

Vandelay Design Blog

Web Design and Development Blog

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog>

25 Creative E-Commerce Website Designs

E-Commerce sites are often considered to be boring and unattractive, however, that is not always the case. This post showcases 25 e-commerce sites that demonstrate creativity in the design. It may be the layout, graphics, design style or site structure, but all of them break the mould of the typical e-commerce site. For more inspiration from e-commerce sites, see our gallery [CartFrenzy](#).

[Ride Four Ever](#)

[Mom & Popcorn](#)

[The Affair](#)

[Hipstery](#)

[Benestar](#)

[Green Label Organics](#)

[RedVelvetArt](#)

[CellarThief](#)

[Shirt Fight](#)

[K2 Snowboarding](#)

[Storenvvy](#)

[Edge of Urge](#)

['47](#)

[Levi's](#)

[McMenamins](#)

[Giraffe](#)

[Saddleback Leather Company](#)

[Kate Spade](#)

[Yellow Bird Project](#)

[Clever Craft](#)

[Free People](#)

[Pally Giraffe](#)

[Mouse to Minx](#)

[Cinnia Edua](#)

[Duchy of Cornwall Nursery](#)

For more [design inspiration](#) please see:

[50 Inspirational Ecommerce Website Designs](#)[25+ Inspirational Ecommerce Website Designs - Part II](#)[35 Excellent Ecommerce User Interface Designs](#)[20 Inspirational, Clean Ecommerce Website Designs](#)[25 Well Designed Sports Ecommerce Sites](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/creative-ecommerce/>

Showcase of Floral Typography

If you frequently browse through sites like [deviantART](#) and [the Behance Network](#) you've no doubt come across a number of designs that use typography and floral effects. In this post we'll showcase some excellent works of this kind from various designers. If you would like more inspiration from typography and text effects please see our gallery site [TypeInspire](#).

[Butterfly](#)

[Eco Environment](#)

[Cyrella](#)

[Wonder](#)

[Dolce & Gabanna](#)

[Kings of Leon](#)

[Funkrush](#)

[Narani](#)

[Ecosystem Wallpaper](#)

[Desire for Love](#)

[Sell Your Body to the Night](#)

[Wyatt](#)

[Play](#)

[Passion](#)

[New Years Eve Party](#)

[Flower Power](#)

[Small is Beautiful](#)

[Anakost](#)

[Regina Spektor](#)

[Wedding Invitation Design](#)

[My Fake Cover](#)

[Javanican](#)

[Deviant Arts](#)

[Mondo Modo](#)

[Passion](#)

[Compassion](#)

[Inspire](#)

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[Design Inspiration: Lighting Effects](#)[Design Inspiration: Lighting Effects](#)[Design Inspiration: Splatter Effects](#)[3D Design Inspiration](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/design/showcase-of-floral-typography/>

40 Beautiful Corporate Websites

In today's marketplace, every company needs an effective website. Of course, the purposes and needs of each company's site will be unique, but every company should have a site that presents a professional image to visitors. That image should also be an accurate representation of the company and should work with other branding efforts to present consistent messages to customers. In this post we'll feature 40 well-designed corporate websites.

[Blackberry](#)

[Logitech](#)

[Navigant Consulting](#)

[Team Excellence](#)

[Cognigen](#)

[Chapeltown Development Trust](#)

[Capgemini](#)

[Mission Bicycle Company](#)

[Sophos](#)

[Kingpin Social](#)

[Avalon Business Advice](#)

[Clearspring](#)

[Paramore|Redd](#)

[Integrated Wealth Counselors](#)

[Element Fusion](#)

[Monk Development](#)

[Less Everything](#)

[Simple Flame](#)

[Trent Cruising](#)

[Apple](#)

[Dell](#)

[AT&T](#)

[WiredTree](#)

[Gateway](#)

[FireHost](#)

[Graphics.net](#)

[RedBrick Health](#)

[Adlucent](#)

[Glenilen Farm](#)

[8Interactive](#)

[ten24 Media](#)

[Envato](#)

[Norbauer](#)

[Aptana](#)

[IGN Entertainment](#)

[Preserve](#)

[Further](#)

[Scott Breuer Homes](#)

[Medallia](#)

For more [design inspiration](#) please see:

[50 Inspiration E-Commerce Website Designs](#)[25 Outstanding Church Websites - Part III](#)[40 of the Best Websites of Non-Profit Organizations](#)[25 of the Best Websites of Educational Institutions](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/corporate-websites/>

15 Invoicing Tips for Designers and Freelancers

Most designers don't particularly enjoy the financial side of running a business, but handling it properly is a necessary part of being a freelancer or running a design agency. The financial side of the business includes invoicing clients, and in this article we'll look at some tips and best practices for invoicing.

