

The 20-minute homepage audit checklist

You have a homepage, you suspect something is wrong, and you do not know where to look.

Before you start: set a timer for twenty minutes

The limit is the point. A homepage you stare at for two hours stops being a page and becomes your own memory of building it. Do the passes in order, mark what is present or absent, and do not fix anything until the third pass is done.

Pass one: the stranger test (5 minutes)

Open the homepage on the device you use least. Look at it for five seconds, look away, and answer three questions out loud: what is sold here, who is it for, and what am I meant to do next.

Three answers in five seconds is a pass. "Design" is a category; "logos and brand kits for new businesses" is a thing. If the answer to who it is for is "anyone", the page is for nobody.

Pass two: the proof pass (10 minutes)

Scroll slowly to the bottom and mark each of five items present or absent: a real name and a real face, something you have actually made, a price or the shape of one, a way to contact you that is not a form, and words a customer would use.

Every absent item is a reason someone left without telling you. Three or more absent and the page is a brochure, not yet a homepage.

Pass three: the phone pass (5 minutes)

Open the same page on your phone. Read the first screen without pinching, tap the main button one-handed, turn wifi off and reload on mobile data, and check the header does not take half the screen before a word of yours appears.

What to fix first

In this order, one at a time: anything from pass one, then a missing price signal, then the phone problems, then everything else. A stranger who cannot tell what you sell will never reach the thing you fixed in pass two.

Resist the urge to redesign. Most pages need four or five sentences changed and one section deleted.

Before you close the tab

- ☐ Can a stranger say what is sold, who it is for and what to do next in five seconds?
- ☐ Is there a real name and a real face on the page?
- ☐ Is there at least one example of work you have actually done?
- ☐ Is there a price, a starting price, or a sentence about how you quote?
- ☐ Is there an email address or a phone number that is not behind a form?
- ☐ Does the first screen read on a phone without pinching, on mobile data?

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 The art is the body

 The community is the village

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