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Digital Eye

BY Peter Jin Hong, creative director at Tribal DDB in Vancouver

Reward Points

www.points.com

Wow! An online service that lets people combine all their obscure points from several different loyalty programs, and trade them in to use as collective currency to more quickly qualify for the rewards from any one program. Toronto-based points.com's service proposition is enticing, and the user interface is equally lively and engaging. Usability is also not an issue as the site is fairly straightforward in its functionality. There are even sample screen shots to assist in the process and, with a couple of clicks, redeeming becomes a new-found pleasure.



The programming structure of the interface template is flexible and well thought out, adjusting the layout to optimize for different browser window sizes. The navigation is clear and intuitive, and the database-driven template consistently displays content in a predictable manner that preserves the look and feel of the site across all sections.

But therein lies the danger of database-driven templates. The template that manages diverse content results in pages and sections that blur into one. Database-driven content needs to include "environmental markers," which help flag distinct characteristics of personality and experience to strategically optimize the uniqueness of the different message and service offerings. These markers establish the theme of the section and the environment, which engages users with visual and interactive cues to help them comprehend the message. For example, if it is a promotional section, create a mood of excitement and urgency. In this case, the corner visual in the top left of the template is an excellent but missed opportunity to customize each section with a different thematic image. Instead, the same image of a generic man is recycled.

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