Why People HATE YOUR WEBSITE

WHY PROSPECTS HATE YOUR WEBSITE

No one designs a website to deliberately turn off clients, prospects and search engines, but all too often, that is the end result.

Whether you are planning your first website or considering a redesign of your existing site, spend a few minutes to discover the common mistakes which turn off prospective customers. These common mistakes typically fall into one of the following categories: **Design, Content, Conversion or Search.**

In this short eBook, we will look at ways to avoid mistakes, enhance your website's performance, convert prospects to clients and track the results.

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DESIGN: MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE

First impressions are important, but good web design is about more than a pretty image. A great website should look good, of course, but it also needs to provide an enjoyable user experience, function correctly and give people a reason to come back or call you. At the core of good design is simplicity and ease of navigation.

But sometimes, despite your best efforts, it all goes wrong. Here are some reasons people may be clicking away from your website, never to return:

BAD FIRST IMPRESSION:

You only have one chance to make a good first impression. If you aren't wowing your customer in the first second your page loads, it may already be too late. Are you falling into these common traps?

1. *Irritating flash animations, autoplay videos and audio tracks* – You think these tactics are cute, clever and you spent a fortune to create them so you're going to use them, darn it. However, many people see these videos and noises that start without their consent to be annoying at best, intrusive at worst.

   In many product categories, your prospects are viewing your website in the office or another location where the automatic audio track will be disruptive. Instead of turning off their speaker, the fastest way to turn off the sound is to simply leave..

   Also keep in mind, your nifty Flash animation (or worse, your Flash navigation bar) is absolutely invisible on an iPhone, iPad and other mobile devices. With the mobile market increasing, you cannot afford to make your site invisible to so many people.

2. *Slow loading pictures* - Did you forget to convert those high resolution images to small, quick-loading GIFs? By the time the image has loaded, your prospect has made a snack, gone for a walk or found someone else to do what you do.

3. *Too much, too much, too much* **–** Imagine walking into a room where many people are shouting and waving banners and pictures at you. Even if f you walked in to the room for a specific purpose, the experience might be so confusing or overwhelming that you might simple turn around and leave.   Unfortunately, too many websites create that same feeling.

   A call to action is important, but every inch of your website does not need to be crammed with **"CLICK HERE," "WATCH THIS VIDEO," "BUY NOW" or "DOWNLOAD THIS WHITE PAPER."** Research indicates the more choices you give people; the less likely they are to make any choice. Too much content and too many calls to action on may actually drive prospects away.

   There is no need to cram every service and every product you offer onto the homepage or tell visitors everything they need to know all at once. Be selective and don't be afraid to break the content up with a link to another page. If people don't follow the link, you have not made a compelling case for the follow.

   > There is no need to cram every product or service onto your homepage.

4. *Unreadable text on dark backgrounds* **-** It may look cool and edgy, but if you want people to be able to read your site, this may not be a good choice for anything other than headlines or calls to action. As people age, it gets harder and harder to read small print on dark backgrounds.

5. *Outdated design* - Web design trends continue to change. What was cool and hip a few years ago may now look outdated. For most businesses, a website refresh or redesign every 2-3 years will keep you looking current and modern, not stodgy and old-fashioned.

FUNCTION

No matter how pretty your website is, it's never going to net you a single customer if no one can see it. Are you falling into these functional traps?

1. *You don't look good on all browsers* –The days of Internet Explorer dominance are long gone. At a minimum, your website needs to render effectively in not only the most current versions of Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Android and Opera, but also in a few outdated browsers which still have a huge market share. Is it a pain to do? Yes. But your website will render differently in each browser, and if you aren't showing up properly, your customer will find a website that will.

2. *Mobile, mobile, mobile* – According to one study, more than 40 percent of all Americans over the age of 13 use their smart phones to browse the Internet. If your website doesn't display or doesn't display properly on mobile platforms, you're missing potential customers.

PROSPECTS GET LOST

Can visitors find the information they are looking for within one or two clicks? If not, the second click will probably be followed by a trip back to Google for another source of information.

1. *Confusing navigation* - You think those page names are cute, different from the normal "Contact Us" and "About Us" headings. Those are *so* boring, right? Yes, but sometimes things are standard for a reason. Not sure if your navigation works? Watch someone who is not familiar with your business try to find information on your website. If they can't access the information quickly, it is time to review your navigation.

> **NAVIGATION TEST:**
>
> **Watch someone try to locate information on your website.**

2. *Hard to find information -* Is your page cluttered with so much information visitors don't know where to start? Today's web trends are simple, clean and clear. Make it easy for people to find what they are looking for. They may leave quickly once they do, but they will enjoy the visit.