1. Decide on an Invoicing App or Software

There are plenty of online invoicing apps available that have been created with designers and freelancers in mind. Additionally, there are some software options as well. Using either an online app or software to handle your invoicing will allow you to save time and to have better organization over your invoices and receivables, as opposed to using a manual system or spreadsheets.

With so many options to choose from (see [20 Invoicing Tools for Web Designers](#)), you should be able to find an app or software that includes all of the features that you need, and ideally, not a lot of those that you don't need. Online apps are available in a wide range of prices, some are even free. Prices will usually rise as more features are included, and most invoicing apps will have a few different plans according to the number of invoices and clients that you need to manage.

If you'd like to avoid monthly or yearly fees of online apps, you can purchase invoicing software for a one-time fee and manage an unlimited number of invoices and clients.

For invoicing software we recommend [Fanurio](#). For online apps we recommend [FreshBooks](#). Find a solution that meets your needs and it will help you to have more accurate invoicing and financial records with less time commitment.

2. Determine Your Policies

In an ideal world, all of your invoices would be paid on time. However, most designers have to deal with late payments, or even no payments, every now and then. You should be prepared and set some policies for how you will handle your invoicing and payments.

Some things you need to consider:

How much will you charge up front? How many days will you give clients to make payments? What late fees will you charge for late payments? Will you provide completed files or work before or after final payment is received? What types of payment will you accept?

Of course, there will be situations when you'll want to make some adjustments or exceptions to your policies, but it's a good idea to establish the policies in the first place and then deal with exceptions as needed.

3. Avoid Surprises

Clients should be made aware of your policies and they should know when they will be invoiced for your services. Clients who are surprised by anything on the invoice (whether it is the amount due, the payment terms, the hourly fee, or not knowing what the invoice is for) will be much more likely to pay late or to not pay at all. Part of having an invoicing system that works efficiently is to make sure that there are no unpleasant surprises for clients.

4. Include Your Contact Information

Your invoices should always include your name (or your company name), address, and preferably your email and phone number. Depending on the client you are dealing with, there may be a number of different people that handle the invoice before it gets paid. If it gets passed to an accounts payable department and they have some question about the invoice, it should be easy for them to get in touch with you. Any delays in being able to contact you will result in a delay of the payment as well. Additionally, some of your clients will need your contact information on invoices for legal or record keeping purposes.

5. Have a System for Numbering

Most designers send out invoices on a frequent basis. It doesn't take long before it becomes difficult to track them without having a system for numbering. Most online apps and software will include this by default or will allow you to customize the invoice numbers. Having numbers will allow you to easily record payments accurately as they are received, it will help for tracking down late payments, and it will make it easier on your clients' record keeping as well.

6. Include the Recipient's Information

In addition to including your own contact information, you should include all of the same things for the recipient. This can help for making communication easier, but more importantly, it can be important for legal purposes if you are having issues with not receiving payments. The less information you have on the invoice the harder it is to prove that you are owed any money.

7. Provide the Details of Services and Charges

Each invoice should specify what the charges are for and what services have been performed for the client. This will help both you and the client. For the client, it will help to avoid confusion over what has been done, what they are being billed for, and what they have already paid for. This can especially be an issue for projects that involve multiple invoices or for clients for whom you do on-going work.

From your perspective, a detailed description can help you for record keeping and to know what clients have already been invoiced for and what they will need to be invoiced for in the future.

8. Include the Due Date

Each invoice should include a due date for when payment is expected. Without a due date it can be difficult to assess any late fees or to establish that a client has not paid on time. Due dates are helpful even for your clients that always pay on time, as it can help them to know what you expect and when they will need to process the payment.

9. List Methods of Payment that are Accepted

Clients should not only be aware of how much they owe, what services they are being charged for, and when they need to pay, but also how they can make a payment. Some designers prefer to receive checks, while others accept online credit card payments. Your clients should be aware of how they can get you the money that is owed. Making it easier for them and communicating clearly is always a good thing for increasing the likelihood that you will be paid on time. If you are accepting payment in the form of checks, clients should also know to whom they should make out the check.

