

1.

The Main Banner: Does your homepage pass the billboard test?

Imagine you're driving down the highway. There are dozens of billboards to your left and right. Some have big, bold images and pictures of celebrities. Others just advertise a large written message.

Now, what would happen if you saw a billboard displaying 500 words of text, all in the same font size?

Would you stop your car to read it?

Now, let's say you look to your left and see another billboard. This one has a dozen images, advertising what looks to be 10 services and 30-something words scattered about. Would you pull over and try to decipher this message?

My guess is you drove past both billboards.

You're busy. You're driving fast. You have neither the time, nor interest in some unfamiliar company's products.

Rarely is this spoken about in the website industry, but your homepage's **Main Banner** is a billboard for your website. With millions of distractions on the internet, attention spans are shorter than ever. And if your **Main Banner** doesn't get your message across quickly (as in less than five seconds) then your visitors are likely to drive past your website to their next destination.

What are the elements of an effective **Main Banner**?

Simplicity is key. In fact, simplicity is a key component of effective copywriting and sales in general because people can quickly understand simple messages. Make your pitch too complex or long-winded and prospects will bounce. So, will a visitor understand your message in five seconds or less?

Here are three characteristics of a simple banner:

1. Big, clearly readable message: The written message needs to be legible. Why? If people can't read it, then they'll drive past your website to another destination. In five seconds, your reader only has time to comprehend so much. That's why your readable message needs to be big, concise and contrast from its background. What do I mean by contrast?

If your message is on a light yellow background, white text will be difficult to read. It doesn't contrast well. It doesn't pop. On the opposite end of the spectrum, black text on a yellow background stands out. It's easy to read.

Readability is important because you want visitors to exert the least amount of effort possible. Understanding your business's message is a key component of the buying process. Make that buying process too difficult, and your website visitor will bounce.

2. Clean, uncluttered imagery: When there's more content for your eyes to digest, it's difficult to quickly understand a message. Less, however, is easier to see and understand. It stands out.

For example, remember the *Where's Waldo* books? Finding Waldo could easily take 10 or 20 minutes. Sure it's fun as a kid. But for adults looking to buy a new product, sifting through loads of images and text to find Waldo (aka your message) is an unwelcome chore. Most website visitors won't bother. However, a clean, uncluttered image ensures your message doesn't get lost in the crowd. It helps your visitor find Waldo fast.

3. Instant value understanding: Does your Main Banner answer the question, "What's in it for me?" Your banner is similar to an article headline. It needs to hook the website visitor immediately with value. For this reason, I always suggest that your Main Banner copy do one of two things: sell the USP (unique selling proposition) or tout benefits.