

Products & Services

The ability to show off your products and services at precisely the time buyers are seeking suppliers is a fundamental reason for the explosive proliferation of websites – surpassing eight billion indexed pages in 2004. The ability buyers have to find detailed information 24/7, in turn, spurs ever-greater usage of that information. The result has been an unprecedented upward circulation spiral.

This section details some of the ways to display products and services to make it easy for prospects and customers to use that information. The details suggest ways to go beyond the simple display of products and services information to gain interaction with buyers. Further ideas for Products and Services sections are given for manufacturing, healthcare, real estate and specialty retail sites.

Products & Services Overview

Start with an overview of your products or services (for ease of reading, we'll simply refer to both products and services as 'products' from time-to-time). Even after you've developed product details on your site to include specifications, drawings, and other information to the nth degree, you want to give viewers a relatively simple overview to start with. Just like the home page, you do not want to overwhelm viewers with too much information at the start. You do want to give viewers enough information to determine that your products are indeed what they are looking for, enough highlights of the products or product families to position them competitively, and links to more detailed information to allow viewers to “drill down” for any and all information they may be interested in.

In planning and deploying the Products and Services section of your site, start with the Products and Services overview page. Sub-pages and sub-navigation can be built from there.

Often your product overview page can show the range of products, the applications and more. The product overview is essentially a secondary home page, giving a general overview of your products while detailing via links and synopses the breadth and depth of detailed product information available on your site.

Remember to include calls to action on your product pages. The old direct marketing axiom, AIDA, for attention, interest, desire, and action, is appropriate for web pages. Buyers often come to your site with their full attention ... after all, they searched you out. Their interest and desire are already whetted. Call out ways to get action, from using links to your Contact

Us page. Suggest that buyers “Call Toll-Free” for more information. Offer online interactive support to get buyers to communicate with you.

Products & Services Sub-Navigation

The product overview and product subpages should contain the primary site navigation and open up a new level of subnavigation as product information details are incorporated into the site. This sub-navigation should allow viewers to return to the product overview at any time, while also allowing navigation to other product sub-pages without having to ‘climb back up the ladder’ to the product overview page.

If there are a number of primary product pages with corresponding sub-pages, each primary page should have its own sub-navigation that relates to that product’s own supplemental information.

Sub-pages and sub-navigation should be as consistent as possible across products to make viewing multiple products routinely and intuitive (i.e., once you’ve navigated one, you’ve navigated them all). For example, if you offer products that have sub-pages including applications pages and product accessories, these applications and accessories sub-pages should be offered to the viewer in a consistent format. That format includes having the sub-navigation available on the first screen (and perhaps again at the bottom of the page) and having the navigation show the user where they’re at (i.e., what product applications or accessories page they are on).

If other product information is offered that isn’t really in the form of web sub-pages per se, but the additional offerings do give more product information (for example, product videos, or the same web page content albeit in PDF form) these items should also be offered in a consistent way across product pages and on the first screen for each (and, again, perhaps once more at the bottom of the page).