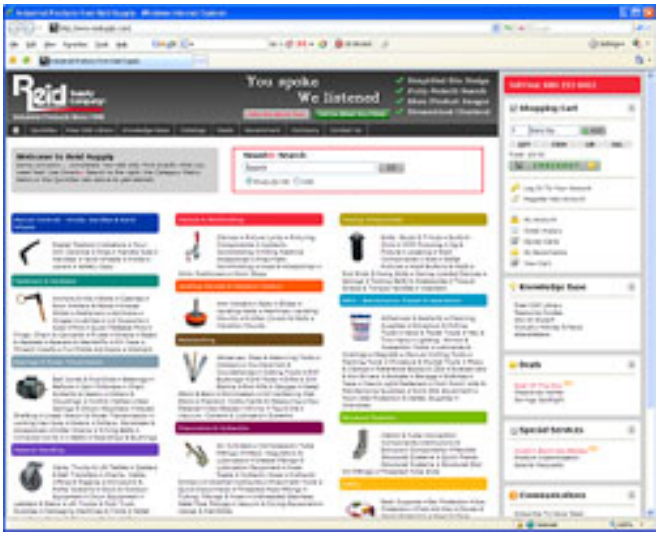
Customers Design Reid Supply's New Web Site

Muskegon, Michigan — What does it take to build a great e-commerce web site? According to the web services team at Reid Supply Company, a Michigan-based global distributor of industrial parts, components and supplies, all it takes is getting direct input from many customers, along with some savvy data managers, creative web designers and clever web developers to incorporate the customers' desires.

In a continuing effort to improve the customer experience, the web development team at Reid Supply enlisted the help of long-time patrons to understand their e-commerce needs for industrial products. What they found was good news.



The redesigned Reid Supply Company website

"We discovered that we were on the right track with our developmental planning for the new ReidSupply.com," said Greg Palmer, Reid Supply Company's director of marketing. "In a survey sent out to thousands of customers, we learned that they wanted a simpler and more direct shopping experience. That was exactly what we were planning, and that is exactly what we've built."

Part of that simpler experience involved Reid eliminating most of the marketing messages on the site. Their customers wanted better search results with less "marketing clutter" to get in the way of buying the products they wanted.

Based on the survey the Reid team realized they had some pretty serious remodeling to do.

They determined the new site would need a lot of web images because they wanted it to be image-driven, as well as data searchable. The Reid team utilized all of their

print catalog images, took photos of missing images, and utilized computer aided design (CAD) drawings, which are free to the customer, to give the site added functionality.

According to the company, their new web site is much more than better data; an improved search experience was number one on the customers' request list.

"The first thing we considered was how we could create a simpler and smarter search app that delivered what customers were looking for," said John Carrier, President of Reid Supply Company. "Our new Smarter Search function is very intuitive in the sense that as you are typing, it is auto-suggesting in a drop-down window. This can be very handy if you don't know exactly what you want. The search engine can be very helpful."

Reid also simplified the look of the web site and virtually eliminated the marketing hype. There are still specials available like the Clearance Center, Deal of the Day, and Savings Spotlights, but they are only visible from a tab or on the right rail of the site.

"We didn't need an economic downturn to tell us that we needed to give the Customer exactly what they wanted," said Carrier. "We've always believed that and that is why our team is constantly gearing up with new technologies to improve thecCustomer's experience. There will always be new features that our customers will ask for when shopping on-line and even now, having just launched the new site, we continue tweaking and improving the functionality daily."

Reid offers free CAD drawings on more than 90 percent of everything on their web site, ReidSupply.com.

"We have over 40,000 free CAD drawings that anyone can download," says Palmer. "It would be very beneficial for an engineer or technician in any industry to come to ReidSupply.com and simply download the CAD part they need for their engineering designs."

The company's revamped web site offers a Knowledge Base for engineers, machinists, hobbyists and scholars. This repository of information features the free CAD library, a large collection of reference books, a free "Ask An Expert" feature, a free e-newsletter, free Resource Guides, special requests, and more.

"Our exclusive 12 color-coded category classification is great for folks who want to locate specific items with minimum effort," says Palmer. "We have organized all of our products into these 12 areas and color-coded them for easy reference and access."

Reid's product offering features 12 color-coded categories as follows:

- Manual Controls: Knobs, Handles, and Hand Wheels
- Clamps and Workholding

- Tooling Components
- Fasteners and Hardware
- Leveling Devices and Vibration Control
- Material Handling
- Bearings and Power Transmission
- Metalworking
- Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO)
- Pneumatics and Hydraulics
- Structural Systems
- Safety

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