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Star Global Newsletter May 2007

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Greetings,

Star Global created this monthly e-mail newsletter, filled with information about web based tools and technology to help you optimize and empower your business online.

This month we'll discuss the **proper use of Adobe (Macromedia) Flash technology** which has been debated for years by usability experts and rich media lovers. In this newsletter, we'll discuss it from the perspective of the usability expert. To be fair, we'll include some rich media benefits too.



READ ON AND LEARN WITH US!

The Flash Debate

What exactly is Adobe Flash?

Adobe Flash is web animation technology, originally developed by Macromedia, to allow much interactivity to fit in a relatively small file size.

Flash can be used to create entire "Flash sites" or to add interactive elements to **standard*** HTML sites. Some Flash-only sites are accompanied by non-Flash sites in an effort to cater to a wider audience.

To view Flash content in your Web browser, you need to have the Flash plug-in. Fortunately, it comes standard with most browsers today. If you don't have the Flash plug-in, you can get it directly from Adobe.

<http://www.adobe.com/software/flash/about/>

A Flash-only web site has four main problems for marketing:

- Search engines find it hard to spider Flash files and this can have an adverse effect on your sites ranking.
- Any statistics and tracking provided through your hosting account will be null and void.
- You cannot send people to a specific page on your web site.

- You must get a copy of the **original .fla files****. If you do not, and lose contact with the web developer who created your Flash-only web site, you cannot easily update the web site (aka you are screwed).

A further case against Flash:

- A failure to test across different operating systems and browsers
- Creates accessibility problems for speech browsers.
- By default flash breaks the back button in your browser
- It doesn't print well using the default browser print functionality.
- A lot of corporate environments actively block Flash.



The Evils of Flash:

http://www.headscape.co.uk/view_article/5/42/the_evils_of_flash.html

IE's latest problems supporting flash:

http://headscape.co.uk/view_article/5/188/changes_to_the_way_flash_works_in_ie.html

Use Your Flash for Good, Not Evil!

The most essential criteria of "a good web site" can be lost when creating a Flash-only web site. That's not to say Flash is without merit. At Star Global, we believe in using the technology judiciously. We love it for banners advertisements, special promotional inserts, and using it for specific interfaces.

Here are a few tips when using Flash:

- Use a Flash interactive elements inserted into the rest of your web site to achieve that extra WOW factor.
- When using a Flash interactive element, place a static graphic as the default mechanism for the area. If your viewing device does not have a Flash plug-in, the graphic image will be inserted in place of the animation.

Flash Marketing - uses of good

- Flash advertising has a 5 times higher click-through rate than HTML advertisements. This demonstrates that people respond to it better.



- With the number of people on broadband continuing to rise there is

an ever greater demand for rich media content which utilizes the increased bandwidth.

- Third-party plug-ins using Flash technology like SimpleViewer (which can be inserted into a standards web site) are good!

***Standards and Usability**

To achieve maximum web usability, quality companies are building websites using CSS and Strict Standards HTML, which is compliant with modern web standards, set by the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium)*** in collaboration with other bodies.

**** What is the difference between SWF files and FLA files?**

SWF files is the compiled version of flash presentation for VIEWING only. FLA file is the source code file of the flash presentation, which can be edited and re-compiled.

*****W3C**

A consortium created to lead the World Wide Web to its full potential by developing protocols and guidelines that ensure long-term growth for the Web. <http://www.w3.org/Consortium/>

Star Global has served over 600 clients for more than 9 years and has proven itself as a skilled and stable technology partner, with a goal to exceed our clients' expectations. Star Global specializes in developing and re-structuring web sites for businesses.

Please give us a call if you need any help interpreting your web needs.

Sincerely,

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