

# Build a winning website

Use these web design concepts to attract and retain your online audience

**I**n a world that is increasingly connected through the World Wide Web, it is important to engage your audience. Otherwise, you risk being lost in a sea of web-sites.

After going through hundreds of sites, it seems to me that most designers run out of steam by the time they get around to developing their "About" pages. The corporate profile page is one of the most overlooked pages in development and one of the highest ranked pages on many websites.

## Unique profile pages

A great way to distinguish your website from the crowd is to have a unique corporate profile page, which acts as an online business card.

Here are some tips:

### ■ Use a big photograph

A large photograph can leave a lasting impression in your users' minds if it is well taken and is relevant to your business.

### ■ Keep it organised

The best site pages are the ones that have a lot of information that is excellently organised, making it easily digestible.

### ■ Try a minimalist style

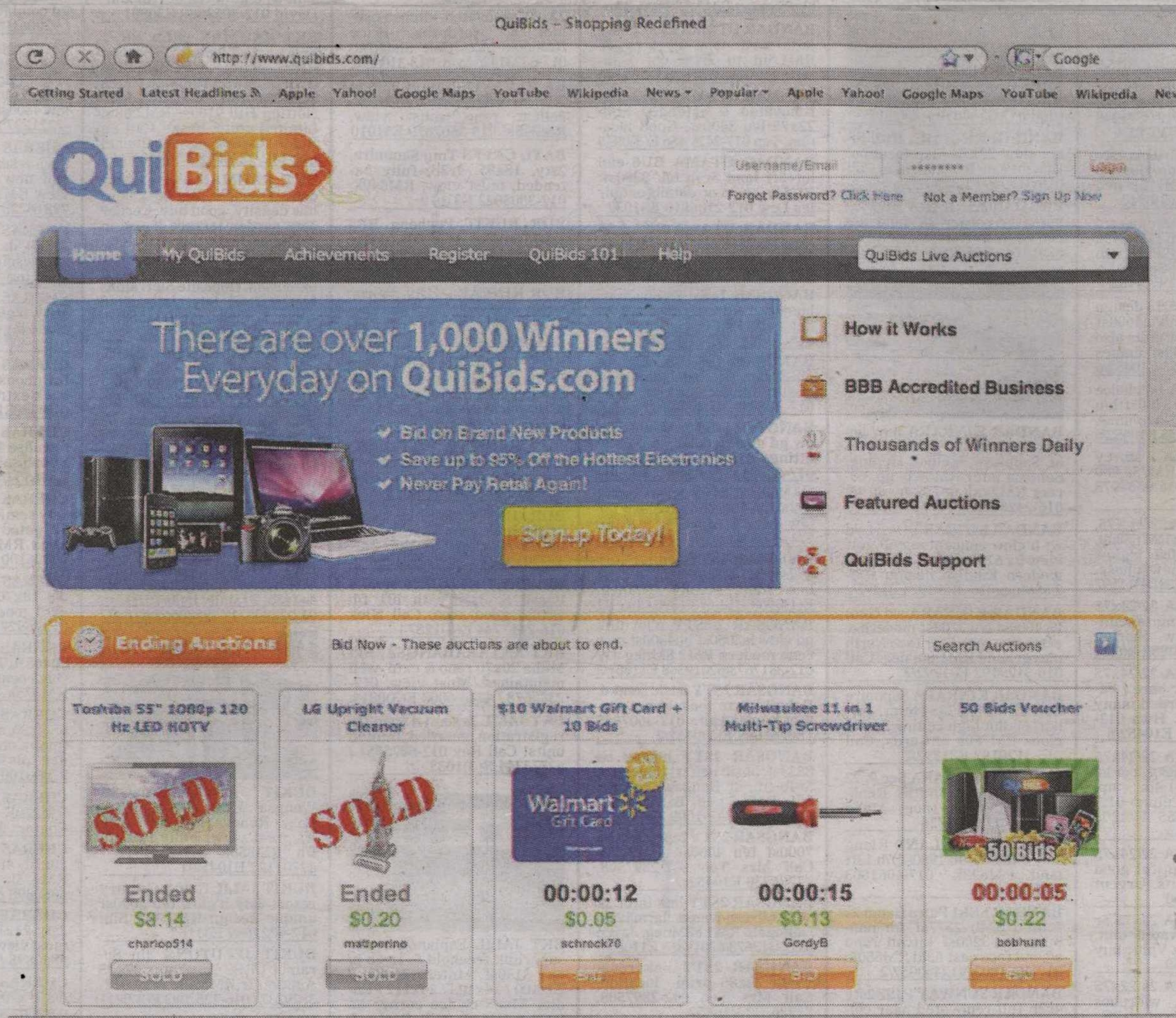
A minimalist approach can be a great way to convey important information about your services without distracting the user.

### ■ Use drop-downs

A few of the pages should be accessible from an ajax (or JavaScript or Extensible Markup Language) driven drop-down modal. It's a great way to make the information about your services easily accessible to anyone from any page without forcing users to navigate away from the page they are currently reading.

## Business card websites

Send people to business card websites (BCWs) to get an overview of your social networking presence, portfolio and capabilities, contact information and so on.



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When planning the overall design of your pages, think "Kiss" (Keep It Short and Simple), and utilise hyperlinks and calling pages.

Here are some useful tips for effective web design:

## 1 Fast-loading website designs

This is the Number One tip that every web designer should follow. You may design a website that looks fantastic but few people are going to see it if it takes a long time to load. Your designs should be

optimised for the Web and should not take more than 15 seconds to load.

## 2 Clear navigation

Once a visitor has come to your site, you need to make him go through it. To do this, you need to have clear navigation. Make sure all your important links are at prominent places, preferably right on top – that is usually where a visitor first looks.

Make use of menus on the right

and the left. Try to link the visitor to as many pages of your site as possible. Let your information be accessible from all parts of the site.

## 3 All resolutions

Today, there are computers that offer all kinds of resolutions. The best way to do this is to design your site in terms of percentage and not pixels.

## 4 Browser compatibility

Make sure your site is browser-

compatible. Don't stop designing your site as soon as you find that it looks great on Internet Explorer. For other browsers like Google Chrome and Safari, problems may arise especially when you do complicated HTML designs. But it is worth persisting because these are popular browsers.

## 5 Readable and professional-looking fonts

Don't use fancy fonts that may not be available on most computers. If the font you use is not available in a visitor's computer, the website will use the default font of your computer and the text will be displayed as boxes or ASCII codes.

## 6 Minimise the use of images

Sometimes, simple designs are the most effective. Keep your site simple and neat. Don't clutter your page with big, bulky images that take ages to load. Instead, use tables creatively and design eye-catching icons that will draw a visitor's attention to a particular section of your site. Visitors are usually more interested in content than in design.

## 7 Use white space

Again, use the Kiss principle by minimising graphics and using a lot of white space. White space gives a sense of spaciousness and overall neatness to a site.

## 8 Check for broken links

Always check for broken links within a site before uploading it to your web server. Use online tools like Net Mechanic.

Use these tips to come up with some unique and innovative ways of positioning your website on the Web. - Source: ST/ANN

● **ARTICLE** by Amit Kumar, a senior consultant with Training Edge International.