun outdoors. The new site features these more prominently.

A new "Like what you do" section highlights **Life is good's** many fundraising activities for terminally ill children, and calls on consumers to join them in making the world a better place.

**Life is good's** old Web site was organized around products. The new site enhances the company's message of fun and optimism, letting customers browse based on their own interests and preferences.

**Right on**

# Extreme MAKEOVER: Orr & Reno

Orr&Reno  
Professional Association

Firm Attorneys & Professionals Industry Sectors Resources Home

BEFORE

Welcome to Orr & Reno

Orr & Reno was established in 1946 as the successor to firms that had engaged continuously in the general practice of law in Concord since 1847. The firm is recognized for the professional excellence and civic leadership positions held by its members, and the stability of its organization. Currently, we are a firm of more than thirty-five lawyers conducting a statewide general law practice.

Our offices in Concord, the state capital, allow us ready access to the New Hampshire Supreme Court, the Merrimack County Superior and Probate Courts and Registry of Deeds, the United States District Court, the New Hampshire Legislature, Executive Branch, and state and federal agencies. Our location in the center of New Hampshire makes it convenient to reach other courts and registries throughout the state.

What's New

\*John Male authored in Mount the office newsletter NHVerm of the Financial Management Association.

\*Marty Van Oot and Lisa Snow Wade admitted to the state and federal courts in Vermont

\* 13 Orr & Reno attorneys listed in The Best Lawyers in America, 2005-06.

Orr & Reno's old Web site was straightforward, but cold. The new site uses warm, inviting colors, images of people, and interesting architectural shots to project the image of a professional, but approachable, firm that caters to NH businesses.

While the previous design had only four menu options, the redesign provides more user-friendly labeling and reduces the clicks required to get to desired information.

AFTER



Welcome to Orr & Reno  
*Smart. Creative. Practical. Responsive.*

This is how our clients and other lawyers describe our 60-year old firm in Concord, New Hampshire's state capital. You will be impressed with the depth of experience and legal talent you'll find at Orr & Reno. We're a firm with a global vision, and New Hampshire values.

## PRACTICE AREAS

### Practice Area Spotlight

#### Media and First Amendment

Counseling media clients ranging from book and newspaper publishers to news services and radio and television broadcasters.

To get a sense of the wide variety of industry sectors Orr & Reno represents, [click here](#).

## OUR PEOPLE

Our lawyers represent domestic and international businesses, and state and local governments, in virtually every aspect of law.

**& Our Associates Programs**  
[Click Here](#)

## WHAT'S NEW

Robert Carey Joins Litigation Group [GO](#)

Recent Supreme Court decision in ElderTrust case [GO](#)

Note the wasted space on Orr & Reno's old Web site—prime real estate that's now put to good use by highlighting the firm's key strengths: areas of practice, attorneys and success stories.

Every page of Orr & Reno's new site is searchable and printable, making it easy for potential clients to find what they're looking for.

A news area on the redesigned site keeps the firm looking active and fresh. The section was designed so that staff members could update it themselves as the need arose.

# The Five Biggest Web Errors

A little planning can save a lot of hassle.

## **Mistake #1: Starting with the Look**

Companies sometimes know how they want their Web sites to look before the design even begins. That's putting the cart before the horse.

A good design begins with a strategy. For example, study your old Web logs to see how visitors have used your site in the past. That way, you can learn from mistakes and capitalize on customer browsing trends. The look should enhance the function of your Web site, not drive it.

## **Mistake #2: Designing for your Convenience**

Don't organize your site based on what's familiar or convenient for your organization or its departments. You want a site that's convenient for end users. They come first.

Don't assume that everyone will approach your site the same way. Different audiences use the Web and search sites differently, so provide a variety of ways for people to get at information, but don't overwhelm them.

## **Mistake #3: Underestimating the Cost**

Don't low-ball your own project. Companies often misjudge the time it takes to prepare content, provide links, gather images, and thoroughly test a Web site. Developing a Web site is a major effort, so make sure you budget enough time and resources for it.

## **Mistake #4: Launching on Friday**

Whatever you do, don't launch a new Web site on a Friday. Invariably, something will go wrong over the weekend when no one's around to handle it. Unveil your new site on a Monday or Tuesday and prepare your staff to deal with unexpected developments.

## **Mistake #5: No Forwarding Address**

If you're not careful, a redesign could leave a lot of dead links and 404 "Page not found" messages in its wake. To avoid user frustration, make sure old, unused links redirect to current pages or to a search page where people can find what they're after.

tee review the design and make suggestions, but don't let that bog down the process. Give one or two people the authority to make final decisions and let them communicate with the design team.

Having the right tools makes all the difference in carpentry and in Web design. Make sure your Web developers use standard tools that your Information Technology department is familiar with. If they don't, your IT folks will have a hard time doing maintenance on the site or updating it—and you'll have a less dynamic, flexible Web presence.

If possible, have your site hosted by the same company that did your makeover. This will avoid finger pointing if something goes amiss—and it usually does, somewhere along the line.

Finally, be sure to leave room in your makeover budget to make tweaks in the design as needed. Just as a last-minute, slapdash paint job can ruin the most beautiful home renovation project, choices that are rushed because you don't have the budget can ruin your Web redesign. ■

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