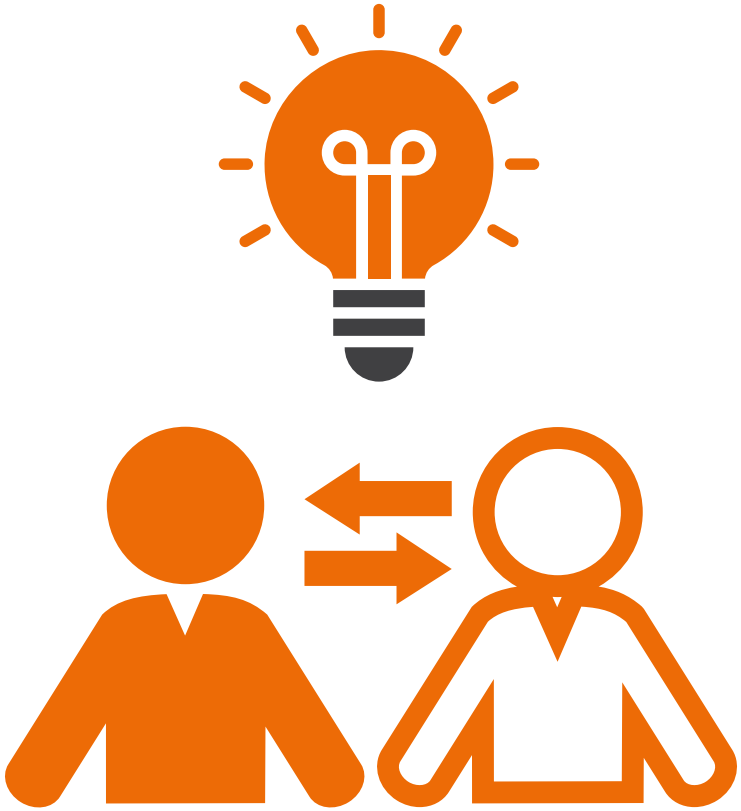
GIVING DESIGN ADVICE - A SIMPLE APPROACH



it'seeze websites
brilliant designs – better results

spoton.net
websites & digital marketing

OVERVIEW

What this guide is for:

The aim of this guide is to provide you with some pointers on how to approach the topic of design with a client or prospect.

This could be during your initial meeting whilst generating ideas, or it could be part of the briefing stage – any information you manage to glean about design preferences should be submitted through the Uploader.

The benefits of design knowledge:

You'll be able to:

- Talk more confidently and in greater detail about how the website will look and feel.
- Build enthusiasm and trust more easily.
- Provide better direction during the briefing stage.
- Help us create better websites.

The 4-step design checklist:

This simple approach is a mixture of advising and educating the client as to what is possible for their it'seeze website:

1. The Look

2. Key Messages

3. Nuts & Bolts

4. Extras

THE LOOK

At this point, you will have spoken to the client about their business and have given them an idea of the packages we offer. Concentrating on the look of their website should increase their interest and open up a more detailed discussion.

The look - advise on style:

Use our portfolio

- At this stage, you should focus on giving the client some style suggestions and honing in on their preferred style of site.
- The A-Z section of our portfolio is particularly useful as it makes it easy to browse related industries, providing a broader range of styles to choose from than the 'Industry' tab alone – this is especially helpful in cases where clients do not like the design style typically used for sites within the same industry as theirs.
- If you are struggling to find the right style, ask the design team if they can recommend any sites that might inspire the client. You'll need to provide info on the type of business, and any other relevant information that you think could help. The best way to do so is to email design@itseeze.com

Use the 'Styles & Trends' pages

- These pages are not visible to clients as they contain in-house terms and some complex design-related vocabulary, but are useful when advising clients about more specific trends and styles that could be incorporated into their website.

  These pages should also help to get you used to the terminology used by the design team, and will prove useful when briefing sites.

Take care when referencing non-it'seeze websites as examples

- If you want to refer a client to a non-it'seeze site as inspiration, or a client puts forward a non-it'seeze site as a website they like, it's important to be familiar with the functionality of our websites so that you can advise on what is and isn't possible to replicate – you can familiarise yourself by going to demo.itseeze.co.uk
- **Look out for the following content on non-it'seeze website examples:**
  1. Complex animations
  2. Sound
  3. Filter/search options
  4. Countdown timers and date displays
  5. Online shop features

The look - attention grabbing:

Use copy and images with impact

- Creating visually stunning websites is easier with good copy – suggest to your client that the benefits of their products or services are made highly prominent on the home page – the design team can then emphasise the message with clever typography and image choices.
- The images used on the site are a key factor in its effectiveness – make sure you highlight the importance of using good quality, impactful original photography or stock images if necessary.
- A great alternative to stock photography is illustration – you can find this by choosing 'Illustration' images within Getty Images. This can really help to set a website apart from its competitors.
- Pexels, Pixabay, and Unsplash are great alternatives to Getty Images as they offer more natural, realistic looking photos, although the choice can be limited and you will not have the advanced search functionality.

