

## Measuring Success



### [Web Design: ROI Is Not a Silver Bullet](#)

For years now, the "ROI of user experience" has been sought as a means to justify larger corporate investments in Web design. Although ROI methodology can be a useful tool for prioritizing possible Web development projects, by itself measuring ROI is not the path to a greater competence in user experience design.

So what valuation methodology will better position a website and its designers as a strategic corporate resource? Here are five steps that design managers and Webmasters can take that will help:

1. **Get an Understanding of Business Value**

"...Before attempting to measure the value of specific design projects, it's helpful for design managers to get an understanding of how their internal clients measure business value..."

2. **Look for Quick Wins**

"...Valuing the success of a quick win will also provide some meaningful political capital and credibility — a success story is so much more effective in getting executive buy-in than even the most complex ROI calculation..."

3. **Determine the User Behaviors and Measure Baseline Data**

### Our thoughts...

We need to understand how internal clients - including the brands, regional teams, properties and project stakeholders - measure business value before moving forward with new design projects. Project success depends on working towards a unified vision, where each team member can identify his or her role in the process and make decisions that support the larger team goal. This article provides a good introduction to the importance of defining, measuring and communicating goals and how to be viewed as a strategic partner within the organization.

"...Measuring the baseline yield is critical to understanding the value of a redesign, as it provides both a target and a means to value project success..."

#### 4. Measure Outcomes Post-Launch

"This is the most critical step for understanding the value of user experience, and yet it is also the most widely ignored...However, if baseline data has been adequately identified and collected, measuring outcomes is actually quite easy and can be used to inform future projects..."

#### 5. Evangelize Success

"...Take this opportunity to call attention to the benefits of user experience design at higher levels of the organization. We have seen many web design teams use this approach to get better visibility, increased budget, and more autonomy..."

## Search Engine Optimization



### [Users Confuse Search results, Ads](#)

"We're still in the infancy of the internet"... "People are still kind of so pleased that they can go there, ask for something and get an answer that it's kind of not on their radar screen to look in a very scrutinizing way to see what's in the background there."

She [researcher] said the results reflect blind trust on the part of the web searcher rather than "anything nefarious on the part of the search engine."

### Our thoughts...

The finding that only 18% of users could confidently tell the difference between ads and true search results suggests two strategies for improving traffic from search engines.

- 1) Using paid search result placements is possibly more effective than ad banners because most users pay attention to it in that context even as they ignore the same link if presented as obvious advertising.
- 2) We may be losing a lot of potential user traffic to

our sites because of the flood of paid links that users mistake as legitimate. Placing Starwood sponsored links when users search for Starwood related keywords in order to crowd out third party links could counter act this problem.

## User Centered Design

ChangeThis

### [LESS: What Customers Really Want](#)

"A few years ago, Phil Baxter set out to deliver one meaningful innovation to customers of his hotel, the 570-room Four Points by Sheraton in Los Angeles. After participating in a hotel marketing seminar, he set a goal of offering 24-hour check-in. This was a revolutionary idea. But Phil wanted his customers to be able to check in anytime, and to have the right to stay for a full 24 hours.

"People are more demanding," he says. "They are used to making their own rules, and they want more control over the experience they have." It took about six months to prepare for 24-hour check-in, juggling schedules, rethinking procedures and convincing superiors. He even learned Spanish to do a better job of calming the fears of the housekeeping staff. But it works, and the hotel's occupancy rate is over 90 percent, at a time when similar hotels average about 66 percent."

### Our thoughts...

In the case of the Four Points by Sheraton, Los Angeles, the customers wanted the hotel to be less rigid in the rules, and they listened. Responding to customer feedback and engaging the team to get buy-in helped turn this hotel into an industry leader.

Finding out what our customers want and changing accordingly is the ultimate driver for innovation and gaining a competitive advantage. This concept applies online as much as off, and requires complete team dedication to find opportunities and create comprehensive solutions that address our customer's needs.

## About the IA Newsletter...

### What is an "IA"?

IA = Information Architect. As information architects on the interactive marketing team we work on the navigation, flow and interaction of Starwood brand websites. Our goal is to create useful, usable website designs that help the business and our customers achieve their goals.

## Why do the IAs send out a newsletter?

Our work requires research into all aspects of Starwood's business, and we want to share articles we have found valuable for our projects with you. We hope you enjoy and find it useful in your own endeavors!

## How do I get more?

PDF versions of all articles featured in the IA Newsletter can be found on the shared drive at [deleted for public viewing]. If you do not have access to this drive and would like a copy of an article, or if **you would like to share an article you have found useful in your work**, please don't hesitate to contact [Kelli Bernard](#).