3. *Assuming everyone thinks the same way* - Some people are visual and will be drawn to graphics; others will follow a more logical path to information. Offer multiple ways for visitors to find information. Take advantage of search tools, call to action images and standard navigation links to help visitors find what they came for.

4. *Hard to find contact information* - Websites have replaced the phone book. Today, one of the most common reasons for people to come to your website is to find your contact information. Is your phone number or a clearly marked contact us link visible on the home page?

   When a visitor arrives, do you offer multiple ways to contact you? While a contact form is a good start, it is not an acceptable replacement for providing a phone number, email and street address. A page with a contact form but no other way to get in touch gives visitors the feeling you don't want to actually talk to them. It raises concerns about how responsive you will be.

CONTENT: IT'S WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE

It's great to have a beautiful site, but ultimately, people are coming to your online home to find information. It might be a list of services, a contact number or just a better idea of who you are. The design of the site should support and accent the copy on your site, adding to the overall experience. Design is not the main attraction--it's a backdrop.

You are not your customer, but you need to think like them and understand their desires to market to them, and ultimately to effectively fulfill their needs. Make your website a resource for your clients, not an exercise in ego.

> **You are NOT your customer.**
> **But you need to THINK like them!**

Are you falling into these copywriting pitfalls?

1. **Copy which talks about you, not me** - Yes, it is your website. But here is the hard, cold truth: No one actually cares about your years in business, mission statement and return policy. That information only becomes relevant once they are convinced you understand their business and can fix their problem in a way that won't break the bank.

   Is your copy to "you" focused? Let's find out. Take a look at your web copy. Look for references to your client. How often do you say things like: you, your, your company, your problem, companies like you? Next, count the number of times you refer to yourself. How often do you use words like "we," "us," or "our"?

   A customer-focused website will have twice as many client references. If your ratio is lower, you may be falling into the ego trap.

2. **Technical jargon** - If a prospect knows what HSPF, SEER, AFUE, VSP, SEO and other acronym jumbles stood for, would he really need you? Write for the layman, not for someone inside your industry. It can be hard to distance yourself from your business, so have a friend who's unfamiliar with the fine details of your business read the site. Does it still make sense to them?

3. **Graduate level text -** This is a hard one for many people to get over. On the one hand, you want to sound smart. On the other hand, you want people to actually read your content. Remember, even the New York Times is written at an eighth grade level. Why? To make it easy for people to digest information quickly.

4. **Grammar and spelling** - Would you show up to an important business meeting with a mustard stain on your shirt? We hope not. Having poor grammar and spelling is the digital equivalent. Making sure your website is grammatically sound and typo-free contributes to an overall air of competency and care in everything you do.

5. **Irrelevant or overused images -** Pictures are more important than ever - Google and other search engines are doing a much better job of indexing images. The picture gives you one more hook for search. Pictures attract the eye. As people scan your blog archive, they are drawn to the posts with an image. Images can reinforce or expand the ideas presented in the blog post.

   The trick is to pick the right image, something that is attractive **and** relevant. If you can't find something which fits, you might have to create it yourself. You can go out and take a photo, or create a chart or graphic image. Avoid those overused smiling people who don't work for you shaking hands with strangers.

6. **Broken links:** Whether you mean to take the visitor to another page on your site or elsewhere on the Internet, make sure the links work. There is nothing more frustrating to a visitor then a "page not found" error.

7. **_Stale Content_ -** When was the last time you updated your website? For both human visitors and search engines, new information is an important part of attracting visitors, getting them to stay and keeping them coming back.

Visitors and search engines alike expect fresh new content. The easiest way to do this is with a content management systems or CMS. With these web platforms, you're empowered to make simple, necessary changes to your website, including blog posts, web copy or site architecture, with no fuss and no extra charges to web designers.

And if your web designer should ever leave the industry, you can easily turn to others who are familiar with CMS software for help. Common CMS software titles include WordPress, Drupal and Joomla

Curious about what a Wordpress Website looks like? Check out our portfolio for some examples.

SEARCH: DON'T BELIEVE IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME

Unfortunately, there is a lot of conflicting information on the web about search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM), and the rules seem to change daily.

Keywords and Meta tags are no longer enough to drive traffic to the website for your small business. The search engines are getting smarter and they are looking for real, relevant and timely content. Constant updates to your site with real, relevant, useful information are critical if you want to rank well on search engines.

> **You may thing search is about "gaming" the system.**
>
> ## It isn't!

