

Design Choices That Can Set Your Wine Store Apart

Why Should Customers Look at *Your* Website? BY IAN GRIFFITH

Recently, a store owner told me “all other wine store websites look the same; we want our design to stand out as being different.” To be honest this statement made me a little nervous. Unless the store has a very clear idea of what “different” means, or has experience with a designer who knows how to interpret “different” for this store, we could be in for a bumpy ride.

Design plays an important part in establishing the credibility of your business online, and helps reassure customers they want to do business with you. Part of establishing this trust comes from presenting yourself online in a familiar way. If this is your first website why would you jump into the deep end and take risks with your business online? I’m not saying that every website needs to look the same, but there are specific areas where design can make a difference, while other areas are more about branding and style.

As Rachel Andrew of the UK consultancy edgeofmyseat.com says, “Including many features right away is tempting, but your goal is to make money, not to spend it. Testing the water before spending a fortune is perfectly acceptable.” Beverage Media’s e-commerce platform was built specifically for selling wine, beer and spirits, and saves stores from the expense of building a shopping cart from scratch. With the benefits (and savings) of a trade-specific platform come some constraints. Some decisions have already been made about the functionality of an established platform and are shared by all websites on that platform. This also makes the design task simpler and focuses the discussion on a handful of critical interactions.



DESIGN HELPS TO ESTABLISH THE CREDIBILITY OF YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE, AND REASSURES CUSTOMERS THEY WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU.



MERCHANDIZING PRODUCTS ON YOUR HOMEPAGE

Just like in your store, the merchandising of products is how you signal to customers the strengths of your inventory, like value and selection. Have a clear “call to action” when customers arrive on your website. Opportunities to merchandise are especially strong on the homepage, but to be effective they need to be regularly updated. When designing your homepage features make sure you are able to maintain them.

PRODUCT BROWSING BY REGION AND GRAPE VARIETY

Wine is a complex beverage with classifications and attributes that make it easier for customers to browse through your selections. Organizing wine by region is the most common navigation system, yet it may be more intuitive to switch from country to variety for some regions or wines. Will your e-commerce system allow you to display options for Italian Merlots alongside Chiantis while filtering by price?

SEARCH RESULTS PAGE (SRP)

The SRP on your website should allow a customer to scan results while judging

the merits of each item. Filtering by price, vintage or rating helps customers narrow results to the most likely candidates. Including multiple price points, ratings from critics and/or consumers and allowing for sharing on social media sites can be a challenge to present without looking cluttered.

ITEM DETAIL PAGE

The expectations for information on a product detail page have grown in recent years as content describing an item can come from the producer (winery review), a publication (review and ratings), a customer (review and rating) or the store (tasting note, rating, video, recommendations). Often, the detail page will act as a landing page from search engines and wine directory sites and a secondary goal of this page is to keep a visitor on the website. Related products and accessible navigation all help in directing a visitor to browse horizontally through your inventory.

Ultimately, the goal of a wine store website is to convert a prospect into a customer. By using design to solve the challenges of these important interactions you can improve your conversion rate and set your store apart from the competition.

To comment on this column or to learn more about how Beverage Media can help with a website for your store visit bevsites.com, contact Ian Griffith at 617-864-1677, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/bevsites.