

Time For A Good Web Site Cleaning

by [Steve Brown](#)

Soon after Procter and Gamble's Swiffer hit the shelves in 1999, it gained popularity in the world of house-cleaning. Swiffer products have been prominently featured on Saturday Night Live, in movies and on the cover of Rolling Stone Magazine. Today, these ingenious products designed to make cleaning easier are used in more than 50mm households. At a time when spring cleaning is underway in many homes, we can come up with literally dozens of areas where cobwebs may have gathered within a bank. One good place to start Swiffing away dust might be your corporate web site.

Although many bank sites appear to be relatively easy to use, they fall short when compared with other sites, according to a study last year from research consultancy firm Change Sciences. It found bank web sites are 25% less usable than e-commerce sites like Amazon and Walmart. Even compared to other top performing financial sites, bank sites fall short on the user-friendly spectrum. Many bank web sites are confusing or contain unwanted promotions, hidden navigation and dense product text. These result in lower usability scores, the study concludes.

So as you start cleaning, consider that when customers go to a bank's web site, they should be able to easily find what they are looking for. They also should be able to easily complete the tasks they set out to do. That sounds easy enough, but success rate varies widely by institution according to the study. RBC Bank, for example, had the highest task success rate of those surveyed at 85% vs. a success rate of only 40% for Bank of America.

Not only does the study show many banks could perhaps capture more customers by making more of an effort to have user-friendly web sites, but they also have to ensure their sites are available - especially during heavy traffic times. Routine maintenance is necessary, but simple things like making sure it occurs during off-peak hours helps ensure customer disruption is minimized and customers are not aware.

Downtime is yet another area worth exploring. Earlier this month, we compared downtime reports for a handful of big banks on SiteDown.co, a service that allows users to report web site issues they are having. Here's what we found: Since SiteDown.co has tracked the info, Bank of America has accumulated nearly 14,000 downtime reports, compared with 5,500 for Chase, 4,700 for Wells Fargo and less than 3,500 for Citibank. Amazon, meanwhile, has logged fewer than 1,500 downtime reports. Yes, websites go down and customers' notice, but finding out why and constant monitoring can help.

We're not trying to pick on anyone in particular, but rather to highlight the point that customers are watching banks closer than ever before. Cyber risk concerns are real, people generally think banks are targeted and they worry about their money and safety so website up-time is paramount. Think of your web site like a window into your bank. Customers expect it to work every time and anything less is odd leaning toward worrisome the longer it goes unchecked. As branch traffic continues to decrease, banks must continue to clean the very corners of the website to make sure it sparkles the most it can to keep customers interested in the digital world.

In banking, there's always ongoing work necessary to keep your digital "house" clean, so whatever cleaning tools you use to get the job done, designing and maintaining an effective web site is an

important project to tackle.

BANK NEWS

ID Theft

Javelin Strategy & Research reports there was a new victim of identity fraud every 2 seconds in 2013 and 33% of the people who received notice that there was a data breach also became a victim of fraud.

Agriculture Lending

The RMA reports farm real estate values have jumped 9.4% nationwide over the past 12 months.

Small Biz

Facebook reported a push to sign up small business owners led to 5mm to set up pages in Q1, boosting the total of small business users to 30mm overall.

Mobile Fraud

A report by the Center for Financial Services Innovation finds 10% of people who used their smartphone to deposit a check had it returned due to fraud or about 2x higher than using other methods.

Economic Growth

The ABA Economic Advisory Committee group of bank economists forecasts GDP will average 3.1% over the next 6 quarters, despite a softer housing market. The economists also expect Q2 GDP to jump to 3.8%.

Whopper Fine

The Wall Street Journal reports Bank of America is reportedly in talks to pay \$12B to settle the final piece of its mortgage related issues.

Rate Risk

The NCUA said it is worried credit unions have loosened credit standards and jumped into longer maturity assets at an alarming pace, raising bar on interest rate risk. The NCUA reports net holdings of long term assets is now at an all time high of nearly 36% of total assets.

Basel III

Community banks should note that under Basel III, regulators will expect even small banks to be above well capitalized minimums to avoid restrictions on executive bonuses, dividends and stock buybacks.

Debit Fraud

The ABA reports about 96% of banks experienced losses from debit card fraud and 63% had losses from check fraud.

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