

McGovern: It's Not About You



Bloated, constipated sites, however pretty they may be, are worthless to an impatient public that wants to accomplish tasks—simply. That was Web guru Gerry McGovern's message to the April 10 HHS Web manager seminar.

McGovern cautioned against creating a "we-centric" Web site that miss the mark by focusing on

"we did this" and "we did that" stories and not on satisfying customer needs.

Customer-Centric

McGovern's daylong seminar, sponsored by WCD, urged Web managers to remember who we're trying to serve—and it's not our bosses or Congress. We need to be customer-centric, not organization-centric. And what do our customers want? To perform tasks, McGovern says.

"Great Web sites are useful," he said. He related the story of what passengers want when they step off a plane: trains, tickets, toilets. McGovern called them "core tasks" and suggested we all determine our customers' core tasks, then tailor our sites around them—even at the cost of aesthetics.

"The best Web sites let you do the top tasks immediately," he said. "The focus on prettifying is not what the customer wants." They want simplicity. "They don't come for the fun of it," McGovern said. "They come to health Web sites because there's a problem."

Trust Killers

Getting in the way of customers are broken links, outdated content, verbose jargon, and poorly organized pages—what McGovern calls "trust killers." He urged more attention be paid to reviewing and trimming content wherever possible, comparing dated material to spoiled food. Throw it out, he said. "If content smelled bad, you would have a smaller site."

Good writing and "care words" will also boost customer satisfaction. "Global warming," for example, is

And the Survey Says...

The HHS Web site recently began asking visitors what customer service reps have been asking customers for years—How are we doing?



We now have OMB's ok to survey Web site visitors.

The survey can be used on any departmental site and may use persistent cookies (this survey only), though we are not doing that yet. Surveys can be opt-in or pop-ups and can have as many as 12 questions from our pre-approved list.

Visitors to HHS.gov are assured their responses are secure, personal information won't be recorded and that the information will not be shared outside HHS. Our site asks visitors general questions about occupation, how they arrived at the Web site, how often they visit, if they succeeded in their tasks, and how to improve the site

If you are interested in utilizing the survey, contact your WCD liaison in ASPA. Check the survey out on the HHS.gov homepage.

a "care word," as opposed to "climate change." If millions of people are saying it, they're right, McGovern said. "We are not the center of the universe. The customer is." Attention to "care words" will get agencies included in search queries and loop them in the public conversation.

"We are not the center of the universe. The customer is."

- Gerry McGovern

Manage Search

McGovern urged agencies to carve out new positions for specialists to manage their site's "findability," since most people don't look beyond the first results in a search query. He also suggested more usability testing, which is available through WCD to all HHS agencies.

McGovern reminded us of our own core task. "Our job is not to get content up or to manage technology," he said. "Our job is to help people complete their tasks."