



5 Design Principles to Make Your Website a Money-Making Machine

About the Author



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Her work has been featured on several authority blogs, like Unbounce, KISSmetrics, Crazy Egg, Six Revisions, Traffic Generation Cafe, et al. She's passionate about helping websites make more money and loves to stay attuned with changing SEO trends.

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About VWO

VWO is a leading website testing platform used by more than 3,600 brands in 75 countries to analyze web activity and increase conversions.

Companies such as Microsoft, General Electric, Rackspace and the American Red Cross use VWO to understand how website visitors engage with their digital properties.

VWO offers marketers an easy-to-implement and use, but highly effective A/B testing, multivariate, behavioral targeting, usability and heat map testing solution that requires no coding knowledge.




Introduction

“A design is as good as the conversions it gets”

A design is nothing but window dressing unless you enthrall life into it with a compelling conversation. More than conveying the overall feel of the website, your design can act as your powerpuff salesman if you want. The key here is to tap into consumers' thought sequence and guide them to your conversion goal with subtle visual cues. Use the 5 design principles covered in this book as your commandments and you should be all set.

Let's unravel the mystery of a conversion-centered design -- a design that communicates with your customers and make your conversions go off the roof.





Design Principle #1

Enclose What's Important

You wouldn't want to dress your kid as other children on his birthday party, right? He should stand out from the rest. And the same goes for your call-to-action. It's your most important page element. It shouldn't have to compete with other page elements to get the attention it deserves.

Encapsulation lets you accomplish just that. When you enclose the call-to-action in a container, it breaks visitors' eye path on the page and make them notice what's inside. It makes your call-to-action hard to miss.

There might be other elements on the page like heading, trust seals, testimonials, and many others. But these are all supporting elements. Their aim is to push visitors towards the main conversion goal of the page. The goal that your call-to-action represents.

Here's an example of encapsulated call-to-action:

Visual Website Optimizer

See how call-to-action here is encapsulated into another circle to distinguish it from other page elements.

Basecamp has an encapsulated form on their homepage. See below:

“ For all of my projects, I use Basecamp to keep track of every file, discussion, and event from beginning to end—all in one place.

— Joy, [designer at Pitchfork](#)



Encapsulated Form

Start your free trial.
You'll be up and running in less than a minute.

Already have another Basecamp, Highrise, Backpack, or Campfire account? [Log in here](#) and a new Basecamp trial will be added to your account.

Your full name

Company or organization

Email

Password

Start your two month free trial

By clicking you agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy](#), and [Refund](#) policies.

Sometimes you can even add important points in a box that you think can influence visitors' purchase decisions.

See the example below from OzScopes.com



Move Mouse Over Main Image to Zoom In



SkyWatcher SW450 114mm Reflector Telescope w/ Motor Drive

SKU# SKY-SW450

★★★★★ 1 Review(s) | [Add Your Review](#)

Sale Price:
\$234.95

Retail Price: \$483.95
Save \$249.00 (51%)

OZHut Rewards
234 POINTS

Quick Overview

- Come with a Motor Drive
- Easy object focusing with 5x24 finderscope
- More light gathering capacity (165% more than 70mm refractor)
- Aluminized and overcoated mirrors
- Comfortable viewing at high and low magnifications
- Easy tracking of stars with equatorial mount
- 5 years Skywatcher limited warranty

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- ✓ Buy from an Authorised Retailer
- ✓ Have Questions? Let us help you

IN STOCK | ⌚ Ships Out Next Business Day

+ ADD TO CART Qty:

[Add to Wishlist](#)

30 DAYS SUPER EASY RETURNS POLICY

 **SHIPPING CALCULATOR** ▼
[CLICK HERE](#)

Actionable Takeaway: Put your call-to-action/important points in a container to make them stand out on the page.



Design Principle #2

Leverage Color Theory. Contrast Your Buttons Well.

Have you ever come across an article that says orange buttons always convert better than any other color? Or read a case study where yellow button converted better than red button, and the writer suggested you should do the same to get those results?

Don't waste your time and resources on any such absurd advice.

The point is, your call-to-action button should stand out on the page. And should thus use a contrasting color to draw the necessary attention of visitors.

