Use Buttons, not Links, to increase your clicks

There is little debate over how using "Call-to-Action Buttons" on your web pages and in your e-mail messages -- instead of words-with-links -- produces more clicks and conversions. It's one of those things you really can't ignore when creating e-mail messages and web pages.

For most organizations, you'll probably want to use buttons like "Donate Now" or "Subscribe Now." It's important to start off with a verb or 'action word' on your button. Try something like "Start Your subscription today" instead of saying "Free Subscription."

We routinely include call-to-action buttons in our e-mail and web page creative. In the end, it's one of the most important elements in the composition!

Best Practices for Creating Buttons

1. Draw readers' attention with contrasting sizes

   The size of an element relative to its surrounding elements indicates its importance; the larger the element is, the more important it is. Decide how vital each site action is, and size your call to action buttons accordingly.

   For instance, a web page or e-mail may have multiple calls to action. To indicate the relative importance of each, you can vary their sizes accordingly.

   Remember -- to grab the reader's attention, the call to action button should be one of the most prominent elements on a page.

2. Draw readers' attention with prominent positioning

   The placement of call to action buttons in the composition is critical to drawing the eyes of your readers. Placement in prominent locations such as the top section of the page can lead to higher landing page conversions because users can't miss seeing the button and taking action.

   Don't forget to use whitespace to separate call to actions from other elements. The use of whitespace around a call to action button is an effective way of making it stand out in areas where there are many elements. Many designers believe the more whitespace there is in between a call to action button versus a surrounding element, the less connected they are.

3. Use highly contrasting colors.

   Deciding what colors to use for call to action buttons is important. Use colors in your call to action buttons that have a high contrast relative to surrounding elements and the background because it is critical to ensure that the user notices your call to action.

4. Convey a sense of urgency

   Phrasing of the action by using bold, active commands can move reader's to action now.

   Usually, suggestions to perform an action can be effective in creating a sense of urgency. Using words such as "now", "immediately" and "right now" can convey such urgency.

   Remind reader that taking action is easy. Often, a reader's hesitation stems from her/his that an action will be difficult, costly, or time consuming. By removing these concerns, your call to action buttons can lead to more conversions.

   [February 4, 2011]