

WEB DESIGN BLUNDERS



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Introduction

Web design is complex enough as it is. You have to worry about mobile accessibility, design aesthetics, user friendliness, SEO, and so much more. But when you consider just how many mistakes one could make and how dearly those mistakes could cost the owner of the website... well, it's frankly just mind blowing!

The fact is, if you focus too much on any one element of web design, the other elements are going to suffer. You can't allow that to happen. It's important to be sure you're covering all the bases if you want to have a website that is effective at getting traffic and getting conversions.

In this guide, you're going to learn about some of the most common mistakes web designers make, and how you can avoid making them on your own websites.

Remember, it's not all about SEO, or it's not all about looking pretty... there are many factors that work together in unison to make the perfect website. And if you neglect one aspect, your site isn't going to get the results you're hoping for.

So let's begin.

Mistake #1 – Overuse Of Animations and Flash

Back in the 1990s and even the early 2000s, the use of animation and flash on websites was common. It was a way to jazz up websites and draw attention.

Unfortunately, these tactics got overused and eventually became completely passé. Now, their use is a glaring signal that the person who made the website had absolutely no idea what they were doing.

Flash and animated images have their place. For example, those websites that post funny images might use animated GIFs to get a laugh where a static image just might not work. Or Flash might be used on a free web-based gaming website.

But if you're using a ton of Flash banners or menus, or if you're using animation in your logo or to draw attention to certain areas of your website, you're being lazy AND annoying your visitors. Stop it!

Use such tactics very judiciously, and only when necessary. Otherwise, you're just making your site run more slowly and getting on your visitors' nerves.

Mistake #2 – Poorly Chosen Colors

Another huge mistake people make when designing for the web is choosing colors that don't work together or that severely clash and look terrible together. This could end up frustrating visitors to the point that they leave your site. At the very least, this could hurt conversions.

Not only should you choose colors that are aesthetically pleasing, but you should be careful to use colors that work psychologically with your website's theme. Believe it or not, colors can actually have specific effects on the human brain.

For example, McDonald's has always used the color red in their restaurants because the color can make people feel hungrier. This causes them to order more food than they really ought to, because they think they are hungrier than they actually are.

If you want to learn more about how colors work psychologically, you can check out this article:

>> <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/233843>

Mistake #3 – Improper Font Use

Fonts.

They can make or break a design, and unfortunately most people just go overboard with fonts, or they use the wrong ones.

Some designers actually become semi-obsessed with fonts. They may have thousands of fonts on their system (which is a bad idea in itself, because the more fonts you have, the slower your system runs) and they may want to use as many of those fonts as they can in every design they create.

Every font you use should have a specific purpose. Don't use something like a cursive font or (heaven forbid) Comic Sans for the body text on your site. Not only is this not a good look aesthetically, but it also makes it harder to read the text. Use easy-to-read fonts like Helvetica, Arial, or Verdana.

You can get a little more creative when it comes to your logo and headlines, but you should still make sure that:

1. The fonts are easy to read, AND
2. The fonts work for your niche (for example, don't use fancy script fonts on a masculine website or huge, garish fonts on a feminine one)

Mistake #4 – Failure to Implement SEO

Every single website on the planet (except maybe those that are set up specifically to be private, which can be blocked with a password or robots.txt) needs search engine traffic. Otherwise, why even be online in the first place?

But unfortunately, a lot of web designers focus too much on the way a site looks and they forget to make sure the site is capable of getting traffic! (The prettiest website in the world isn't going to do you a bit of good if no one ever sees it!)

Yes, your site should be attractive. And yes, your site should be user friendly. But you can't forget to ensure that search engines can properly find and index your content. This requires using proper silo structure and making sure your navigation links are easy for search engines to find.

Here is some information on the silo structure:

>> <http://www.bruceclay.com/seo/silo.htm>

Mistake #5 – Failing to Make the Site Mobile Friendly

Let's face it. Mobile is the wave of the future. Up to 90% of a given website's traffic may be mobile these days, and that number is still rising. The personal computer is actually losing ground rapidly.

Most people use computers for things like writing documents and for working, but when it comes to browsing, more and more people are using tablets and smart phones, because they can be used anywhere.

Plus, as of April 2015, mobile friendliness is one of the factors Google uses to determine rankings. If your site is not mobile friendly, your rankings are likely to plummet unless all your other ranking factors are just phenomenal.

If you're using WordPress, you can make your site mobile friendly by simply choosing a mobile friendly (also known as responsive) theme. If you're building your own website, you will need to detect user agent in order to find out what system a visitor is using, and then direct those users to a mobile version of your website. This requires making different versions of your site for different platforms.