So when someone says one button's color always converts better than the other, or something along those lines, the only thing you can conclude is -- they know nothing about conversions. Ignore what they say. It can be true for one website but it is NOT a universal principle.

Every website has their own audience set. And to find the best button color for your website, there's no other way than to run a quick test and let data decide it for you.

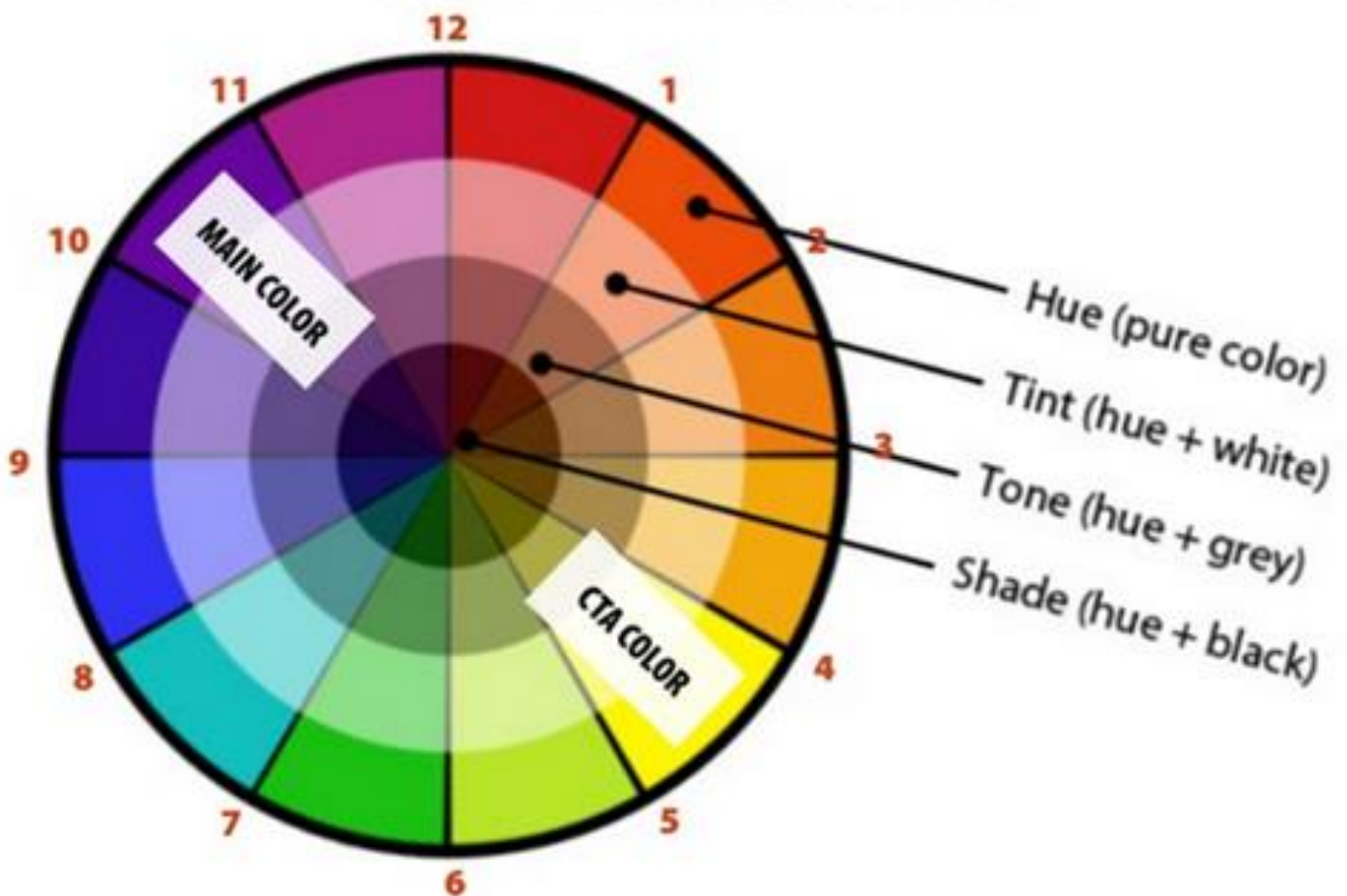
You'll often notice that the button color that contrasts better with web page's background color and overall design is the one that comes out as a winner. Still, don't ever make the mistake of substituting data with your intuition. You are better than that.

