

From the Novamedia blog at www.novamedia.co.uk/blog

Billy Connolly is a funny man, but his website isn't funny

So I had been meaning to write this blog post on usability for some time and, as is usual in business, other things got in the way - like work. And I thought to myself tonight, as I sat down to write this, "wouldn't it be typical if Billy Connolly had had his site redesigned in between me thinking of expressing my considered assessment of it and actually getting round to doing it."

I took a look tonight to make sure that he had not had it re-designed and, to my initial horror, he had! It was all different and I thought that was the end of this blog post. Then, as I looked at the site, it became clear that this man is a serial offender when it comes to usability.

Billy Connolly is a funny man, but his website isn't funny.

It's at www.billyconnolly.com and, whilst you could say that it is slightly better than the previous incarnation that I was preparing to have a pop at, that's not really saying much.

Now why, I hear you ask, are you picking on that nice Mr Connolly. Well, firstly and quite frankly, he should know better (or at least the people who are advising him should) and secondly, maybe he'll ring up and ask Novamedia to completely re-design it for him. OK, I won't hold my breath; he's probably more likely to call me and tell me to... (let's not go there).

What is wrong with the site? Firstly, it has no fixed menu and, if you want to find anything, you have to roll your mouse over the various elements on the home page until you come across what you want.

When you have clicked on an item, you are taken to the page and then there is no way to then go off to another page without clicking the back link to get back to the annoying home page.

The pages are all designed differently as though a bunch of amateur web designers was each given the job of designing one page with no communication between each designer.

The whole thing is just chaotic and anarchic. You could say that it reflects Billy Connolly's personality but, to me, web usability is too important an issue to treat in such a cavalier fashion. Being original doesn't mean making something unusable. You wouldn't design a chair with a hole instead of a seat because people would fall through when they sat on it and it wouldn't be usable. You wouldn't design a hot water bottle made out of tissue paper because you would be sued by people with scalded feet.

So Mr Connolly, what should you do to make your site usable? Here are a few tips to start with:

- ❖ Design an easy-to-use, clear navigation system
- ❖ Keep your navigation consistent - same place on all pages
- ❖ Have a clear link to the home page
- ❖ Don't overuse Flash. (Why do all comedians do this?)
- ❖ If the site is large, have a search box so users can easily find content
- ❖ If the site navigation is complex, use a breadcrumb link to tell users where they are

Anyway, that's enough ranting for the time being. It's getting late and I'm going to sit down and put on a Billy Connolly DVD to watch him doing what he does best - making people laugh.