

Oct 02, 2006

## **Ad Agencies -- How to Make Your Web Site Appeal to Type A Executives (Despite the Flash)**

Most ad agency Web sites make me absolutely nuts as a visitor. Instead of giving me quick, easy navigation to whatever I want to know, they just can't resist showing off how creative they are.

And in their outside-the-box, wow-aren't-we-unique, so-revolutionary way, most end up looking pretty much the same -- much like teens who dress as punks or goths. Generally, this means strong background colors such as black or red instead of white, copy in reverse type (or ultra-fashionable tiny pale gray type) and lots of Flash-based content.

I'm especially annoyed by having to scroll over nav buttons (or in some cases cutesy graphics) to make navigation completely visible. I don't have time to horse around on your site. I'm looking for something quite precise and I want it now, now, now.

Probably part of this is because I'm a Type A personality. And an overcaffeinated one at that.

Which is why I was utterly charmed by the home page for Barkley Evergreen & Partners (BEAP), which is the largest employee-owned ad agency in the US. Yes, they had that darned Flash stuff - - in this case, you mouse over navigation tabs to see people flopping about on stuffed chairs. ... I'm not sure of the point but I'm sure it's extremely creative in an agency sort of way.

However, they also went outside the agency-site-box and added an enormously compelling click button on their home page just for people like me. It reads:

"If you're a type A person, click here before you waste any more precious time."

When you click, up pops a one-page factoid sheet. Love it, love it, love it!

I asked Erica Wren, BEAP's Marketing & PR Manager, how many visitors click on this button. Turns out, the button has been clicked 10,763 times in the past 12 months (including twice by me.) That equals 15% of the home page's traffic in the same time period.

Now, the rule of thumb in site design is: every major page should have obvious click link/navigation for every type of persona who is at least 10% of your average visitor population. Some people want lots of lots of information, some people want to play with rich media and some of us want to cut to the chase already. Your site must please all of them pretty much instantly and simultaneously.

OK, that's oversimplified, but you get the picture.

Based on that rule, my personal award for agency home page of this year goes to BEAP. But it may not be around for long. Erica says a redesign will launch Oct. 31st. So here are two links:

BEAP home page -- original version until Oct. 31, 2006:

<http://www.beap.com>

Canned version -- we've posted screenshots here so you can see it no matter when you happen to read this blog:

<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/cs/barkley/study.html>