

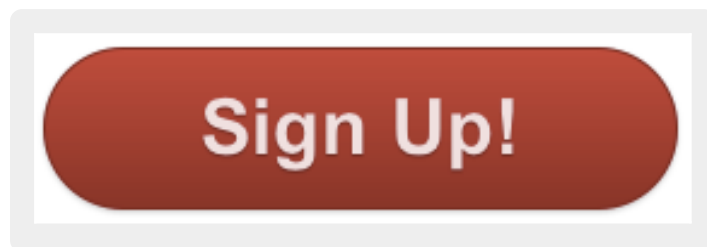
Why you Should Bury your Sign Up Button

by [Joshua Porter](#) | October 21st, 2011 | shortlink: <http://bokardo.com/p/1991>

A short while ago I was involved in a project redesigning a home page of a website. I dutifully designed the page in the common fashion, using a bold headline, some bullet points, and a juicy call-to-action button. It was very similar to many of the startup home pages that you might run across every day.

The goal of the redesign was to increase conversion on the primary call to action of sign-up. We wanted to double or triple (or more) the number of people who were signing up and trying out the product.

I knew the redesign was a vast improvement over the existing one, merely because the page



About

Our world is made of interfaces! Interface and product design is my passion and that's what I write about here at Bokardo. My goal is to share practical knowledge with designers, product folks, copywriters, and entrepreneurs. Check out the [archives](#) for a list of popular posts.

Published by [Joshua Porter](#).

better communicated

what was going on. Instead of a vague headline that wasn't communicating value to readers I used a much more descriptive one that helped orient people immediately to have some idea of what the site does. And the button...well let's just say that it was so hot it made you want to click it.

So we launched, and then we looked at the data. Uh Oh. No big increase in conversion, certainly not enough to change the business. The conversion rate had improved about 20%, which is OK, but the rate itself was so low to have very little effect on the company's bottom line.

What was wrong? Why wasn't there a big improvement in conversion? Why was our click-through so low on what was obviously the primary call-to-action? Didn't we follow all of the visual design rules here? Make headline big and bold. Check. Make a bullet list of important points. Check. Make a beautiful, sexy button that looks like it was born to be clicked. Check.

Why then, were people not clicking the sexy button?

It's at this point when you have to step back and ask yourself: what exactly is design? Is design creating something for creation sake? We certainly had done that, and we had already done as much work as is done on most redesign projects. Most projects would have launched

and been done...when redesign is the goal the launch is the end.

But that's not what passes as good design these days. Good design is design that works. So to honestly assess the redesign I did I had to admit...this design was still not working.

Damn was that hard to admit. Really, really hard to admit. I hated admitting it because it was an admission that I failed. I've not often admitted that on projects in the past that just didn't get the usage that I wanted. In so many cases it was easier to say to myself that what I did was better than what was there before and the work of launching was enough. It is so easy to confuse getting stuff done with doing good work.

Yet, this admission also allowed me to see the problem more clearly. Once I accepted that the redesign still wasn't working, I created the opportunity to find out why not. See that interesting little trick I pulled there? Failure is an opportunity to problem solve! We all love to problem solve, right?

So in hindsight the answer is obvious...people weren't clicking "Sign Up" because they were not ready to. They saw the button and did not care enough to click it. I could have made it flashing big-ass and red, but still nobody would have clicked on it.

No visual design wizardry at this point would have improved things. No matter how much we tweak the call-to-action, we're not going to

significantly improve click-through on it. We're not fighting an attention war here...we have people's attention because they're on our website. No, we're fighting an emotional war. We need to convince people of the value of what we're offering enough so they actually care. They are aware that our big-ass honking button is there...how could they not be? We made it impossible to miss! in fact they've read the text on it that says "Sign-up for Free". They can barely get it out of their peripheral vision...

No, our visitors can see clearly...they're not failing to notice the button. And they can read...they can see what the button says. They're also not obstinate...they're not doing this just to spite you.


The hard fact is that they *just don't care*.

Or more precisely, they don't care *yet*. They're interested, but they do not know enough to care. We have not given them enough of a reason to care. They are not ready to take that step.

So the right answer in this situation is not to give our call-to-action a stronger drop shadow, double its text size, make it fire engine red (#CE1620), or make it blink. No amount of visual design on that button will make people click it more. The right answer is to remove the button altogether and replace it with something that people do want to click. Something they do want to do...the appropriate next step in their lifecycle as a customer.

I call this *Designing for the Next Step*. And in my next post I will explain what I'm talking about in much more detail...

Addendum: The folks at [Zurb](#) have published [an example of a 350% improvement from simply burying the sign-up button](#). That's some serious improvement.



Make them Care! - Struggling to communicate the value of your product or service? I'm writing a new book that shows you how to make people care about your product or service by clearly communicating the most important bits. For designers and marketers creating product web sites. [Find out more.](#)

PREVIOUS

[What our home pages are really saying \(a dialog\)](#)

NEXT

[The Golden Age of Design in Startups](#)

Comments are closed.