

## Whoever coined the expression 'as timid as a mouse' was definitely living in the last century

Nowadays, the mouse is one of the most powerful items in the universe

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TELL ME, does anybody else in the direct marketing world get that wonderful '**Back to the Future**' feeling when you read all these up-to-the-minute cutting edge articles about 'what makes a really good web-site'?

Because, let me tell you a secret... **we've been there before!**

First off, webbies will tell you that the constant danger that you face when you're trying to communicate your sales message to the faithful is the dreaded clicking mouse. You see, net browsers, even the most dedicated on-line shoppers, are an impatient bunch. And if you're too darn slow in getting to the point, it's simply a case of 'one click and you're as dead as a Dodo'.

**But didn't us direct marketers know that centuries ago?**

Likewise, if even the most dedicated of webbies ends up in a cul-de-sac on your site (you know the kind of cul-de-sac I mean, where you scroll down a page on your screen and there's nowhere for you to go but back!) they get dreadfully bored and head for home.

This, of course, is like a really good direct mail offer that doesn't include a pre-paid reply envelope - which inevitably ends up behind the clock on the mantelpiece... and you never go back to it.

And now come the pictures. Aha! 'A picture' in advertising we're told is worth countless thousands of words. And while this is also true for some - **but not all** - direct mail packs, unless you're very careful it can all go hopelessly wrong for you on your flawlessly produced web site.

You see, there is nothing more irritating in web-life than sitting there drumming your fingers while slowly, ever so slowly, a very obvious library picture unfolds before your very eyes. Best do what many people do, just bin the pictures and concentrate on the written word.

**Hey! Where have we hear this before?**

But it's not always as easy as you might think to concentrate on the written word. For decades direct marketing experts have been telling their clients to use a 'serif' type font. Why? Because, whereas sans-serif type fonts can look fabulous in headlines and in short snappy pieces of copy, they are demonically hard to **CONCENTRATE** on for any sizeable length of time.

And, of course, you know what webbies do when they find it hard to concentrate? You're absolutely right! They 'click' quicker than the turnstile into Croke Park for an All Ireland football final.

Another thing that us direct marketers have known for yonks is that the smaller the type point you use the meaner you look. Big type is associated with being open and honest.

The type size used by many of Ireland's leading companies on their web sites is tiny! You'd almost go purple trying to focus in on it.

And talking about purple! I've just come back from visiting a site that has a solid black background on which there is a mind-blowing important message in pure purple typeface. At least I think the message was important. But it was so hard to read that I (you guessed it!) clicked it out of my life without a moment's hesitation.

**Everything about the old direct marketing AIDA formula (A =Attention, I = Interest, D =Desire, A = Action) holds true for structuring web sites too!**

But don't fall into the trap that so many web-site designers end up in. Which is to forget that each page (Yes! every single page) is the equivalent of a stand-alone direct mail pack.

This is to say that every page must quickly grab your Attention, hold your Interest, create a high level of Desire and clearly encourage you to take some form of Action like move to the next page, send an e-mail, place an order, or whatever.

**Each Page? Yes!**

That's why the best advice that I can give to anybody who is planning a company web site, is to ask the direct marketers to help you.

**After all, we've been designing and writing the equivalent of web pages for decades!**

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... meadow grass in Farmley - from the underfoot series  
Photograph Robert Hayes-McCoy