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Top 10 Biggest Mistakes of Website Design

By Scott Whitney

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Author: Scott Whitney

Contact: swhitney@whitcom.com

Website: <http://www.whitcom.com>

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By Scott Whitney

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Here's a seemingly easy question: What is the goal of EVERY website in the world?

Ask this question of most website developers, and the answer will be the same; "Uh, that depends on what you want, Mr. Cu\$tomers."

The *real* answer, however, is quite clear:

The goal of EVERY website in the world is to increase the

probability of engagement (with the visitor, so you can sell, support, or tell your story), and decrease the risk of exit (from the site, resulting in competitive engagement).

To that end, there are three (3) areas of interest that must be addressed when developing and maintaining a website:

- ~ Technical
- ~ Design
- ~ Marketing

Technical Mistakes

1. Not taking advantage of the medium (or, I Can't Breathe!). Surprisingly enough, some of the BIGGEST Websites in the world fail to actually put the technology available to them to work. What do we mean? Specifically, DOES THE SITE B-R-E-A-T-H-E?

A Breathe-able site is one that is able to automatically reformat its content to fit a user's screen, regardless of their screen size. When designing a website, in order to make the experience pleasurable and as user-friendly as possible, make sure that regardless of the visitor's screen size, the contents fits perfectly. In other words, if you design your site for a user with a 640 x 480 screen, anybody with a bigger screen (800 x 600, 1024 x 768, etc.) will be forced to look at a BUNCH of white space.

Interestingly enough, folks who come from the desktop publishing world create many of the sites that do this. And while they often make pretty Websites, theirs is a world where a dynamic, re-sizable "page" didn't exist. Well, it does today, so if you REALLY

want to make the experience a pleasurable one for your visitor, take the time to make your site BREATHE!

2. Forcing a visitor to scroll from left to right

Have you even been to a Website where you found yourself having to scroll the screen left to right to read all the content? Chances are, you have. Chances are also that after a while, you decided against doing much of it. This is mainly because, while it is intuitive to read down a page, it's less so left to right.

The visual distraction of having content cut off the right side is very disconcerting. You'll see a great many sites do this for the simple reason that the developer forced an absolute size width of his web page, instead of allowing it to fit within the users screen (see #1). Bottom line? If you make your visitor scroll from left to right, they'll likely stroll to another site.

3. Dead Links

There really is no excuse for this one. Every Website development environment worth its salt has the ability to check the integrity of all its internal links. And although it may not be able to check the integrity of links that lead a user somewhere outside of your site, if it's important enough to link to, isn't it important enough to see if it exists?

Design Mistakes

4. Ransom Note Design

Sites that suffer from this mistake fall into three categories;

~ Sites that spent time on creating a nice home page, but forgot that a visitor might actually go beyond that page,

~ Sites whose webmaster is determined to use every color, font, graphic, and animated logo and cool Flash movie he can get his hands on, and

~ Sites that fail to use a consistent formatting technique.

For those folks in the first category, you're simply setting up your visitor to be VERY disappointed once he ventures beyond your opening screen. It also implies a lack of follow through and continuity, which does not reflect well on the Website owner.

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Our friends in the second category are no different than the people who couldn't wait to try every font available when WYSIWYG word processors came out. Problem is, nobody reads this stuff. Period.

And folks in the third category choose to underline words leading people to believe they're hyperlinks or forget to use consistent font formatting (ie serif versus sans serif fonts) on similar pages. Besides looking goofy, it again reflects poorly on the Website owner's attention to detail.

5. Poor Navigational Method

Simply put, if a user can't tell where he is within a given website, at all times, they will eventually become disoriented. There should always be a consistent navigational method through the site that allows the user to know exactly where he is, and how he can get elsewhere. If you make it hard for your visitors to find their way around your site, they'll find their way to somebody else's site.

6. Graphics (Yes, Size Does Matter)

There is nothing more annoying than waiting minutes for a page to load. And while many folks are connecting to the Internet much faster than ever before, if you don't design your site for the lowest common denominator, you'll end up turning away the vast majority of users who still surf the web at modem speeds.

We understand that graphics make for a much more visually appealing environment. Just make sure to use the smallest graphic size possible.

7. Browser Bias

Oh sure, it would appear that Microsoft rules the world, but does that mean all other browsers should concede defeat? NEVER!

When designing a website, it is important to recognize that although the Microsoft browser owns the majority of the browser market, it does not own it all! Depending on the site (and more importantly, the content of the site), I have seen the Microsoft browser accounting for between 50 – 80% of the traffic. That means that 20 – 50% of the users ARE NOT using the Microsoft browser. This, my friends, is important to remember!