Actionable Takeaway: The color that contrasts best with the web page's background color is the one that will make your call-to-action button stand out on the page.

Chances are, this color will improve your click through rate and nudge visitors deeper into your conversion funnel. Don't want visitors to miss out your CTA? Test that color.

Luckily for you (and us), search and conversion optimization expert, Angie Schottmuller of **Three Deep Marketing**, has made a color wheel that depicts contrasting CTA colors opposite to their main colors. You can simply pick the color shown opposite to your site's background color from the color wheel and test it out.

Clockwork Conversion on the 12-Hour Color Wheel



If you are a design geek, here is another color wheel tool that you can use to find a contrasting color.

The color theory is however not just confined to call-to-action on the page. It also extends to other elements on the page. If a particular element should use strong colors or subdued colors depend on the importance of that element in the page layout so that it fits the eye path accordingly.

For example, client logos on the page shouldn't be more glaring than the headline or call-to-action on the page. They are important supporting elements, but definitely score below the page heading or call-to-action in priority.

After all, when visitors land on a page, they should first understand what that website is about and what are they expected to do there, before they even consider the credibility of the product/service. Match the conversation in the mind of the visitors. And then convey that conversation in your design, step-by-step. (You will read more about this in design principle #5)

Takeaway: Try a squint test, if you have to. This will tell you if your call-to-action is popping out well. You will be able to analyze if your page layout is good and establishes the right eye path for conversions. See the example below from Marketing Experiments:



original image



as seen when squinting



Design Principle #3: Control Eye Movement with Directional Cues

Look Left ----->

you failed



I knew it! You fell for that, didn't you? :D


If someone points us in a direction, we just cannot help but follow that path. Tap this power of directional cues in your design. Divert your visitors' attention to your call-to-actions, just the way Buffer does it:


A Smarter Way to Share.

Be awesome on social media. Easily add great articles, pictures and videos to your Buffer and we automatically share them for you through the day!




 Sign In with Twitter

 Sign In with Facebook

 Sign In with LinkedIn

If you want to sign in using your existing Buffer account...

 Use Buffer Account

Arrows is not the only way you can guide eye path of your visitors. Studies have shown that it matters where people in your images look. This subtly redirects visitors' gaze in the same direction.



Eye looking straight ahead
 Only 6% of 200 usability test participants looked at the product



Eye looking towards product
 84% of usability test participants now looked at the product

Image Credit: Thinkeyetracking.com

Takeaway: Make your subjects in images look in the direction of your call-to-action. Or guide your visitors to it by pointing to it with an arrow sign.



Design Principle #4

Use Your Whitespace Judiciously

Everyone wants a cleaner look these days. It looks pleasing to the eye and gives enough emphasis to page elements, especially the call-to-action. Imagine visiting a hotel and not being able to find the reception to get the keys to your room. Frustrating, right? Cluttered look does the same to your call-to-action on the page.

Don't make your visitors hunt for it. You want them to book their stay with you. Your visitors want to make bookings with you. Then why force them to play hide and seek? Let's get right to business before they change their mind because of zillion bizarre reasons. Place your call-to-action on whitespace so that it doesn't get mixed with other elements on the page.

A popular example of the optimum whitespace use is when larger-than-life images are utilized as a backdrop with all the attention focused on the main call-to-action. See how Shopify uses it:

Use Shopify to create your online store.

India's Ecommerce Leader



Start your free 14-day trial today!
(you can change your store name afterwards)

The use of whitespace goes a lot beyond the CTA button. It plays a key role in readability on the page as well. Cramp your text, present lengthy stacks of paragraphs, and see your visitors click the exit button in seconds. Want them to read your text? Break your paragraphs into small chunks. Use a separate line for important dialogues, make bullet points, and so on. Soon you will see your page engagement goes up.