As you read the list you may think winning the attention of search engines is about "gaming" the system. It isn't. It is about content. To attract people and search engines write smart, relevant content and everything else will fall into place. But also make sure you aren't making these common SEO mistakes:

1. *Too many keywords* - More is not better! When it comes to attracting the attention of search engines, adding in a large number of semi-relevant key words will actually lower your search engine rankings. Instead of stuffing each page to capacity, use your blog to create lots of pages and vary the keywords you use.

2. *Irrelevant tags or keywords-* If you want your web site to rank high on specific key word searches, it is not enough to title a page and use the term in keywords and tags. If you want search visibility for a specific key word phrase, make sure you're using it in natural ways throughout the copy of the page as well. But see point one—don't stuff it full of keywords. The key is natural language.

3. *Repetitive page titles and Meta tags - Meta* tags and page titles are the bait which lure search engines. If every page on your site has the same page title and tag, the engines will be less likely to take a closer look. It is fine to have similar phrases, but every page has a reason for its existence. Use page titles to identify the unique reason people should visit your site.

4. *No page titles, slugs or headers -* A worse offense then repeating titles is having none at all. This is your opportunity to lead engines through your website in an organized manner, making sure they notice the most important information.

5. *Old content* – Just like people, search engines get bored. As search engines crawl your site, they look for new content. If they find it, they are more likely to return again and again. If you are neglecting your site, so will Google.

6. *Unlabeled pictures* – Images are searchable too—but only if you tell Google about them. When you add an image to your site, be sure to name it correctly, with keywords and phrases, not a generic title like photo1.jpg. Be sure to include an alt tag (that floating text that shows up when you hover your mouse over an image) and description.

7. *Duplicate content –* Search engines see this as a way to "game" the system. If you share content from other websites don't simply lift the entire article. Not only is this plagiarism and ethically wrong, you aren't helping your search rankings by parroting what others have said.

CONVERSION: DO YOU MAKE PROSPECTS WANT TO COME BACK

In the digital age, your website should be the hub of your marketing activity. Your goal isn't just to drive people to your site, it's to get them to click, buy, call or otherwise do something that gets them involved in your sales cycle. Ask yourself these questions to make the most of your website:

> **Your website is a home, not a museum. People want to do more than look at pictures!**

1. **Nothing for visitors to do when they arrive -** If your website is still simply an online brochure, you are missing a tremendous opportunity to engage visitors. Your website is a home, not a museum. People want to do more when they get there then look at the pictures. Possible activities include the option to leave a comment, download a report, view a video, listen to a testimonial, fill out a survey, search frequently asked questions request a quote or schedule an appointment.

2. **No clear calls to action -** You don't want to overwhelm people with dozens of competing offers, but make sure there are clear paths to conversion forms, resources and tools. A visitor to your website is no good if you never know they were there.

3. **Assuming everyone will surf your website the same way -** Visitors will l enter and exit at different points. If you only have one call to action, you're missing customers. Try adding conversion forms to the bottoms of blog posts or download links on service pages. Let your customers discover the site in their own way.

4. **No response -** Once someone takes the time to comment or download a form, be sure you have a way to keep the conversation going. Monitor your blog for new comments, set up auto responders to acknowledge questions and comments. Consider developing a standard email campaign to send to prospects to keep the conversation going.

5. **No way to share -** You've got great content on your site: fantastic blog posts and stirring videos. Don't stop there. Only a small percentage of your community will come to your site, so make it easy for people to share your content across the web with "tweet this" and "pin this" or "like us" buttons. Just be careful not to over share. You don't need links to every possible social network. Pick the 2 or 3 most relevant to your target customer.

6. **Come on too strong** - Have you ever been to a website where, the moment the page loads, you're immediately bombarded with requests to subscribe to the newsletter, add the blog to your RSS feed, get in touch, stay in touch, love us? Yeah, it's kind of needy, isn't it? Pop overs and pop unders are the online equivalent of coming on too strong. Yes, you want to convert people, but let them understand why they should stay in touch with you before you ask.

7. *Asking too much* - Most prospects are willing to give you their email in exchange for access to information, but when you start asking for full name, mailing address, email addressing, work phone, cell phone, blood type…it's all too much. Whenever you ask for contact information, think about what's really important. For every field you require on your website, you lose a customer. Keep the interaction barrier as low as possible.

MEASURE SUCCESS: TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

You've got a website. You're happy with it. You think you've avoided the major pitfalls we've discussed here. But is it really working? Like every other aspect of your marketing, you need to hold your website accountable, with specific goals and measurements.

