

Creating a website that actually WORKS

The six main reasons websites fail

Everyone has a website these days, but the burning question is, how many of them actually work and generate enquiries?

It's important to make that distinction because most of them don't.

To create a great website, we must first understand why people visit them. They are there for one of four primary reasons.

➤ To find information ➤ To network ➤ To be entertained ➤ To make a purchase

Bearing the above points in mind, listed below are the six main reasons why websites fail in their basic structure, even before they begin to market their presence to customers.

1: Contact information is difficult to find

It's there somewhere! You know it must be because nobody would be so crazy as to leave this crucial part out...would they?

Kick this problem very firmly into touch by putting your contact information on the home page...and adding links between pages within your site.

Include name, phone, fax, email, and surface mail address prominently. Show visitors clearly on your home page how to place an order with you.

Quite simply...you must make it easy for them.

2: The website is just not user oriented

"Here's a great idea...let's bury the content we've advertised, everything our potential visitors are really interested in and hungry to find, beneath layers of our exceptional corporate branding! After all, this is our website. Isn't it all about US?"

To be brutally honest...no it's not.

Visitors to your site are only interested in what's in it for them. They are looking for what they can gain for themselves, and they want it NOW. Give it to them first, beginning with the home page, or they will be gone in a click and you won't see them again...ever.

Straight off, you must give them an up-front reason to stick around, and hopefully immerse themselves in your site.

Tell them to bookmark your site. Demonstrate through crisp, clear writing and graphics that they

have arrived at their dream site, filled with benefits for them, ABOUT THEM, answering their specific and important needs.

You can tell them about “THE COMPANY” later.

3: It's too difficult to navigate

If you're a regular web browser the chances are you'll have come across a site like this...

“This site is best viewed through Netview Transmitter version 24.7 - download a copy now, it's on special offer if you're quick. And we've modelled this site on a handful of spaghetti because we know how much you like a challenge and if you ever manage to pick your way through the maze of stuff we've made available for you, the greater appreciation you'll have for our fabulous content...IF you can find it that is, because we've added a zillion links to take you away to other sites elsewhere in cyberspace”

If you want to avoid this fatal error there are four simple rules to observe:

- **Everything you offer visitors should be no more than two clicks away.**
- **Your sales information is never more than one click away.**
- **Prominent links at the top of pages get higher click-through rates than those buried deep within your site.**
- **Not all the pages in your web site will have the same appeal for your visitors. Provoke their response with exciting headlines, 'forcing' them to click through and take a look inside.**

4: Too many bells and whistles

The opportunity to dress up a website with the latest fad plug-ins is too great to resist...for some.

“We're a cutting edge company at the forefront of all that is sexy and fashionable in the industry we work in, so let's go for titanic graphics; really dark screen colours to separate us from all those other boring sites; 3D, textured backgrounds to make it more interesting (just don't try to read our pages) with lots of Java, Flash and loads of other really cool stuff.”

Best not...just keep it simple.

5: Never finished, never updated

The curse of the stop-gap holding page often means the website takes longer or worse, never gets done.

“Site under construction” But one of these days it's going to be really great. You won't believe what you'll see when you're able to get here, but you'll have to come back when we're done, sometime in the next few months, so bookmark now!” No chance. The online world is an instant one. Nobody will bookmark your unfinished site. By the same token, if you don't regularly freshen up your site through updating and enhancing information, your web site will be out of the race.

Grasp the nettle and make sure you get it finished and keep it updated.

6: Lack of interactivity or customer empathy

We're huge and very important. We don't care. We don't have to.

But everyone else does. Customer response can make or break your success on the Internet. And as with most things marketing, the personal touch and going the extra mile for someone can make a huge difference.

Encourage interactivity. Give people every reason to visit your site, and capture their information when they arrive. At a minimum, you must get their email address. Best of all, get their complete contact information - those who supply their address and phone number are your very best prospects for a business relationship.

Your website should ideally enable you to begin a relationship with the visitor and you begin the relationship by giving. Give something for free in exchange for their permission to communicate with them. Permission based marketing is where it's at.

Speak to us about it...it could revolutionise what you're doing online.



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