Here's a perfect example from [Boagworld blog](#) to show this in action:

Ponting defends England hierarchy

Triumphant Australia captain Ricky Ponting believes the level of criticism aimed at England coach Duncan Fletcher and captain Andrew Flintoff is unfair. Australia won the first three Tests to regain the Ashes, and have won 14 out of 15 overall since their loss in 2005.

"There are 11 guys in the team, or 13 in the squad, and it's very harsh to blame the coach and captain," he said.

"They haven't played anywhere near as well as they'd liked but we haven't given them the opportunity to."

Ponting is only too well aware of the emotions that Fletcher and Flintoff are experiencing, as it is only 15 months since he became the first Australia captain for 19 years to lose an Ashes series. Ponting, who celebrated his 32nd birthday on Tuesday, has responded magnificently with the bat in the current series, making over 500 runs in his first six innings, including two big centuries.

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The importance of whitespace is highly underrated probably because it is so easy to implement. Pressing enter is all it takes. Yet, no design can be effective if it doesn't make judicious use of whitespace.

While we're talking about this, let me add an important word of caution to this advice. Don't be overzealous about whitespace, else you might break the continuation in your design because of too much space between the elements. Your elements might look dangling in the middle of nowhere, making customers confused.

Too much space between supporting content and the CTA, for example, can make people see call-to-action as a separate element than a continuation of the text. To avoid this disconnect in your message, read this article to avoid negative space in your design.

Takeaway: Add your call-to-actions on whitespace to bring focus to the conversion goal of the page. But don't overdo it as it can make elements look disconnected and break the thought sequence you're trying to design on the page for your visitors.

Design Principle #5

Guide Visitors' Intuitively to the Conversion Goal with Strong Visual Hierarchy

Many other factors contribute in establishing a clear visual hierarchy:

Size - Larger the size of your element, the more it will be noticed.

Color - Bright, contrasting colors will always be the first ones to catch attention. A yellow call-to-action, for example, will prominently stand out on a black background.

Contrast - This reflects relative importance of elements on a page and both color and size of elements play a crucial here.

Repetition - Repeating the same pattern can make users identify those elements with a certain attribute. For example, you might always use a certain peculiar font when you use famous quotes in your writing.

Proximity - Like we discussed above, too much of whitespace can make elements look disconnected and cause confusion in the mind of users. Proximity suggests similar ideas or continuation of a thought sequence.

Alignment - This is important to create order among page elements. This can also include more complicated concepts like arrangement of page elements. If convention demands that the top right of the header be used for important navigation items and call-to-action (recall Facebook, Gmail, et al), it's best to succumb to such established conventions in most cases. This reduces the time taken by customers to understand your website and improves usability.

These are all design guidelines but to make them work for conversions, you must combine this knowledge with customer insights. Let me share a few tips to elaborate how you can incorporate customer learnings in your design:

a) Leverage insights from heatmap studies

Lessons from numerous heatmap studies can be extremely helpful in understanding visitors' behavior, interests and what they choose to ignore.

For example, it was a heatmap study that recognized the long-known F-shaped scan pattern of web users. Our customer Underwater Audio tapped this insight to improve their website sales by 35.6%.

When they interchanged the placement of their call-to-action button with the testimonial on their main landing page, their conversions shot up. You can see the comparison image below:

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of the Underwater Audio website landing page, labeled 'Control' and 'Variation'. The 'Control' page has the 'Learn more' button below the main headline. The 'Variation' page has the 'Learn more' button to the right of the testimonial. Red arrows and numbers 1-4 in the variation page indicate the F-shaped scan path: 1 (headline), 2 (testimonial), 3 (product images), and 4 (button).

Visual Website Optimizer

Control

Variation

Visual elements in the variation page were re-arranged to follow the F-shaped pattern of eye movement. This meant that visitors read the testimonial before they came to the call-to-action button, which influenced their decision and increased the sales of Underwater Audio by 35.6%

This small change in the arrangement of page elements worked because now visitors were intuitively made to read the testimonial on the page before they were shown the call-to-action, which increased their motivation to buy the product.

It's all about how creative you can get. Read about marketing insights from various heatmap studies and A/B test them like Underwater Audio did. Wait to see if data validates your hypothesis.

