

# **The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) website in the context of sustainable development**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to examine one real world e-business system in this case [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org) website (International Institute for Sustainable Development) through specific standard website specifications or checklists. Website was evaluated through eight different sets of criteria. Website [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org) is compared to standard criteria and results revealed that website [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org) have some weaknesses but also and strengths. Findings show that website has good inflow of information but organization and positioning of data is very poor. In the present time, most of the importance is given to the e-business system due to the radical changes in technology. Internet is a huge market and in order to succeed website need to have certain criteria which will attract customers and retain them.

**Keywords:** e-business, sustainable development, environmental impacts, IISD

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is a Canadian-based, public policy research institute that has a long history of conducting cutting-edge research into sustainable development. IISD promotes the transition toward a sustainable future; they seek to demonstrate how human ingenuity can be applied to improve the well-being of the environment, economy and society.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.iisd.org/about/>

When you think of the world as a system over space, you grow to understand that air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia, and that pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia.

And when you think of the world as a system over time, you start to realize that the decisions our grandparents made about how to farm the land continue to affect agricultural practice today; and the economic policies we endorse today will have an impact on urban poverty when our children are adults.

We also understand that quality of life is a system, too. It's good to be physically healthy, but what if you are poor and don't have access to education? It's good to have a secure income, but what if the air in your part of the world is unclean? And it's good to have freedom of religious expression, but what if you can't feed your family?

The concept of sustainable development is rooted in this sort of systems thinking. It helps us understand ourselves and our world. The problems we face are complex and serious—and we can't address them in the same way we created them. But we can address them.

It's that basic optimism that motivates IISD's staff, associates and board to innovate for a healthy and meaningful future for this planet and its inhabitant.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.iisd.org/sd>

In present time there are two main drivers that change global economy. First one is huge development of technology (Internet) and all businesses are radically shifting toward the sustainable development. These drivers can transform companies and markets.

The world is in the midst of multidimensional transformation: technological, economic, social, cultural and political (Handzic et al. 2010). To be successful in nowadays needed is to improve in technological direction especially information systems. Competition is very fierce so organizations must have a website based system. Internet as a whole is a very dynamic and powerful generator so website needs to be day to day updated and to follow some general rules and criteria. These criteria (indicators) are a measure for a well prepared website and provide a huge contribution to the quality of website.

Indicators don't guarantee results. But results are impossible without proper indicators. And proper indicators, in themselves, can produce results.<sup>47</sup>

### **3. Research Method**

This study was examined through specific criteria for website. It examines website through nine different sets of criteria:<sup>48</sup>

- 1) First impression - is very important. If the website is not functioning very well and if it is not accurate than potential customers create a bad image about it and they may not return back.
- 2) Navigation - stands for being offered an easy way to find way around the website.
- 3) Content - stands for useful and valuable information's and key to good content is that it must be extensive and original.
- 4) Attractors - draw individuals and other organizations to the website.
- 5) Findability - stands for ease of finding website in the first place.
- 6) Making contact- many organizations demand some contact information for interacting and negotiating.

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47 . [http://www.iisd.org/pdf/s\\_ind\\_2.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/s_ind_2.pdf)

48 <http://www.mcil.co.uk/review/7-10-criteria.htm>

- 7) Browser Compatibility – make the website visit a much more useful and pleasant experience.
- 8) User satisfaction – satisfying the users is essential part so the users will come again.
- 9) Other useful information – giving additional information will build confidence in customer’s minds

**4. Results**

Evaluation of www.iisd.org website

	Score
<b>1. FIRST IMPRESSIONS</b>	
URL	8
Download time - size of home page	10
Look and feel - readability	5
Need to download software *	8
Home page on one screen (above the fold)	7
Unique Selling Point (USP) or Value Proposition	10
Ability to take action (Key action point – KAP)	9
Feeling of wanting more - depth of site	9
Contact details	10
Credential validation - certifications, associations	0
Statement from management	10
Use of attractors	10
Are you made to register to get into site?	10

<b>Total score for section (max 130)</b>	106
<b>2. NAVIGATION</b>	
Ease of use	6
Site map	10
Return to Home Page from any page	10
Internal search engine	10
Internal links	10
Broken links	10
Text as well as graphic links (ALT tags)	10
Navigational links visible	10
Opens multiple windows	10
<b>Total score for section (max 90)</b>	86
<b>3. CONTENT</b>	
Useful information	10
Degree of substantiated information	9
Level of interaction	8
Use of valuable graphics	8
Use of valuable animation	7
Use of valuable sound	2
Reviews, testimonials and certifications	10

Content in digestible quantity	7
Up-to-dateness	10

Terms and conditions	10
FAQ's	10
Availability of follow up discussion	10
Total score for section(max 120)	101
<b>4. ATTRACTORS</b>	
Invitation to register for something	10
Competitions	6
Special offers	7
Freebies	9
Breaking news	10
External links	9
Newsletter	10
Other (Specify)	

