

POP-UP WINDOWS – DO THEY WORK?

If you have ever visited a website that automatically launches new small browser windows, like most people you will have closed them as soon as you possibly could. Unfortunately this is the experience of most users and if you are not very careful in the way that you use this facility your users will never know what it is that you are trying to show them. Here are some rules of thumb to guide your developer.

DON'T

- Never have a new window launch without the user clicking on a link. Be careful about this, it is easy for your developer to program the launch of the window if the user's mouse just passes over a link.
- Do not hide the address of the information unless there are particular security requirements; people don't like to be taken to an area that they cannot identify.
- People are very practiced in ignoring advertisements. Advertisements used to make people think your site was important, now it seems that advertisements detract from your site.

DO

- Offer a facility on the page to close the window. (Which should put them back to the page they were on.)
- Make sure that the content of the new window is expected by the user.
- If you use pop-up windows throughout your site ensure that the size is consistent and your user does not have to scroll to see all of the contents.
- Give your users the ability to change the size of the window.

SUMMARY

Pop-up or small windows have their place and can be very useful, particularly if you want to present small grabs of information that is relevant to and an extension of the information of the launching page. The most important thing to remember is to leave the control of the windows in the hands of the users. If you take away their control you will probably lose your user.