

zmags



8 Proven Tips for Digital Catalog Design

A guide to increasing online sales with deeply immersive, interactive content.

8 Proven Tips for Digital Catalog Design

Fully engaging your catalog's prospects and customers is the key to online success. Capturing and then holding their attention on a pathway from interest to purchase, over and over, increases page views, conversion rates and order size. Experienced, successful online catalogs understand this challenge and have mastered it.

The eight tips offered here are proven best practices. They address online catalog architecture, navigation, design and layout with the aim of extending your customers' involvement in your content. Achieving this level of involvement improves marketing results at every level: conversion, dwell time and sales.

Zmags' proven digital solutions produce the following concrete results:

2x
increase in conversion rates

5x
increase in page views per visit

40%
increase in average order size

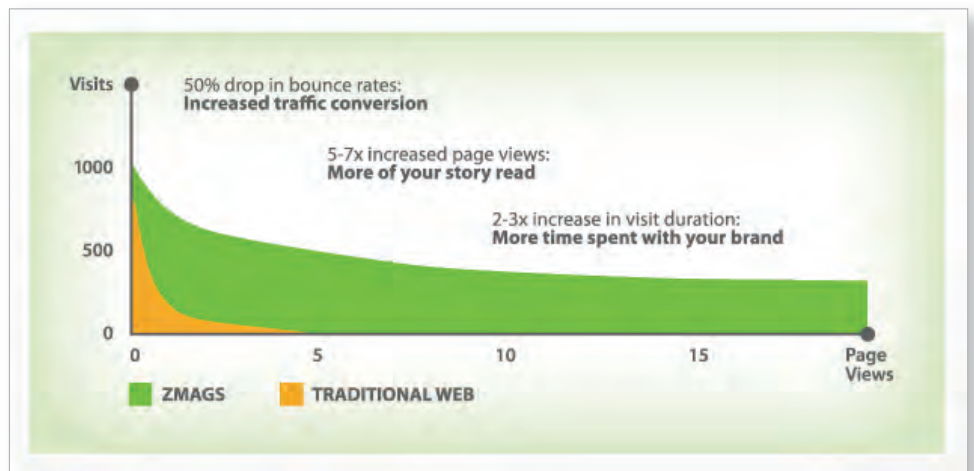
70%
end-to-end readership

Expert Knowledge

Zmags works with online marketers who experience billions of page views across thousands of web sites, online brochures and catalogs. As a service to our customers we deliver deep analytic data on customer experience. We also consult with these marketers and create online tools for businesses worldwide. As a result, we are deeply informed experts with hard data on real-world e-commerce sites that point to specific, effective recommendations for any online marketer. We know that immersing customers in your online experience requires a number of strategies, techniques and skills, all of which you can learn.

Results

Zmags' customers enjoy consistently better results. Using our tips has a dramatic impact:



Dramatically reduced bounce rates increase the size of your attending audience. The deeper involvement from Zmags solutions increases page views and visit time.

A Story

The over-arching goal of your online catalog is to tell a product story that connects with your customers in as many ways as possible. Today, this means bringing your catalog to every digital touchpoint — mobile, web, social and tablet. Via these touchpoints, you should convey messages that leverage unconscious responses to design and illustration, emotional reactions to descriptions and practical considerations about the purpose and function of your products. Providing impactful, varied insight into your products or services — with considerable detail and interactive involvement — inevitably boosts sales.

Make your key points accessible, your products' primary purposes clear, but don't skimp on detail. Provided customers can control how and when they delve into detail, the more the merrier. So go ahead. Include all the facts your customers need to make an informed buying decision. But present your product story in a way that gives readers a more inspirational and emotional experience. How? Here are eight tips to get you started.



Layout: The Eyes Have It

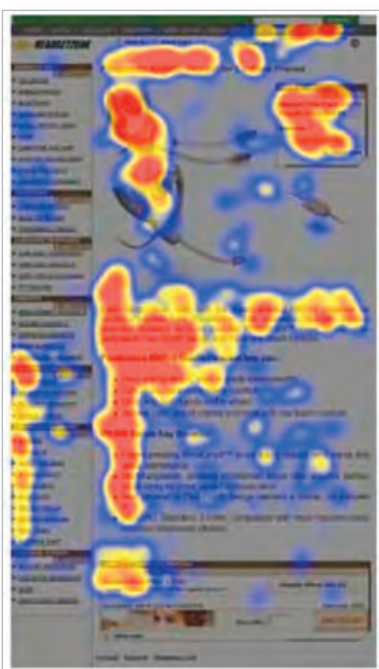
Editorial and advertising design, online and off, should take into account the ways in which readers scan and then read content. There are some very specific design elements that can take advantage of tendencies we all share.