You can analyze your mobile friendliness here:

>> <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>

Mistake #6 – Using Audio or Auto-Play Videos

Nothing is more irritating about the average website than being startled by loud audio that you weren't expecting. This is especially true if it happens at an inopportune moment, such as when you're surfing inconspicuously at work and it's not break time, or if your kid is asleep and it wakes him up, or if you're browsing somewhere you shouldn't be (like, say, church or at a funeral – oops.)

Unless you have a very good reason for doing so, never automatically play audio or video on your website. Polls have shown that if a user is hit with audio or video that plays automatically, it drastically increases the chances that they will immediately leave. (This increases what is known as bounce rate, and if your bounce rate is too high, it can adversely effect your search engine rankings.)

The only time you should maybe set something to automatically play is when it is the primary focus of your page. For example, a video sales page or squeeze page might require auto-play.

Otherwise, make it so that users have to manually activate audio or video. Your users will thank you!

Mistake #7 – Bad Navigation

Navigation is one of the most critical elements of any web design. If a user cannot find what they are looking for quickly, they are likely to leave just as quickly.

There are several locations for navigation options on any website. Here are a few places you can squeeze in the navigation you need:

- **Above the logo** – This is a good place to have links to important pages like privacy pages and contact pages.
- **Below the logo** – This is traditionally where you can find important links to articles and other content.
- **Sidebar** – Your sidebar is another good place to locate stuff like article categories and pages.
- **Footer** – More links can be placed in your footer, and this is a good place to include links to pages if you haven't located those links above the logo.

You also want to be sure your site has search functionality if you have a large amount of content. Otherwise, it becomes nearly impossible for people to find the exact content they are looking for.

Mistake #8 – Requiring Software Installations

Years ago, it was common to need to download a piece of software in order to use a particular website. Things like Real Player and various web cam programs required downloads to run, because their functionality wasn't built in to browsers.

These days, with so many viruses going around that can steal your personal information or destroy your computer, people are wary of installing anything. If you require a download in order to use a function of your site, people are most likely just going to leave.

If you need functionality that you can't get from standard HTML or CSS, consider using something like HTML5 or other standard formats. If it requires something that most people don't have, you're going to lose a whole lot of traffic.

You could also use Java or JavaScript, which most browsers can use natively these days.

You can read more about HTML5 here:

>> http://www.w3schools.com/html/html5_intro.asp

Mistake #9 – Improper Optimization

One of the biggest factors in SEO today is the speed at which your site loads. If your site is slow, you're going to rank lower than a site that is speedier if all other factors are the same, simply because Google and other search engines understand that people are impatient and will quickly get bored and leave if a site takes too long to load.

The most important things to optimize are:

- Images
- Videos

Text itself doesn't take long to load. It's the images and videos on a website that can take a very long time to load. If you're including photos in a blog post, for example, they don't need to be massive in size unless they enlarge to show important details (like infographics, for example.)

Images should generally be about 400-1000 pixels at most, and no more than about 75k. Videos should be optimized for the smallest size possible without sacrificing quality. HD videos are great, but they take a while to load, and this could hurt your search rankings, especially if your videos are set to load and play automatically. They'll just slow down the rest of your site.

Mistake #10 – No Contact Information

Lack of contact information is a red flag for a lot of people, and it's a red flag to Google. Sure, legitimate websites may not have contact information, but spammers almost **never** put contact information on their websites. If you have a contact page, people will trust you more.

Here are some reasons you might want to include contact information on your website:

1. It's a ranking signal for Google. Google loves to see contact information on your website, because it makes the site look more legitimate. Spammers definitely don't want to be contacted.
2. Users will trust your site more if they see you're being open and allowing people to contact you.
3. You could get important messages from potential advertisers who want to give you money to advertise on your site.
4. It could save you from legal issues if someone can contact you to resolve potential issues instead of having to subpoena your information and potentially sue you because they couldn't contact you to ask you to remove something you inadvertently used on your site, for example.

Conclusion

Web design is already a technical task. You have to learn how to use many different types of software, how to use scripts or program HTML or CSS, how to design graphics... it's a lot of work and a lot of knowledge required.

But even the most experienced designers often lose sight of the big picture when it comes to building websites. They may focus too much on aesthetics that usability suffers, or vice versa. Or they may focus too much on SEO and not enough on user experience, or the other way around.

It's important to be sure you're looking at all potential aspects of design, and not focusing too much time and attention on any one factor. A harmonious design takes all factors into account equally in order to ensure the site is friendly to both users and search engines.

You might want to create a checklist with web design best practices that you should keep in mind every time you build a new site. This way you can be sure you've followed every step each time.

Good luck!

Resources

If you need more help with content curation, here are some resources:

>> <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-practices-effective-content-curation>

>> <http://www.contentcurationmarketing.com/category/tips-best-practices/>

>> <http://blog.hootsuite.com/beginners-guide-to-content-curation/>