

Small issues ==> bigger communications problems

In the past several weeks, I've noticed a bunch of small communications issues with different organizations. None of them is big enough to merit a blog post, but they do cause bigger communications problems.

Making it extra hard to reach you

I met a graphic designer at an event a couple of weeks ago. I sent her a follow up email, and got an automated reply back from her email service telling me it didn't recognize me and I would have to reply to the reply, so that I could be whitelisted. I've never seen that before, and I get why she does it. We are all bombarded by spam and other unsolicited email. But when you add an extra step to contacting you, especially when you've given me your personal email on a card, you are creating an obstacle to communication and slowing down any potential business. You have to balance accessibility with the desire for less email. I think if you are a business, you must be accessible.

Not including crucial information

The other day I visited microsite for an upcoming conference. It did not list the venue where the conference would be taking place, just the city and state. I've seen some conference websites that don't list the full date of the conference. And many don't list the price, but force you to hit the register button to find out how much it costs. If you are considering attending any event, you need certain information—where, when, how much and why. If your event page or site does not include crucial information, you are just making it hard for people to decide to attend your event.

Email from unknown senders

The other day I got an email from someone named Orlando. My first instinct was to delete, but something about the headline made me open it. It turns out that Orlando is a new employee at an organization from which I get a newsletter. And it was an organizational newsletter. I will never understand why organizations think it's a good idea to send email from individuals rather than the organization. Unless you're well known already, most people will not recognize you as the new CEO or communications director of an organization.

If your organization recently rebranded or changed its name, you may have to send an initial email from your old name. Last year, I received an email from an organization I had never heard of and I was on the brink of hitting delete. It was communications related, so I figured I must have met someone from that organization at some point, but I wasn't sure. It turns out that it was a new name for an old organization.

Opening external links in the same window

For the life of me, I don't understand why so many organizations want to lose visitors to their websites. And yet, it happens more often than not than when you click on a link, such as the Twitter feed or LinkedIn profile, you are transported out of the organization's website to the other website. It doesn't take too much coding knowledge to have links open in new windows. That way, visitors can still be on your site and view the outside site.

Remember user experience, always.

All of these issues point to one overarching theme: user experience. What do users (visitors to your website, potential customers, potential supporters) experience when they interact with your communications? Are you considering what users need in order to do business with you? As the small issues I described above show, many organizations are not considering their users at all. And that's a big communications problem.

