

## Skip Intro

Want to be the most clicked-on company on the web? Call yourself 'Skip Intro'. Or is it just me that feels like I click on that phrase more than any other?

I have to ask myself why people insist on putting fancy animated introductions on their websites. It strikes the same confusion in me as selling cigarettes with a warning on that they are going to kill you. What's the point? In effect, what these companies are saying is that you probably won't want to look at the Intro so here's how to get round it. You have to ask why they bothered to put it there in the first place. I wonder if there is a piece of software that can track how many times people watch a flash intro and how many times they 'skip' it? I'd love to see the stats on that.

I do appreciate that some websites, although mostly consumer-facing ones, are there to provide entertainment to the people who view them. But for business to business information delivery, why not just get on with it? It's my opinion that websites in the business world should be there to inform, not to entertain.

As a marketer I spend a lot of time looking at websites for agencies - event management, graphic design, print, list brokers and so on. Somewhere in the region of two-thirds of these have flash intros. Whose idea was that? I'm guessing that web design companies can make money out of these animated introductions and so they are bound to recommend them. Or am I just being cynical?

Anyway – while I am on the subject, here's another thing that really bugs me about websites . . .

I happen to like the music of Richard Ashcroft, ex-lead singer with The Verve. If you've never heard of him I highly recommend you have a listen if you get the chance. A while ago I wanted to find out if he was touring any time soon, so I did a search on Google on 'Richard Ashcroft' and came up with two main sites, the official fan club site and the unofficial one. Looking at the official version first I was interested to see that the most recent 'News' entry was June of the previous year and the concert dates advertised ranged from September of the year before that! Very useful. So, I then turned to the unofficial site, which wished me - after I had successfully 'Skip Intro'd' - a 'Merry Christmas to one and all from AshcroftUnofficial.co.uk'. I wouldn't mind, but at this point it was the end of February!

Can someone explain to me why organisations and businesses place time-sensitive information on their websites and then don't keep it up to date? Actually, I know the answer to this one. Lack of hours in the day. People work hard to get their sites up and running in the first place and then just tend to breathe a sigh of relief and think "phew, that's another thing to cross off the list" and move on to the next project, totally forgetting that a website should never be a static thing. In the IT industry especially it's very common to see Events Calendars on company web sites inviting attendance at the most

fascinating seminars and workshops which took place sometimes well in excess of a year ago! I'm not naming any names though, you know who you are . . . .

In summary, I guess what I am trying to say is, where websites are concerned it's better to be simple, informative and up-to-date rather than complex, time-consuming or inaccurate. Whatever your position within an organisation, if you care about your customers' and prospects' ability to find the information they are looking for, then visit your website regularly and tell the person who is responsible for it if there is anything you think needs changing!

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