10. Send the Invoice as an Attachment

Most designers send their invoices by email rather than snail mail or fax, and this is a good practice for saving paper and speeding up the process. Generally, the easiest way for clients to receive and view an invoice sent by email is a PDF attachment. Most apps and software will create PDF versions of invoices for you.

11. Be Sure to Send it to the Appropriate Person

Before sending an invoice to a client, be sure that you know who should be receiving the invoice. Especially if your client is not a small business, sending the invoice to the wrong person can slow down the process and increase the chances of the invoice being lost or ignored.

12. Record Payments as They are Received

Sending out invoices is really just the start of the process. You'll also need to have a system for recording payments as they are received. This way you'll be able to easily, and accurately, see who has paid you and what invoices are outstanding or past due. If you fail to record payments accurately you'll waste time trying to identify unpaid invoices, and you may even wind up contacting clients about a late payment that has already been made.

13. Follow Up

As your unpaid invoices reach their due dates, take a moment to follow up with the client, remind them, and see if payment is on the way or if there are any problems. As was mentioned earlier, it's a good practice to have some sort of policy for handling collections of late payments, and follow up will probably always be a part of the process.

In some cases the invoice may have slipped through the cracks and the client will quickly pay when they realize this. In other cases, a gentle nudge or the possibility of a late fee will be enough encouragement.

14. Indicate if it is a Partial Payment

Because most web design projects involve more than one invoice or payment (for example, 50% up front and 50% at completion), it's a good practice to indicate this on the invoice. Doing so can help to avoid potential confusion and disputes that could lead to difficulty in collecting payments, plus clear communication is always a positive.

15. Address any Problems

Whenever you experience a problem or issue that a client has with an invoice or charge, address it as soon as possible. Don't wait to see if they'll make the payment, make an effort to get it resolved. The longer it goes the less likely you are to receive payment.

What are Your Tips?

If you have any tips from your own experience that you'd like to share with our readers, please leave a comment.

Disclosure: this post includes an affiliate link for Fanurio. We use this software and can honestly recommend it.

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/design-process/invoicing-tips/>

Design Instruct: A New Resource for the Design Community

Almost two years ago I got to know Jacob Gube of [Six Revisions](#) as both of us had relatively new blogs in the design community. Since then I've followed Six Revisions as it has grown to become one of the leading blogs on web design and development with over 40,000 subscribers.

If you follow Six Revisions you know that Jacob is a very talented designer, developer, and writer. Today he and his brother Isaac have launched their latest project, [Design Instruct](#), which will provide high quality content related to visual arts and communication.

Design Instruct has launched today with a tutorial, [How to Make a Vibrant Portfolio Web Design in Photoshop](#)

If you're interested in design tutorials and articles I recommend that you subscribe to the [Design Instruct RSS feed](#) or [follow them on Twitter](#). I'm sure Isaac and Jacob will turn Design Instruct into an excellent resource for designers. They're also looking for writers, so if you are interested see their [writing guidelines](#).

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/site-news/design-instruct/>

Showcase of Buttons in Web Design

Button design is usually a subtle element to a web design, but it can have a significant impact on the overall look and usability of the site. In this post we'll showcase a variety of types and styles of buttons. Hopefully this showcase can provide you with some inspiration and ideas for your own work.

[Epic Event](#)

[Elegant Themes](#)

[Zendesk](#)

[HelpSpot](#)

[Converse](#)

[Save the Songs](#)

[Blogs.mu](#)

[Line Ascensori](#)

[Storenvly](#)

[MailChimp](#)

[Colorburned](#)

[Onehub](#)

[Markup4U](#)

[Social Jitney](#)

[VideoTeaching](#)

[Xero](#)

['47](#)

[Pastebot](#)

[Bara' Mail](#)

[MediaLoot](#)

[Design Bombs](#)

[SlideDeck](#)

[Benestar](#)

[GreenTent](#)

[XHTML This](#)

[Pixel Crayons Small Business](#)

[Dave Myers](#)

[The Sak](#)

[The Odin](#)

[Art in My Coffee](#)

[Project 365](#)

[Ronnie San](#)

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[Button Design Showcase](#)[50+ Gorgeous Navigation Menus](#)[50 Gorgeous Navigation Menus - Part II](#)[40 Beautifully-Designed Navigation Menus](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/showcase-button-design/>

25 of the Best Photography Portfolio Sites ? Part III

In the past we've published two posts showcasing excellent photography portfolio sites, and today we're following up with the third edition (see [25 of the Best Photographer Portfolio Websites](#) and [25 of the Best Photographer Portfolio Websites - Part II](#)). If you're looking for more design inspiration from high-quality portfolio sites, see our gallery site [Folio Focus](#).