Total score for section (max 70)	61
<b>5. FINDABILITY</b>	
Intuitive URL	5
Designed for search engine performance	8
Intuitive keywords	8
Use of metatags	9
Advertising	
On-line advertising	3
Off-line advertising	0
On-line recommend a friend	0
Partner and affiliate sites	8
Total score for section (max 80)	41
<b>6. MAKING CONTACT</b>	
Email and other details visible	10

Use of online forms	10
Telephone contact number provided	10
Telephone call back offered	10
Total score for section(max 40)	40
<b>7. BROWSER COMPATIBILITY</b>	
Internet Explorer	8
Google Chrome	9
Mozilla Firefox	9
Resizeability	10
Total score for section (40)	36
<b>8. USER SATISFACTION</b>	
Robustness/reliability of the site	9
Clicks to completion	10
Acknowledge order/request	0

Order/request tracking online	0
Retain personal information to minimise detail Entering	0
Total score for section (max 50)	19
<b>9. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION</b>	
List of career opportunities	10
Contact details for HR department	0
Financial results	10
Up-to-date financial news	8
Stock prices	0
History of the company	10
Management and geographical structure of company	
Mission statement	10
Up-to-date press coverage	10
Total score for section (max 90)	40
<b>OVERALL TOTAL SCORE (max 710)</b>	<b>530</b>

## Main Findings

Criteria	Website score	Max. score
1. First impression	106	130
2. Navigation	86	90
3. Content	101	120
4. Attractors	61	70
5. Findability	41	80
6. Making contact	40	40
7. Browser Compatibility	36	40
8. User satisfaction	19	50
9. Other useful infor.	40	90
Overall total score	530	710

In the first impression URL is short but not very intuitive. Size of the home page is not exceeding normal 50kb which is a good point. Main disadvantage is that text is too much cluttered on the website and another problem is there is a need for installation of java plug-in which can make problems for beginners. Home page is needed to be scrolled down to read all the text instead of being it centered on one place. Main advantage is when entering website immediately objectives and usage of website are well known. Contact details are easy accessible and there is no need for any registration.

Navigation system is pretty good developed. Site index and access from any links are working. There is a search engine so all data can be looked up through search engine. When entering into many internal links there is always an option to return to a home page with one single click.

Content is mostly filled with great information which is needed for those groups of users. There is a usage of audio and video on website and many links which will guide you to the needed information but disadvantage is that text is very cluttered in many places so it is hard readable. All information's are always updated and content is available in different languages.

In attractors section main advantage is that there is no need for the registration on the website so all users can easily reach all information without annoying memberships and every time there are some breaking news which will give users reasons to come back. Everything is provided with external links and main point is that website has its own newsletter for the ir users.

Findability section has many disadvantages such as online advertising and offline advertising. Advertising is not so much developed but rather they focus more on the good keywords and short URL.

Making contact gathered full points for it good and well organized contact section. Briefly everything is explained. There are all needed e-mails, addresses and their location of departments. On the website there is Contact Us section which provide needed information.

Browser Compatibility is doing just fine especially on Google Chrome but there may be some small resolution problems on Internet Explorer. A resize ability problem occurs when resizing the browser.

User satisfaction is a major part and all attention should be given to this part. Reliability of the website is very good since website is stable and didn't crash any time. Clicks to completion are short so information are easy accessible.

On the website other useful information are also provided. Financial statements, Career Opportunities, Board Members, Calendar of Events, FAQ, and Sustainability report.

### **Implications**

During the research there were some implications like browser compatibility since it is hard to evaluate browser compatibility when all computers had already installed java flash player or other plug-ins so browser don't recognize any problems when website is opened but having a fresh installed copy of windows would show different. Another implication occurred when evaluating the frames of the website, extensions.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There were several limitations due to the lack of professional staff. For the better evaluation of the website there is a need of professional computer engineers which will also evaluate the website through the html codes. Computer engineers knows more about website extensions and plug-ins so future research would be more focused on evaluating a website with harsh criteria and evaluation of website through the survey of random chosen people which will give their opinion of the website. There is a need for larger group of people which will divide tasks and provide more data about every section. Survey will give additional information where possible outcomes and results would change due to the positive or negative feedback of the surveyed users.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

This study examined how the e-business system correlates and helps to deal with sustainable development. In present times where scarce resources are lacking than need of retaining it is important so awareness of sustainable factor through the website is much easier since it affects larger groups of people. Now, everyone is trying to promote its business through the internet. In order to gain competitive advantage on the internet there is a need for a good and well developed website. To gain statuses of nearly perfect website there have to be some criteria so the users can find and meet their requirements when searching online.

To gain competitive advantage usage of links, visual animations, updated news, customer oriented website must be given in certain ratio. Website [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org) (The International Institute for Sustainable Development) give users all information about the sustainable development and putting the awareness of sustainable development on higher level.

**Screen shot of the International Institute for Sustainable Development website**

Source: <http://www.iisd.org/>

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