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My Dumbest Marketing Blunder And How You Can Avoid It

By John Colanzi

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When I started submitting Ezine articles, I never realized their true power. I was just happy to see the articles being published.

I expected to get some traffic and hopefully some sales. I would have laughed if you told me those early words would still be floating around the web over five years later.

Well, smack me on the wrist and call me shorty, they are. You would think that's a good thing and it is except... That's the operative word, "except." The little critters are still multiplying around the web like rabbits in heat, but there is a little problem. Actually, the problem isn't so little.

This darn problem haunts me. At least a couple of times a week it drives me insane. Whenever I run across it I feel like the dullest axe in the shed.

If I were double jointed, I'd kick myself in the "hello there."

So what is this dumb mistake that: Has me pulling my hair out by the roots Has me kicking myself over and over Haunts me like that house in Amityville

Outdated resource boxes with links leading to that dreaded 404 error.

I'm afraid to guess how much money and traffic I'm losing. It's a nightmare. Those babies are doing their part, but crazy John has made the ultimate dumb mistake.

How did this happen? How could I end up looking like the "village idiot?"

The only answer I can give is, "I didn't realize."

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I never realized how viral articles were. I had no idea that little articles could circle the globe for years.

I didn't see the big picture. I wrote those resource boxes with no regard for the future.

How can you avoid making the same mistake?

1. If you're going to promote an affiliate program, don't link directly.

Sometimes programs just disappear. Other times, you may find the program hasn't lived up to your expectations.

Set up a redirect page on your website. If the program disappears, or you no longer wish to promote it, you can reset the page to lead wherever you choose.

2. Don't lead directly to your opt in list.

You never know when a list may change their pricing or services. For one reason or another you may change listservs.

A better option is to set up a page on your site to capture addresses. If you leave your present service, you can edit the page to lead to your new list.

If I had set up my links according to option number one for affiliate programs, or two for list building, I'd have kept the leads flowing and the orders coming for years.

Creating killer articles can drive traffic and pull in profits for years. So avoid the mistakes of this "dumb monkey" and reap the full rewards of your efforts.

Wishing You Success, John Colanzi

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Avoid These 5 Web Site Blunders!

By Alexandria Brown

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The Web is intended to help people find information quickly and easily. So why do so many sites make it difficult for users to get what they need?

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As president of a copywriting firm that writes and edits dozens of online projects a year, I've come across several common blunders that prevent effective communication via the Web. Here are my top five:

BLUNDER #1: Hiding who you are and what you do.

It's sad that many sites make it a challenge to figure out what they're about. Yes, it may be cool to have a giant dancing logo on your home page, but don't forget **WHY** your visitors are there: to learn what you can **DO** for them! Be sure your home page includes a **short overview** that clearly and concisely describes what you have to offer. It's also a good idea to repeat your tagline or a short mission statement on **every page** of your site. Why? People can pop in and land on an inside page via a search engine/directory link that you may not be aware of. Make sure they know who your are right away.

BLUNDER #2: Writing for print.

Reading copy on a computer screen is different than reading printed text. We read online text more slowly, and we tend to scan rather than read because, visually, the words are harder to digest. Help your users find key words and concepts quickly by making your copy "scannable." Instead of intro paragraphs, use subheads. Use shorter sentences, paragraphs, and pages. Use bulleted lists. And use hyperlinks to give readers more info if they want it.

BLUNDER #3: Writing too formally.

Online readers expect a personal, upbeat tone. If you write like a bureaucrat, you risk turning off many users. Think **ACTIVE** voice rather than passive. (For example, instead of saying "the computer must be turned on" say "turn on the computer.") Write to your customers like you'd talk to them, and nix any industry jargon they may not understand.

Interestingly, I occasionally see the opposite problem. For example, a respected law firm's site shouldn't shout excitedly at customers as in a sweepstakes offer. Ask yourself: "How do my customers want to be talked to?" and **THAT'S** your answer.

BLUNDER #4: Designing cryptic navigation.

Unfortunately, many sites don't seem to be truly designed with the

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end user in mind. Consider why users are visiting your site, then turn those reasons into your main navigation choices. Try to limit them to 8 or less. Then, create sub-navigation within those choices. But if there's an especially popular page on your site, why not put a special direct link from the home page? For example, on the home page of our site, we keep a direct link to our latest article or information about new awards we've won.

BLUNDER #5: Making it difficult to contact you or place an order.

I recently visited the Web site of an acclaimed furniture manufacturer, and I was ready to order one of their renowned ergonomic chairs. I clicked around, found the chair I wanted, and then quickly grew irate. Not only couldn't I find where to order it online, I couldn't even find their phone number to call and order one or find the nearest dealer! The results? One lost customer.

Put your phone number, an e-mail link, and a link to your order form (if you have one) on every page of your Web site. Don't rely on your users having the patience to take a few extra steps. Make it as easy as possible, and they'll be much more likely to follow through (and return)!

Alexandria Brown's FREE biweekly e-zine gives "how-to" tips on writing compelling copy for Web sites, brochures, and e-zines. Learn how to **ATTRACT NEW CLIENTS** and strengthen your customer relationships! Subscribe today at <http://www.akbwriting.com> or via <mailto:AKBMarCom-On@lists.webvalence.com>

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