[World In My Lens](#)

[Josh Tilton](#)

[Warwick Saint](#)

[Levon Biss](#)

[Charles L. Webster](#)

[Lee Towndrow](#)

[Joon Brandt](#)

[Daniel Kennedy](#)

[Brook Pifer](#)

[Simon Plestinjak](#)

[James Maddox](#)

[Martin Gros](#)

[Dave Hill](#)

[Lyndon Wade](#)

[Mareen Fischinger](#)

[Lee Steffen](#)

[Jeremy Charles](#)

[John Wright](#)

[Anna Kuperburg](#)

[Kim Mendoza](#)

[Symbol Photography](#)

[Rocco Studio](#)

[Paolo Santambrogio](#)

[Andreas Smetana](#)

[Steven Brooks](#)

[Picture Report](#)

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<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/photography-sites/>

15 Resources for Easily Creating Web Forms

Almost every website needs some type of form, whether it be a contact/feedback form, a registration form, a survey, or an order form. Despite the fact that forms are a necessity for just about every project, designers and developers can often be frustrated by the process of creating them, especially more advanced forms.

There are a number of resources available that have been created to make it easier for designers, developers, and website owners to quickly and easily create attractive, usable forms without the need to code. In this post we'll look at some of the best options available.

The resources featured in this post include some free options and a number of paid options. Most of the paid options include a lot of features, and in many cases the ability to integrate your forms with PayPal or other payment gateways.

Resources for Creating Forms:

[FormSpring](#)

With FormSpring you can create standard contact forms, set up surveys, accept donations, manage event registrations and more. The form builder will allow you to easily create forms without the need for coding, and FormSpring helps you to manage the data that is collected through the forms (store in a database, export to Excel, or use the API). You can even use a payment integration feature. A free plan is available that allows 3 forms with 10 fields and 50 saved entries per month, and paid plans range from \$14 - \$159 per month.

[Wufoo](#)

Wufoo's HTML form builder makes it easy to create contact forms, surveys, registrations, and online payments forms. You can choose from an existing template or customize it to meet your needs. Wufoo also includes some useful reporting tools to help you analyze the data that is being collected. A free plan is available that allows for 1 user, 3 forms, 3 reports, 10 fields, and 100 entries per month (with some limited features). Paid plans range from \$9.95 - \$199.95 per month.

[Icebrg](#)

Icebrg can be used to create contact forms, registration forms, surveys, application forms, and more. Setting up a new form is easy, and you can view data from submissions, export the data to Excel, and set up payment integration. No free plan or trial is available. Prices range from \$9 per month (10 forms and 500 entries per month) to \$199 per month.

[FormSite](#)

FormSite has over 100 pre-built forms that can easily be customized to meet your own needs. You can create contact forms, surveys, registration forms, order forms, and more. There is a free account available that allows you to manage 5 forms and 100 submissions per month. The lowest-priced ad-free plan costs \$19.95 per month or \$199.95 per year.

[FormExperts](#)

FormExperts includes more than 100 templates to help you create a variety of different types of forms. The online form builder allows to you easily create forms without any coding. You can set up autoresponders, custom "thank you" pages, format the emails that you'll receive, and more. A free 10-day trial is available, and paid plans start at \$7 per month. Plans that allow you to accept payments start at \$17 per month.

[MachForm](#)

MachForm helps you to create PHP forms without the need to code. It is a self-hosted solution option that stores all form submissions in a MySQL database. A single-site license costs \$39 and an unlimited license costs \$199.

[Email Me Form](#)

Email Me Form is a free online service that helps you to create HTML and PHP forms. You can upgrade to a plus plan for \$9.95 per form which means that you will not have to include a link back to Email Me Form, unlimited forms, and some other features.

[FormLogix](#)

FormLogix allows you to create a variety of types of forms (contact and feedback forms, surveys and polls, registrations, invitations, online payments, and more, without coding. A free trial is available for private use (only the account owner can submit forms) and paid plans are available in a few different types. You can pay per form (\$3.99 per form per month for 12 months), per submission (starting at \$50 for 100 submissions), or VIP (\$125 for one month with unlimited use).

[FormAssembly](#)

FormAssembly allows you to create a wide variety of forms, including contact forms, registration forms, and order forms. There is a free ad-supported plan that will allow you to try out the service. Paid plans range from \$9 - \$34 per month, or you can choose a pay-as-you-go plan.

