

WEB SITE REVIEW: WHAT WORKED

This site may sell robots, but it's got a human touch that sells

- *Easy to use, easy on the eye and easy to buy*

Whether it's talking to business buyers, generals from the Army or consumers, this manufacturer's site has worked out how to juggle different online needs.

iRobot.com is easy on the eye and easy to use. It may sell robots, but it feels like it was designed by real people:

- **It is focused on applications not products.** The defense/industry section begins, "What's Your Mission?" Military prospects can choose between bomb identification or route clearance, for example. Residential customers can choose between vacuuming, pool cleaning or gutter sweeping, etc.
- **Its design is uncluttered.** The online store, <http://store.irobot.com>, has one big image with special offers. That's it.

Web site review: In each issue, we review a site. It could be yours. E-mail jpower@pbp.com

- **It is not afraid of customer feedback.** With new products, referrals are worth more than gas during an American holiday. The site's packed with customer reviews and user forums. It also includes media write-ups but adds: "The praise we hear from customers is what matters most, but we're also flattered by the great testimonials we get from the media."
- **It is intuitive.** It preempts questions that make prospects anxious. For example, during checkout it answers this question, "What if I want to send my robot to another address?"
- **It uses the power of pictures to dispel fears.** It uses video and 3-D displays throughout the site.
View this review at eIMR.blogspot.com

ASK THE EXPERTS

Experts answer your real-life online marketing questions.

This issue's expert is Shana Lory, director of strategic planning, *Renegade.com*

Q: As an online marketer, what are your resolutions for 2008?

A: To start the New Year by applying a critical lens to my life as an Internet marketer in these ways:

- **Embrace and learn from negative reviews:** There are hundreds of people who'll say what's wrong with a product, what's off with communication and how to improve.
- **Not rest on my search laurels:** Instead of doing the same old stuff I plan to try more social search engine optimization. That means picking key words based on the real language people use in blogs, social networks, forums, etc.
- **Always deliver utility:** Instead of talking at people, I'm going to work at filling a need. Even online ads can be more useful. BearingPoint ran banner ads that let users download white papers directly, cutting extra steps.
- **Be less self-important:** Much as I'd like to think I'm incredibly interesting, I suspect this is wrong. And I think the same can be said of most Internet-marketing videos. So I am going to craft shorter messages.
- **Be smart about Flash:** It can produce stunning material, but it doesn't perform well on Google searches. Take Nikon's microsite for its D300 camera. It doesn't provide the option to skip the intro. That must annoy users with slow load times. If I am dizzy and annoyed, I'm a lot less likely to buy.
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WEB SITE REVIEW: WHAT NEEDS WORK

- *Call to action is weaker than it should be*

This is a great site, but it could do more to turn browsers into buyers.

Because it sells such an interesting and buzz-generating product, it may think it doesn't need to urge interested visitor to take the plunge, and click on that "Buy Now" button.

That's where the site falls down. For example, the shop online button on the home page appears below the fold.

Weak call to action

And the call to action is also weak on the page displaying home robots.

The "Shop Now" button is too

small and hard to see among all the products jostling for attention. We couldn't even find it at first.

The page looks good, but why doesn't it have a bigger "Buy Now" button that jumps off the page?

Technical issues could cost business

The site's also running the risk of being penalized by search engines for "keyword stuffing." That's because it has keywords in the keyword META tag that don't show up in the actual copy. That's cheating to people like Google. See www.mattcutts.com/blog/avoid-keyword-stuffing