The test of a great website designer is that he/she ensures that their site looks and responds the same, regardless of the browser

being used. The truth is, without exception, almost EVERY website I inspect fails this test.

Why? Because most WYSIWYG design programs do not write code that works the same for all browsers. And most designers are too lazy to take the time and test their work in both the Netscape and Microsoft browsers (Opera & Mozilla too, for that matter).

Because the goal of every website in the WORLD is the same, designing a site that ignores a particular browser is tantamount to designing a site that ignores a particular visitor. Ask your sale, support, or marketing VP if they want to ignore upwards of 50% of their visitors. Once they get off the floor, they'll answer that question with the obvious response.

Marketing Mistakes

8. Lacking a Clearly Defined Message.

It is surprising how many folks rush out to show off their latest design triumph without asking themselves this simple question, "Who is your target audience?" Without being able to clearly articulate who you're trying to attract, you'll have a very

difficult time designing a site that gets your message across.

Equally important is to realize that having too many targets is as risky as not having any. Just as you can't be all things to all people, neither can a well designed Website. Pick your target, and you'll be surprised how much easier it is to decide what should or should not go on your site.

9. Stagnation is not Where Single Deer Live.

Unless you are about to close the doors on your company, there is always something web-worthy for your site. By establishing a pattern of constantly adding or changing information on your site, you'll entice visitors to keep coming back for more. Can't think of anything to add? Then why should a visitor return?

10. Under Construction

Do not invite a customer to a section that has not been completed. Either hide the section, or get enough content in that area to make it valuable. Anything less is a waste of the visitor's time, and is disappointing.

Even more concerning; if a visitor believes a section/page of your site is "always under construction", the chances that he'll mosey that way when you have completed it are nil.

Scott Whitney is a speaker, trainer, consultant, author and expert in website development and broadcast campaign marketing. Visual examples of the above mistakes, along with five bonus "mistakes" is yours free at <http://www.whitcom.com>.

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Five Common Web Design Mistakes

By Charles Nixon III

There are often many mistakes encountered when creating a webpage or website. Learn about the top five website mistakes, and how to avoid them.

Mistake #1

Web page size. If your website takes longer than 10–15 seconds to load you should consider optimizing it for the web. This is one of the biggest mistakes a web designer can make. You may have cable and love to fill your website with graphics, but if your visitors don't have cable or a fast connection at all your chances of getting them to wait that 10 to 15 seconds for your page to load is very slim.

Mistake #2

Flashy ads. Ok, so you have to bring in some cash some how right? So you sign up to a bunch of banner ad affiliate programs. Only problem with this is their banners are animated and constantly flashing while your visitors view your website. This can be good in some cases for getting some extra cash. But visitors can be easily annoyed by these banners.

If your trying to get customers, having these flashy banners increases your chances of your visitors leaving. Lots of people may be drawn into these ads (probably your best customers) and if they click that ad, they are now a customer to someone else thanks to your affiliate program.

Mistake #3

Confusing Navigation. Before you build a website you should make a sitemap for how everything is going to be setup. Come up with a plan to have some form of contact information on each page. If your visitor comes to a page and wants to purchase something and they cant find a contact link they will most likely change their mind while searching for it. Keep your navigation consistent on each page. If your visitor has to learn to use a different type of navigation system on every page they will become easily annoyed.

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Mistake #4

Confusing Content. You want to make everything easy to read and navigate. If you know someone that's in their teen years you should come up with some questions to ask them about your website. Like: What do you think my site is about? Would you buy this product on my website? Can you understand the information on this(blank.html)page?

If you can get a teen, or even any average person to answer these questions honestly you can find ways to change your setup so that anyone and everyone is drawn in to purchase from you.

Mistake #5

Advertising. When you advertise your website the number one thing that you do not want to do is spam. It is very easy to advertise your website all over the web for free! You can use forums, article submission groups, online communities, chat groups, news feeds, and much more. If you do resort to spam this could hurt your website sales. A lot of web surfers will go around and if they find spam they will report it to someone that will post it on a website that degrades or gives bad reviews on your website.

If you can avoid these five mistakes that almost every webmaster experiences than you will be on your way to success in no time.

Charles Nixon – Website Designer Driven by Creativity Building websites to increase sales, and build web presence Did you start your business to create a website? or to run your business? With competitive pricing and your project delivered on time and on budget

may be the

web design firm for you!

Five Common Web Design Mistakes

MISTAKES

Picking Out The Best Web Design For Your Website

Top 5 Search Engine Optimization Mistakes

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Gate Crash into the Interior Design Industry.

Money Making Flashy Designs in a Box

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