[Visitor Contact](#)

With Visitor Contact you can create contact forms with a sticky contact button. Features include auto responders, the option to show a map of your location on forms, and the ability to export form data. A [WordPress plugin](#) is also available. Visitor Contract is a free resource.

[Contactable](#)

Contactable is a jQuery plugin from theodin.co.uk that makes it simple to create contact and feedback forms.

WordPress Plugins:

For WordPress users and developers there are a number of plugins that will help you to create forms. Here is a look at some of the best.

[Gravity Forms](#)

Gravity Forms is a premium plugin for WordPress (\$39 for single-site license) that makes it quick and easy to create forms for a variety of purposes. You can use the forms to create posts (for user-submitted content), create auto responders, and you can manage form submissions through the WordPress dashboard.

[CForms II](#)

CForms II is a powerful contact form plugin that has a lot of features and options. You can use it to create "tell a friend" forms, set up auto responders and more.

[Contact Form 7](#)

Contact Form 7 is a very popular plugin and is a great choice for creating standard contact forms. It's fairly easy to setup and create your own forms, and to insert them into a post or page. You can also customize the emails that you'll receive when a visitor completes the form.

[Fast and Secure Contact Form](#)

Fast and Secure Contact Form will allow you to set up general contact forms and protect them from spammers with CAPTCHAs and Akismet support.

Any Suggestions?

How do you create web forms? Are there other resources that you use aside from those listed here?

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/tools/web-forms/>

30 Beautifully Dark Websites ? Part IV

Some of the most impressive web designs are those that use dark backgrounds effectively. While dark backgrounds can be difficult to work with and may not be ideal for every project, when they're done well the results can be quite impressive. In this post we'll continue a series of showcase posts that we started about two years ago.

[25 Beautifully Dark Website Designs](#)[25 Beautifully Dark Website Designs - Part II](#)[25 Beautifully Dark Website Designs - Part III](#)

[Nue\(me\)dia](#)

[Red Crown Studio](#)

[Lucky Rabbit Films](#)

[Radiate](#)

[Idea Foundry](#)

[Reinvigorate](#)

[Anderbose](#)

[In2media](#)

[Artifice Studios](#)

[To Write Love on Her Arms](#)

[Creative State](#)

[Kinetic Kreaions](#)

[Internet Dreams](#)

[Tap Tapas](#)

[Buzapp](#)

[Mana Music](#)

[Delicious CSS](#)

[Toni and Guy Opticians](#)

[Atebits](#)

[Phusion Passenger](#)

[MephoBox](#)

[No Sleep for Sheep](#)

[Point&Anchor](#)

[Mighty Dream](#)

[Harry J. Husni](#)

[Red Interactive Agency](#)

[Takeover Studio](#)

[h2desk](#)

[Joint Medias](#)

[Phunk'n Creative](#)

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[40 Beautifully Designed Navigation Menus](#)[37 of the Best Web Designs from the Travel Industry](#)[25](#)

[Magazine-Style Layouts for Your Design Inspiration](#)[25 Outstanding Church Websites - Part III](#)[35+ Horizontal Websites for Your Design Inspiration](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/galleries/30-beautifully-dark-websites-part-iv/>

Win a Free Membership to Elegant Themes

Our friends at [Elegant Themes](#) have offered to give away **five** one-year memberships to readers of the Vandelay Design blog! This is a great prize for some lucky bloggers or website owners.

if you're not familiar with Elegant Themes they offer premium WordPress themes on a membership/subscription basis. And the price is a very affordable \$19.95 per year. At the moment there are 30 themes to choose from, but new themes are added on a pretty steady basis.

Here is a look at a few of the themes that are available (click on any of them to see the theme detail page).

[LightSource](#)

[Cherry Truffle](#)

[OnTheGo](#)

[Deviant](#)

The Contest Rules:

To enter the contest all you have to do is leave a comment on this post. You can tell us why you would like to win, what you would do with the themes, or simply state that you would like to enter. The contents of the comment will not influence who wins, the five winners will be selected by a random integer generator. The contest will end on Friday, January 15th. At that time the winners will be determined and notified by email, and this post will be updated to list the winners.

Good luck!

UPDATE: The contest is now over. Thank you to everyone who participated, and of course to Elegant Themes. Here are the winners.

[Andrew LechlakRahul JoshibjedronaSpace and Timealedesign.it](#)

<http://vandelaydesign.com/blog/site-news/elegant-themes/>