If things aren't working, it's time to change. Here are a few things you should measure to make sure you're getting the most from your site:

START WITH ANALYTICS

Do you have an analytics package installed on your website? If not, you need to install one. **NOW!** Many of these, like Google Analytics or WordPress Stats, are free and give you critical insights into visitor's behavior, keyword traffic, bounce rates and other information you need to know.

> **Do you have an analytics package on your website?**
>
> **Install one NOW!**

1. *Evaluate traffic sources* - If you do have analytics software, go ahead and log in and take a look around. How are people finding your site--by typing in your URL, using keywords, clicking through from another source? Or maybe they aren't finding it at all, and you're finding yourself with a paltry handful of visits every day.

2. *Focus on Relevant Key Words* - Take a look at what keywords people are using to find your site. Which ones drive visitors regularly? Try to incorporate those into your web copy and blog posts to improve search engine optimization.

3. *Examine bounce rate* - Your bounce rate is how long people are spending on your site. Is it a short period of time or do they tend to hang around and read multiple pages? What pages are they visiting? Do they hit the home page and run screaming? Do they spend some time looking around and then hit your contact page? These metrics help you better understand your visitor's behavior, and how to use that to help you get sales.

WATCH MORE THAN JUST TRAFFIC

1. *Evaluate conversion* - When prospects get to your website, is there something for them to do? Is there information they want to know about, blog posts they want to read, white papers for them to download, contact us forms to fill out? If so, determine how many people are taking advantage of those activities. If they're not, you might have the wrong activities, or you may not be promoting them properly. Consider using AB testing to fine-tune your calls to action. Even something as small as tweaking the copy or changing a button from red to blue might change how many people buy, download or contact you.

2. *Track inquiries, requests for proposals and sales* - How many people became clients this year because they dropped by you website? This includes clients who come to you via your online contact form, as well as those who picked up the phone and called after seeing the site. Make sure you have a system in place for determining how prospects found you!

3. *Watch your search rankings -* Review rankings on major search engines, and track position over time to make sure you're being found for relevant keywords. It doesn't matter if people are finding your website on irrelevant keywords. Keep focused on high quality traffic which is likely to convert to customers.

Why People Hate Your Website   roundpeg

TAKE CONTROL: IT IS YOUR WEB SITE

One of the biggest mistakes website owners make has nothing at all to do with design. Once you've had a site designed, make sure you hold the keys to your website. You **must** know the answers to all these questions:

1. *Where is your domain name registered?* Where is the site hosted? What are the passwords to access and change the site? Your answer should **not** me, "my web design company knows all that." Companies go out of business, relationships turn sour, web designers can be hit by buses. While we hope none of that happens to you, it occurs all too frequently. You need to be proactive in having all your domain, login and password information.

> **Do you hold the keys to your website?**
>
> ## You Should!

2. *How will the site be updated?* Every website is different. Some are simple to upload using a content management system, while others require an advanced knowledge of HTML or CSS to update. Make sure you understand how you can go about updating your site and what the fees will be if your web design company must do it. Remember, a website that's never updated will not perform as well in search.

NEXT STEPS: IT IS UP TO YOU

After reading this do you think your website need a facelift? Is it time to start tweaking copy, optimizing pages, creating conversion-based landing pages? If so, how do you go about finding a great web design company who can bring your website into the modern era? A few tips:

1. *Ask around -* **If** you live in a small town or even a small city like Indianapolis, reputation travels at the speed of light. If the company isn't totally on the up-and-up, someone will know. Ask your business contacts, their LinkedIn connections or even ask for references. If they balk at providing them, be very afraid.

2. *Check the portfolio -* It's important to check out the company's past work and make sure it's in line with what you want for your site. Also, don't be afraid to ask lots of questions about when the site was built and what exactly they contributed--did they write the copy, or did the client provide it? Did an outside company provide SEO services? Understand the exact role the company played in the site's design and production.

3. *Understand the contract -* Who owns the intellectual property of the site--you or them? Can you or another company update the site, or does the company insist on doing updates in-house? Who's responsible for renewing hosting? If there's something you don't see or don't understand in the contract, ask!

4. *Trust your gut -* Ultimately, your gut is one of the most powerful tools you have. If something doesn't feel right, chances are that it's not. If you aren't sure you can trust the company, there are plenty of others who are worthy of your time, your money and your trust. Don't waste your time with one who's not.

QUESTIONS? GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to talk to you about your website. Call 317-569-1396 or visit www.roundpeg.biz