For example, we scan pages beginning at the top, scanning to the right, then moving down and scanning right again. As a result, a “heat map” of web pages (shown below) describes an “F” pattern of attention. Since this is the case, and scanning drops off toward the bottom of a page, the most effective locations for calls to action begins at the top right and proceeds to about half-way down a page and in the right hand column.

Design pages such that key points are clearly highlighted on the left side and provocative calls to action are available on the right side. This layout gives the reader cause-and-effect involvement with the content and his actions. Adding visual excitement and buying cues that respond to this tendency intercepts the eye and enhances the visual experience of the page.

Analytics

Zmags heatmap analytics tools allow you to test different layout and product imagery and optimize your catalog based on the insight these analyses offer.



Most viewed = red
Less-viewed = yellow
Least-viewed = blue



These two online catalog images were tested against one another to determine their relative effectiveness.



In this image the red dots represent users who zoomed to see details of the image. Green dots represent clicks, expressing purchasing interest in the product.

Use color to establish a background of consistency throughout your catalog. Then strategically contrast that background with different colors to call attention to key features and benefits.

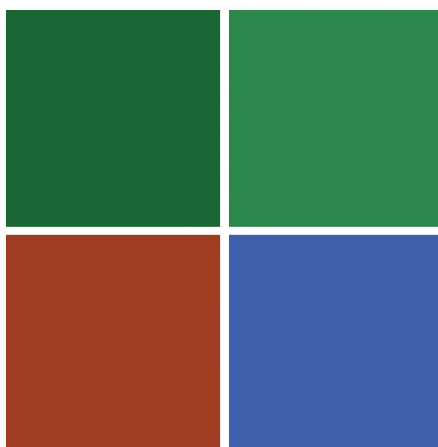
Color

Color plays an important role inspiring purchasing behavior. Different colors evoke different emotions and some cause reactions that are quite different from others.

- Red is typically associated with sales and gaining attention. Increases urgency and triggers impulsivity and impatience.
- Orange stimulates the appetite, and evokes friendliness, confidence and good cheer.
- Green causes feelings of hope, good health and freshness. It is a calming color.
- Blue is a favorite color of most people. It evokes tranquility, patience, and acceptance.
- Together, yellow and black are the most instantly visible, legible color combination.

Too much of any color, however, dilutes its impact. So the best approach is to combine their use in carefully planned ways.

Red, for example, might appeal to an early adopter. In contrast, green and blue may allay the nervousness of a more risk-averse market segment.



The background hues of blue and green in this pallet calm and the orange provokes appetite.



The base pallet above suggests a healthy, hopeful and fresh environment with blue calls-to-action that feel confirming and accepting.

Branding

Color is important in branding, too. So much so that the Supreme Court has held that a particular color can serve as a defensible trademark for a product.

The unique opportunity to demonstrate features and benefits through images and video is a key advantage to online marketing.

