



ExperienceLab

Design guidelines | Online banking and
Insurance services

January 2000

Email: info@experience-lab.co.uk

Tel: 020 7421 6499

RESTRICTED COMMERCIAL

Summary

In an independent study, Serco ExperienceLab evaluated a range of famous name banking and insurance web sites with potential customers. The services provided by the sites included motor and home insurance quotations, mortgage advice and account management facilities. The study revealed a number of issues that are important to the design of online financial and insurance services. They are presented here as a set of general guidelines to assist those developing financial e-commerce sites.

Design guidelines

Users main reason for using banking and insurance online is the speed of the service

- Allow users quick access to the information they want. Avoid delaying users by stringing them along over a series of pages with ‘teaser’ marketing strategies. Also be aware that the use of pop-up windows will disorientate and annoy some users.
- Graphics must add value to your site, particularly if they have long download times otherwise users may become frustrated with waiting.
- Keep the length of application forms to a minimum - users do not like to spend too long inputting information unless it is absolutely necessary. Ideally, only ask for the mandatory information, particularly for speculative insurance quotations. Otherwise, mark critical fields.
- Ensure that progress through multiple screens of forms is made clear by providing orientation cues, e.g. 1of 4. Users are less likely to become frustrated and leave the site if they feel more in control.

Avoid the use of ambiguous terminology

- Use the company logo as a link to the homepage, rather than duplicating the word ‘home’ especially in contexts where ‘home’ could relate to various things e.g. home insurance or home loans.
- Use key words that are clear to users. For example when looking for mortgages, many users did not associate this with “Borrowing” and therefore had difficulty finding the right page.

Provide interactive features that add value

- Offer interactive features on the site – make these relevant to the goals and concerns of your customers. Consider features such as loan and mortgage calculators, so that users can input their own details and see how the products on offer fit with their own unique circumstances.

Users must have confidence in your site

- Keep all product information up to date. Clearly indicate how recently the site has been updated – customers expect up-to-date information and their confidence in the site can be damaged by the presence of outdated links or references to obsolete information.

- Insurance and banking is perceived as a serious business and users do not visit these sites for entertainment. Features of sites such as “fun” areas, for example, may decrease users’ confidence.
- Logos of your strategic partners can increase user confidence in your site if the company in question is well known and has a good reputation.
- Provide alternative points of contact like telephone numbers and address details – on-line customers may require a personal point of contact so that they can telephone, visit or write to your organisation. This is particularly important for customers making significant financial decisions, such as choosing a mortgage.
- Avoid the use of small font sizes – visitors to your site can find it difficult to read and it can give the impression that there is too much information, or that they are being presented with the ‘small print’.

Users expect to find more than an online leaflet

- Users have high expectations of online banking and insurance sites and therefore do not like to have to call up for further information. Ensure that your site provides as much functionality as possible to enable users to find all the information they require and complete their enquiries online.

Online Transactions

- Offer clear feedback on transactions that have been carried out on-line – users require confirmation that any details they have supplied have been received and acted on accordingly.
- Provide clear cues on the security measures taken on the site – customers are often concerned about the privacy of information they enter on-line, and may need reassurance before they proceed. Too much emphasis on security measures may alarm users, so strike the right balance.

Know your target audience

- Use a writing style that is appropriate for your target audience - potential customers can be alienated by a presentation style that they feel is targeted at a different group of people.
- Ensure graphics and pictures suit the branding and target audience for the site – users may find large images imposing, particularly images of faces. ‘Young’ faces can also alienate older customers, so consider the message conveyed by your graphics.

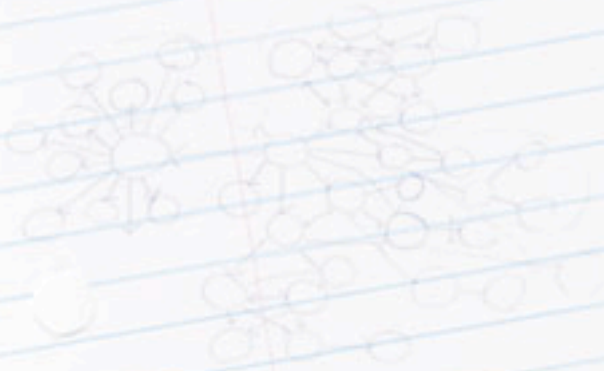
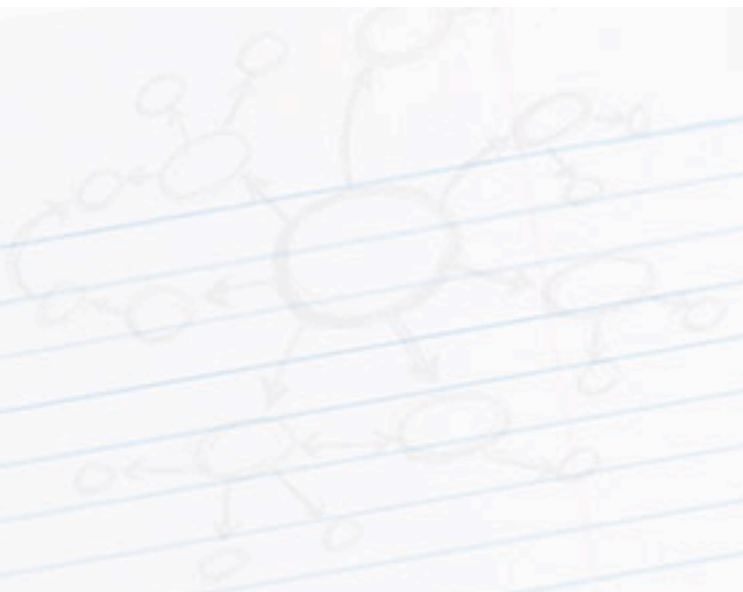
About ExperienceLab

ExperienceLab (formerly Serco Usability Services), are a global experience design research agency. They help organisations optimise their customer experiences, from web to TV and mobile, from advertising to physical environments. They’ve been doing this for a while, pretty much since the first computers and networks were created, so they know a thing or two about how to make people, processes and technologies work in harmony.

ExperienceLab use a wide range of techniques to tailor a research solution that fits your business objective, including ideation sessions, proposition analysis, customer needs mapping, usability

testing, benchmarking and touch point integration studies. As a co-founder of the UXalliance we also provide research on a global scale.

Why not visit the ExperienceLab blog (www.experiencelab.info), which features the latest thinking on experience design issues.



Serco ExperienceLab

22 Hand Court
London
WC1V 6JF

+44 (0)20 7421 6499

info@experience-lab.co.uk

www.serco.com/experiencelab

ExperienceLab is part of the International Serco Group of companies.

