

There is no doubt that Flash is the "latest" cool web site trend. But we feel it is certainly not the answer for every web site nor the majority. Just as frames should be used for specific purposes, so should a site with flash. This is not to say that your site may be lightly sprinkled with eye-catching snippets of Flash, but as the old saying goes ... "A little goes a long way".

About the only crucial reason for a website to be done completely in Flash is, of course, to Flash your visitors with your expertise in the software that creates the effect or if you need to provide your visitors with some type of movie presentation such a product demo. However, this is fine for a handful of sites, but for the average business, personal and organization's web site, be wary of sites completely designed in Flash.

For starters, sites designed completely in Flash may have indexing problems with many search engines. What good is your site if the search engines are not indexing it? Unless of course if your main audience is local or a targeted group offline, search engine indexing may not be important. But for most of our clientele it is. After all, a web site is a marketing extension of your business and it is global.

We are certainly not opposed to Flash elements and snippets that tastefully get your visitors' attention with animation, interactivity and sound. However, keep in mind your site's objective. Who is your target audience? What kind of Internet access do they have? What type of browsers will most of them use? Do you really expect them to download a plugin just to view your site if their system doesn't support it or they do not have latest version of Flash installed? Naturally, if your target audience is web developers who might have the latest web technologies and keep their systems updated, then your site might very well need to encompass Flash. However, if your target audience is mainly libraries, schools or small businesses, for example, then you might want to cater to their needs and what makes them comfortable and not your own preferences.

Many Flash elements are large for the average dialup connection. Not everyone is lucky enough to have access to high speed Internet connections and if your visitors have to wait for a Flash movie to load, THEY WILL LEAVE. You can certainly count on it. The point of fast download time is to encourage your site visitors' to stay and browse. Waiting for long downloads is like waiting in a long checkout line or lunch line. If your visitor doesn't have something in their hand they want badly enough or is hungry enough for more, they will leave your site and likely not return.

Also realize that if your target audience is global, many ISPs in countries outside of the USA charge their customers by the minute for Internet access. And you can be assured that these folks will not waste their money just to see how Flashy you can be. Most people are surfing the Internet for information and graphics that are too heavy, have too much flashing or rollover effects are simply not realistic and timely for slower Internet connections.

We realize that Flash or something similar to it will be the future of the Internet. However, for now and until Internet connections are fully accessible via satellite or electric grids, the coolest of technologies should be used sparingly unless you have a specific and very good reason to use it.

So what do YOU do? You want those cool animated movies! They are eye-catching and you like them, so you figure other surfers like them too, right? By creating and applying simple snippets or mini-Flash elements that are just as creatively appealing to your visitors' eyes, your pages download faster than full Flash movies. And best of all, your site visitors are comfortable and they get your point. After all, you should be designing your site for your visitors comfort and not entirely for your pleasure.