



Flash Animation

What is Flash?

A product produced by Macromedia, Flash is in essence an animation program for the web. Your web browser will try and download it the first time you come across a website that uses it. However as your browser downloads the latest version it needs to view the animation you may end up downloading it more than once. Single animations can be added to an HTML website or an entire website can be built in Flash.

Why use Flash?

Flash enables you to create some really interesting effects in the browser. You may have had a funny animated email sent to you by a friend, this is usually a Flash animation. You can add sound and interactivity to Flash, for example you can animate a box to open when you click it.

Websites written in HTML are limited to what graphical functionality you can have. Flash enables you to create many more exciting visual options, however this comes at a price.

Why shouldn't you use Flash?

HTML is basic and very quick to download. Download speed, even with the expansion of broadband (40% are still on dialup) is still very important. When you browse the web you make split second decisions on whether or not to stay on a site. If a site takes too long to download you will probably lose interest. To create animations in Flash that are worth having produces large files; these take time to download and the majority of users simply can't be bothered to wait. Think how long you are willing to spend waiting for a website to download; if your company's site takes longer than that then you could be losing potential customers.

What are the costs of Flash?

Flash animations are time consuming to build, which means they are expensive, as most web development is based on time. They are also compiled, which means you need the original file the animation was made from to be able to alter flash items on your website. If you are having any Flash animation on your site, ensure the designer provides you with the original .fla file, so you can always get a different company to make changes later on should you wish.