

Adjusting Your Website to Meet the Needs of Individual Consumers

With technology constantly changing and improving, there has been a huge change in the way that consumers do their shopping. In the current day and age, many companies offer their customers the ability to shop for products and services online leaving these consumers at a great advantage. Shoppers are now able to easily compare different brands and their prices without having to leave the comfort of their own homes, as well as, avoiding all of the annoyances associated with fending off hungry salespeople. According to a study done by the Nielsen Corporation, 85 percent of the world's online population has used the internet to make a purchase, and over half of internet users make a regular purchase of at least one item per month. It appears that consumers have found the most efficient way to shop by conducting all of their business online, but service providers and other companies are beginning to strike back with an idea known as web morphing.

Web morphing is an idea that was developed to help businesses and other organizations increase their sales online. Before companies began selling products and services online, everything was done in person. For example, a customer would walk into a car dealership with an idea of what they wanted, and the salesperson would be responsible for adjusting different sales techniques depending on the unique cognitive style of that individual consumer. The cognitive style of an individual refers to the way that the individual processes different information and there are generally three different cognitive styles that are evaluated: analytical vs. holistic, impulsive vs. deliberative, and visual vs. verbal. Companies began to realize that when consumers made purchases online, the companies selling the products did not have an opportunity to evaluate the individual's cognitive style over the internet. This left the companies involved in selling their products online with missed opportunities to sell additional products to the consumers, but this is all about to change with the introduction of web morphing.

The idea behind web morphing is that several different algorithms can be used to establish a similar cognitive style that a sales person would establish after talking to the individual for a period of time. From there, the website would begin to adjust the different features and customize the way that the information is presented to each person. For example, an analytical person is more likely to want a lot of information and numbers to analyze, whereas a holistic person generally sees the product as a whole and will most likely not want to analyze individual pieces. This is what makes web morphing so important to selling products online. If information is presented in an analytical format to a holistic individual it is probably likely that the holistic person is going to throw their hands up and surrender. It is in the best interest of the company to provide information in a format that will make it easier on the consumer, but it is important to remember not to make the process too efficient.

Web morphing can also be used to sell additional complimentary products to an open minded consumer. According to Network World, a study that was performed by researchers at

MIT concluded that Web Morphing had the ability to boost sales for online businesses by about 20%. This study was conducted on 835 broadband users in the United Kingdom who were paid to fill out a questionnaire and navigate through BT's website, a British telecommunications company. The cognitive style of each individual was based off of the different choices that were picked when the individual first entered the website.

After first coming into contact with the BT website, the individuals were given a set of options to choose from: comparing plans, visiting a virtual advisor, visiting a learning center, and visiting a community of users. The average cognitive style could be inferred after the potential consumer made about five to ten clicks on the website and these individuals were then grouped into categories based on specific criterion. The criterion was whether or not the individuals were readers or listeners, impulsive or deliberative, visual or verbal, and leaders or followers. The information was then presented to these potential consumers in a specific fashion that would be the most efficient way for them to understand it. By adjusting the way in which the website was presented, it was concluded that web morphing could increase BT's online broadband sales by \$80 million a year.

It is a simple fact that customers are more likely to make purchases on a website in which they feel comfortable reading and understanding the information that is presented. Many consumers will not purchase products from a specific company, not because the product is of bad quality, but instead because they are not able to access the information that they want in a format that is easy for them to understand. Web morphing crosses this boundary and allows companies to present the information efficiently to individuals both for the products in which the individual is searching for as well as the products that the individual might have a need for but the need is just unrealized.

In the future, web morphing will make the internet a lot more personable as individuals begin to receive information in a format that is easy for them to navigate. It will reduce the amount of time and stress that is associated with the inability to find necessary information while navigating a website. As a result, companies will begin to see an increase in sales for two specific reasons. Customers will more easily be able to find the information that they are looking for so they will feel more comfortable purchasing products online, and it will also be easier for companies to advertise additional products, that might not have been found by the consumer if not for web morphing.