Add eye-catching details

- Subtle animation helps to draw the eye to important elements on the page – typically this is through transition effects where the text or images appear as the page loads or as you scroll. Complex animations would need to be quoted for.
- Background images can add a stunning element to a website as visitors scroll down the page.
- A background video can add a premium feel to a website – simply provide us with a YouTube or Vimeo link and we will embed this in the site, and we can also overlay subtle branded colours and key messages over the video for added impact.
- Icons can be designed to represent the services or products that your client is offering, adding a unique touch to the site.

The look - well branded and consistent:

Consider each element carefully

- The design team create every website with fonts, colours, and styling that reflects the industry and complements the products and services being offered, but some direction from the client is always welcome.
- Make sure you emphasise the importance of a consistent colour palette – for example, the client's logo may feature a distinctive colour scheme and this could be used to tie the website in with the brand. You can use sites such as paletton.com to help clients decide on accent colours that could be used alongside their existing brand colours.
- Choose fonts that emphasise the key messages of the website. We have over 800 Google fonts to choose from, and if a client has a specific font in mind that is not a Google font we will get the closest match possible.
- Take the client's existing logo into account – will this help the site to look professional? Some businesses are very proud of their logos, but many will see the benefit of opting for a new design. A free text-based logo is often a good solution if budgets are tight and a full logo redesign is out of the question.

KEY MESSAGES

Helping your client to decide on the key messages they want to get across through their website at an early stage will provide the design team with more inspiration throughout the design process and will ensure the site is engaging to visitors.

Key messages – get the hierarchy right:

Lead with a headline

- Point out to the client the importance of capturing visitors' attention with a message that makes them want to read more.

Start with benefits – everything else goes underneath

- More often than not, company history is less important to potential customers than what the service or product being offered can do for them.

Key messages – think of content in sections:

Highlight key benefits and services by separating them out

- This is a great way to display information in a clear and concise way – website visitors want to be guided through the page, and this way can easily pick out the information that's relevant to them.

Use negative space

- Using negative space is a contemporary and effective way to emphasise important sections of information on the page.

NUTS AND BOLTS

After discussing the look of the site and its key messages, it's a good idea to focus on the importance of core structural elements such as the navigation and SEO. Although these points aren't critical at an early discussion stage, giving the client some solid SEO advice should help to gain their trust, and will ultimately improve their website's performance in the long run.

Nuts and bolts – navigation:

Simple horizontal navigation

- This is the most common form of navigation menu as the landscape format works best on desktop screens. It's the most intuitive for website visitors to use, but can be problematic if your client wants to add more page links to the menu due to limited space.

Vertical navigation

- This is ideal for a website with a lot of pages as space is not an issue – however, it will result in less space for actual page content.

Burger navigation

- This is a popular option based on the mobile burger menu format, as it frees up space in the top section of the website. It can be used alongside horizontal navigation, with the horizontal menu displaying the key pages and the rest available through the hidden burger menu.

Nuts and bolts – SEO:

Be subtle with keyword content

- Don't use too many location keywords as this will read unnaturally and throw off website visitors.
- Use a mixture of keywords and descriptive text to entice visitors to dig deeper into the site – content has to be relevant.

EXTRAS

Once you have given your client some basic design advice, you can then advise them on any extra features that their website would benefit from. Many of the extras we offer can go a long way towards making a website more impactful and engaging - www.demo.itseeze.co.uk/extras/paid-extras/

Extras – making suggestions:

Use the 3 steps above to approach different features

The Look

- Logo design – a full, simple, or free text-based logo for a professional look
- Fading images – an animated banner to make an impact
- Full-width gradient – an animated background in branded company colours

Key Messages:

- News ticker – to highlight recent news and updates
- Video in lightbox – key marketing messages displayed in a popup video
- Fly out forms – to encourage more conversions and sign-ups

Nuts and Bolts

- Icons in navigation – more attention grabbing and intuitive for users

References:

Design inspiration: itseeze.com/our-work
Editor functionality: demo.itseeze.co.uk
Web design styles and trends: Your regional website address: /styles-trends/
SEO guide: support.itseeze.com/support/solutions/articles/17000057242-seo-guide-