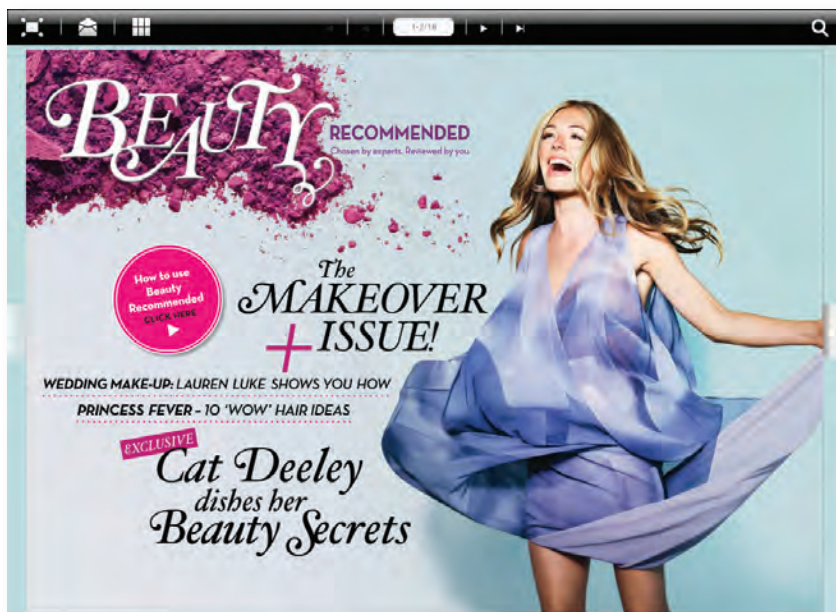
Show and Tell

Your online catalog or brochure is essentially a visual document that should engage its reader. The look, visual “feel” and design “tone” of your catalog has an enormous impact on those who view it. Inviting them to engage with your products or services in a first-priority goal in everything you do.

Pictures precede text in all good catalogs and brochures. Which is to say, they take center stage, commanding the first attention a customer applies to the page. Words (the fewer the better at a primary, first-glance level) support the image, not the other way around. And, depending on your product, a “picture” can be a photo, video, technical drawing, chart, graph or screenshot.

Images, especially those including people, are more memorable and powerful than the written word. They are much more likely to drive action. Your brochure or catalog is an opportunity to show your story, then tell it. Embed rich media and visual content into everything.

Then take advantage of the opportunity to insert expandable text and images, inviting customers to explore greater detail (larger images, product closeups) and specifications (detailed text descriptions). By using images and sparing text to invite deeper exploration by an involved customer you’ll engage him or her in an interactive process that more often leads to sales.



Your brochure or catalog is an opportunity to show your story, then tell it.

Rich Content Engages

The broader the physical and emotional dimensions your catalog expresses, the more engaged your customers are. Online digital catalogs provide a unique opportunity to exploit this connection between content and reader. From 3D product images, to “live” demos, to user testimonials, there are lots of ways to enrich the digital experience. Rich media gives you the opportunity to share video, slideshows or even interactive embedded applications, which add depth, substance and emotional appeal to your product message.

Research shows adding rich media doubles the time spent on any page. A greater variety of emotional responses are created and engagement deepens. Quite simply, online interactive experiences engage viewers in an active, lean-forward way. Interactive media takes this involvement one step further by encouraging your customers to indirectly interact with your products, in effect “touching” them online. This improves awareness but, more importantly, raises comfort levels and familiarity. The longer the page experience is prolonged the deeper the engagement and the more likely the sale.

Be aware how your digital median coordinates with your other content. It must be easy to navigate, load quickly, and is optimized for interaction on multiple channels – laptop, tablet and smartphone.





Sharing

Social media reaches into every aspect of modern life. Where it once was the domain of personal attachments and shared information, it is now ubiquitous in business, science, education, law and government. Whether you are selling an impulse purchase, consumer product or sophisticated scientific instruments, a recommendation from a trusted friend or colleague is a powerful introduction. “Sharing” or “Liking” in social media terms passes your content from one person to another with the strong implication of approval.

When something is recommended in this way, person to person, it is not only more likely to be opened and read but the content itself is evaluated more closely than it otherwise might be.

Satisfied customers are strong evangelists. Make it easy for them to spread the word by creatively incorporating social media tools into your online brochure or catalog. Include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google+ everywhere.

Whether you are selling a consumer product or professional service, recommendations from peers offer powerful advantages.

90% of online customers trust the recommendations of people they know.



When asking for contact information, combine modest demands with valuable rewards.

Take Names

Readers who find your content relevant and interesting are the best prospects for sales. When they engage with your brand, spend quality time interacting with your catalog or brochure and delve deep into your material, they qualify as people you should continue to know. Thus, you have to ask them to identify themselves, giving you some amount of contact information.

But sales cycles vary considerably. Potential customers may be in the early stages of research and could be weeks or months away from a purchase decision. So, while you want to capture their contact information and learn more about them, don't drive them off by making them jump through hoops.