Want to generate heatmaps of your website? Start your **14-day VWO free trial** today to get started.

b) Give the necessary attention to important elements

I know we've touched on this before when I mentioned about relative importance of page elements in a visual hierarchy.

What page elements are important on a website depends completely on the target audience. Our customer, Royal Discount, improved their conversions by 36.54% when they increased the font size of sales price on their product page.

Wonder why?

Because Royal Discount's competent prices gives it the biggest edge over its competitors. It's an important decision-making factor for its target audience. By increasing the emphasis on price, they made sure that their visitors take note of this, which increased their conversions. You can see the comparison image below:

Original

royal discount
technology. online. rewards.

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Phone Support Available Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM AET

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Search | My Account | Sign Up

Microsoft Office 2013
Microsoft Office 2013 Home and Business Product Key Card (Promotional)

Sale Price: \$174.99

Participating Retailer
Retailer: 100-00000000
Manufacturer: Microsoft
Version: 16.0
Availability: In-Stock/In-Store!

Members earn reward points!
Points: 0/10000
Please check the Special Price Program link for more information.

ADD TO CART

Office 2013 Home and Business

The new Microsoft Office 2013 provides access from virtually anywhere to your familiar Office applications, email, calendar, videoconferencing, and most up-to-date documents, across your devices—from PCs to smartphones to tablets. Experience the most powerful Office yet. Office 2013 Home and Business includes the latest versions of your essential Office applications, for one PC. Includes Outlook, to keep your home and work life organized.

- **Smarter applications.** Smart, time-saving new ways to create, read, share, and connect.
- **Cloud-enabled.** Sign in to Office and access documents and settings across multiple devices.
- **Optimized for touch.** Experience Office at its best on Windows 8 devices, optimized for touch.

Includes full versions of:

- Word 2013
- Excel 2013
- PowerPoint 2013
- Outlook 2013

Customer Reviews

Read almost all the product reviews, and you'll see how much loved this product for its price, as well as having money. See 2000 2013

Featured Items

- PhotoKit CD for Mac \$19.99
- 1000Photos Collector's NP \$19.99
- Office 2013 Enhanced Pack \$199.99
- Access to Mac NP \$75.00

Rewards Program

Challenger

royal discount
technology. online. rewards.

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Phone Support Available Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM AET

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Microsoft Office 2013
Microsoft Office 2013 Home and Business Product Key Card (Promotional)

Sale Price: \$174.99

Participating Retailer
Retailer: 100-000000
Manufacturer: Microsoft
Version: 16.0
Availability: In-Stock/In-Store!

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Please check the Special Price Program link for more information.

ADD TO CART

Office 2013 Home and Business

The new Microsoft Office 2013 provides access from virtually anywhere to your familiar Office applications, email, calendar, videoconferencing, and most up-to-date documents, across your devices—from PCs to smartphones to tablets. Experience the most powerful Office yet. Office 2013 Home and Business includes the latest versions of your essential Office applications, for one PC. Includes Outlook, to keep your home and work life organized.

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Featured Items

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- 1000Photos Collector's NP \$19.99
- Office 2013 Enhanced Pack \$199.99
- Access to Mac NP \$75.00

Rewards Program

Competitive prices is one of the key factors that affect buying-decisions of Royal Discount's target audience. As a result, increased emphasis on their price **improved their conversions by 36.54%**.



Sounds simple, eh? Well, it really is. It's all about putting a little thought into your design. It's important that you do not lose sight of your target audiences' needs and considerations. As long as you are designing with your target audience in mind, you're gold, my friend!

Conclusion

Become the Conversion Ninja That Drives Business Growth

Research, analyze, find customer insights and create your A/B tests in minutes with VWO's point-and-click editor and brand-new usability. Re-arrange page elements, change button colors, images, without messing with the code. Sign-up for the addiction you'll be proud to have. Sign up to change your design and increase your conversion rates today.



Thank You

A big thank you for reading this design principles guide. I wish you all the best in increasing sales for your ecommerce website.

I would love to hear from you about your experiences in improving your website design. Just drop me a mail here: smriti.chawla@wingify.com.

And yes, if you liked what you've read, please go ahead and share it with others!

Cheers

Smriti Chawla

Marketing Specialist

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