10 Tips on Creating a Cross-Cultural Website by Deborahswa

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If you want to do international business on the web, consider the impact of culture on the understanding, interpretation, and use of your web-site. Things like colour, content, language, and even the tools we use are not accepted around the world in the same way â€“ there are cross cultural differences. Here are just a few things to consider:

1.Content is King! Content may be king, but it has to be expressed in a way that other cultures can understand â€“ not only the words, but the concepts and the values. How we view information is directly linked to our values â€“ what is important to us and in what context.

2.Sales Pitch: Itâ€™s important to realise that people buy in different ways. Is your focus on selling the benefits of the products, giving the best deal, having the most competitive price, or establishing you as an ethical and moral company? These are not only business, but cultural preferences.

3.Language: avoid the use of colloquialisms, jargon and conceptualizing. Simple plain English is what is needed for an international audience. Realise that statements like â€˜Buy nowâ€™, â€˜Act todayâ€ â€˜Claim your free XYZ if you reply within 2 hoursâ€™ can alienate many cultures and demean your company in their eyes.

4.Colour: Be wary of the colours you use. Red can mean luck or signify death! It can be sacrilegious to use purple. Make enquiries about the cultures you think you will be dealing with most, and adapt your site to suite them. Remember â€“ you canâ€™t please everybody, but it may be prudent to have more than one site for a different target market.

5.Claims: Be wary about your claims. In the West, itâ€™s OK to state that you are good. In the US, you are expected to impress potential customers, hoping to persuade them to buy from you. Some cultures find these â€˜claimsâ€™ immodest and unseemly. Over-exaggerated claims and â€˜hyperboleâ€™ turn people away.

6.Technology: flash, animation, sound, and many other wonderful gizmos wonâ€™t work unless a nation has an advanced telephone systems. Broadband is increasinglybeing used around the worldbut not everywhere and many countries are still selling quite inferior computers. What is the latest thing for them may be old technology for us. Bells and whistles may be a lot of fun for your designer and technician, but may frustrate your visitors.

7.Page Design: What is aesthetically pleasing is culturally linked. Americans like loads of white space.Â Other cultures like dense text. However, pictures, cartoons and visuals are always pleasing to any eye â€“ but research your markets and determine what the main characteristics are. Remember â€“ some people read from right to left, others in the opposite direction, others read down the page and back to front! All this impacts how your site is viewed.

8.Translating Your Site: Because different alphabets and characters take up differing amounts of physical space, and some languages use more words than others, it is imperative to leave plenty of physical space to substitute translations. Remember â€“ the English language is very succinct. Be careful when altering your site as graphics and text can easily become misaligned.

9.Research the Expectations of your Audience: This is our best piece of advice. Decide where your target market is, even if it is in vague terms of The Far East, Middle East, or Europe, as this will help you to create a culturally-sensitive site. Just having pictures with women in can be unacceptable to

some cultures.

10.Attracting visitors to your site: Search engines find your site through matching key words. Foreigners often have simpler phraseology than native English speakers, so it is important to think long and hard about the words a foreigner might use to describe your product or services.

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Deborahswa - About Author:
Hello, I'm Deborah Swallow and, for the last fifteen years, I've worked in over thirty countries addressing the complexities of people working internationally across multiple cultures or a International business practices so individuals and organizations alike can gain an authentic competitive edge and win in international markets.

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