Let common sense and simple courtesy be your guide. Ask for a modest amount of contact information, ideally giving prospects very few "required" fields and a few additional optional ones. Make the opportunity to "sign up" plentiful, showing up on many pages. And make it something that you reward with a download or other privilege, such as access to special information, white papers, blogs or the subscription to a newsletter. The combination of modest demands and a reward of some sort will maximize your harvesting of prospect contact information.

Be especially aware of readers who finish reading your content. These prospects should have an opportunity to identify themselves (and be rewarded for doing so) on the last page of your catalog.

DEMO FOR CommercePro
Complete the form to view the demo

FIRST NAME *	LAST NAME *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
BUSINESS EMAIL *	COMPANY *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
PHONE NUMBER *	COUNTRY *
<input type="text"/>	select...
STATE	INDUSTRY
N/A	select...

* Required fields

SUBMIT & VIEW THE DEMO



Ask for Action

An effective call to action is an essential part of any effective business communication. There are some circumstances where none is required or even advisable, but they are few and far between. For the purposes of your online marketing, there should be at least one, and often more than one, call to action on every page.

By including a well-placed, well-designed, and well-considered call to action, your readers will have a straightforward and convenient way of communicating with you. A variety of actions can help them express the degree of their interest and indicate what sort of product or service they are interested in. Remember, a catalog request is quite different from a white paper download. One suggests urgency, the other contemplation. Make both available so that each sort of prospect can request the material that is appropriate to them.

However, too many options can lead to confusion, discouraging action altogether. Limit the number of choices to the most important and easy-to-decide distinctions.

Calls to action should be very clear. Be explicit about what you are asking the customer to provide and very, very clear about what you will deliver in return. These triggers should be large, graphical buttons, separated from text so they are not lost in a jumble of words. Don't leave anything to guesswork on the reader's part. Uncertainty, doubt, and confusion stop actions cold.



Calls to action should be very clear about what you are asking the customer to provide and very, very clear about what you will deliver in return.



**Learn as you go,
grow as you learn.**

Know Everything You Can

The web implies instant gratification. It has shortened our attention spans and made frustration a deal-breaker. With so much information readily available, people expect to find what they are looking for very quickly and conveniently. Boredom, confusion or delays of any kind can be small speed bumps with very significant ramifications: people exit. It's your job to watch for, identify and fix the speed bumps. That's where analytics come in.

Online catalogs such as those from Zmags have a distinct advantage over other publishing formats. They make it possible to precisely track the behavior and progress of different kinds of customers. The data collected about readers of your catalog is very valuable, if you know how to use it. You can identify problem areas, exit points and ignored items very precisely.

Even better, the same analytics help you identify and expand those areas that work well. These are opportunities that should be expanded. When specific products prove especially interesting, for instance, they can be given more space and/or prime locations.

Click-through rates give you another important analytic. The offer you make, the graphical button you use and difficulty finding and using clickable items all matter. By making conscious decisions about varying these elements you can discover what works and what doesn't.

Zmags' Continuous Improvement

Improving your e-commerce efforts is an ongoing challenge. One of the most exciting aspects of online catalogs is the feedback your offerings can give you.

Zmags CommercePro makes steady improvement possible by delivering deep and insightful user data. Your customers' actions speak volumes, if you listen.

Rich metrics that are integrated into your online catalog make it possible to track the user experience in great detail. This information – if studied carefully – can yield powerful insight that leads to steady improvement in your catalog. Because you are working in a digital environment, change is quick and can be virtually constant. Inherently, you have the power to continually expand and improve your online publication and so grow your results.

Summary

The architecture, navigation, design and layout of your online catalog or brochure impacts the effectiveness of your efforts in many ways. Increasing the engagement of your readers and the accessibility of your products has a significant impact on sales. The tips offered here, coupled with tools such as Zmags CommercePro will allow you to test and improve on an ongoing basis. Maximizing your sales across all markets and on every online platform.

More Information

If you'd like more information about CommercePro, [click here](#) for our brief demo.

A Checklist

Use this simple checklist to re-visit your online catalog and consider its strengths and weaknesses:

- Design and layout should respond to natural reading patterns
- Color palettes manage readers' responses to products and services
- Images tell the story
- Rich content arrests and engages catalog viewers
- Social media is intertwined with products and services
- Contact information is gathered as a reward
- Calls to action are available throughout
- Data on user behavior is collected and alternatives tested regularly