

eircom Golden Spider Awards 2007: Judging Methodology

This year we have enacted a scorecard system of rating entered websites across four fundamental disciplines/areas of importance:

1. Information
2. Usability
3. Design
4. Maintenance/Service

For each distinct area there are now 12 questions which are scored and discussed for relevance to the website. These questions outline many of the key considerations which it is felt a website may exhibit or adhere to in order to be considered best of breed.

INFORMATION & CONTENT

1. How succinct and instantly informative is the introductory Homepage text?
2. How plainly (rather than complicated) is the text written and how well is the information laid out?
3. How quickly do the images on the site load?
4. How well is the information on the site searchable from within the site?
5. How accessible and understandable is the site policy regarding data protection?
6. How organically visible on selected Search Engines is the site, when searching for primary terms?
7. Does the website emphasise user interaction, feedback, communication or opinion?
8. How likely would you be likely to return to the website due to its strength of information?
9. How evident are interactive and/or open-publishing tools such as a wiki, blog, RSS feed, or Podcast?
10. How would you rate the site in terms of the information being current, and up to date?
11. How compellingly different is this sites content to what users may have encountered elsewhere?
12. How evident are registration or password protected areas which benefit repeat users?

USABILITY

13. How well did you find the site navigation structured, categorized and presented?
14. How clearly is a sitemap linked and accessed, if one exists?
15. How simple is resizing text from the website (not via the browser), to aid viewing?
16. If alt-text is employed, how meaningful or descriptive is it?
17. If the website denotes W3C compliancy, how clearly is this presented?
18. Did the site tend to avoid compulsory downloads which negatively affect user experience?
19. How fast are page download speeds on a standard eircom.net broadband connection?
20. What rating would you give the user interface controls and icons, for clarity?

21. Would you say the site tends to avoid opening new windows to display content?
22. Did the website abstain from using code which disabled the back button navigation?
23. Do hyperlinks tend to change colour when links have already been visited?
24. Could you rate the site for its effectiveness at minimum accepted computer resolutions?

DESIGN

25. How fresh, imaginative or memorable would you consider the site design to be?
26. Is the design very effective, in terms of communicating the publisher's message?
27. Is the user experience improved by any usage of effective multimedia or dynamic content?
28. Does graphical, moving or flashing text seem absent from the site design?
29. If the site is transactional or involves purchasing online, how fluidly are these sections designed?
30. How professional are the images/photography on the site?
31. Does the design seem consistent across different site levels or channels?
32. Do dense text areas tend to have sufficient whitespace around them for clarity?
33. How effectively are dense content areas demarked by lines, shading, or other separator method?
34. Do homepage links of 'primary' importance tend to be in the most prominent positions?
35. How simply are icons designed in terms of avoiding over embellishment or confusing detailing?
36. How simple is it to sort or compare the products/services or other content on the site?

MAINTENANCE & SUPPORT

37. How clearly is contact information available?
38. Is it the case that offline contacts (e.g. Telephone) are easily available from the site?
39. How visibly if at all, does the site promote a Low Call/ Freefone or Callback option for users?
40. On forms, input fields, etc., does the site tend to avoid soliciting unnecessarily detailed information?
41. Would you consider any Terms, Conditions, shipping and/or legal information to be clearly presented?
42. How well would you rate the site on its effectiveness in answering questions via an FAQ, or similar?
43. Does the site try to assist users via online informational documents/articles/content?
44. Does the site promote internal or external 3 rd party links for users seeking to learn more elsewhere?
45. If registration is required, does the process seem intuitive and to the benefit of the user?
46. How responsive did you find the publisher, to a support email enquiry over a 24 hour period?
47. Compared with 'real-world'/offline information queries or support issues, how effective is the site?

48. How effective is the sites customer support, in terms of identifying user location, currency, issue

49. Do you consider this site to be an innovative website ?

The judging panel will access all nominated sites based on the above methodology and a round table final judges meeting will determine the shortlist and winners.

The shortlist will be announced prior to the awards ceremony but the winners will not be announced until the night of the awards on November 22nd 2007 at the gala dinner in The Burlington Hotel.