

“The 7(and a half) costliest mistakes you can make when building a website for your business and how to avoid them”

Mistake No. 1 Not having a plan.

I’m not talking here about a fancy plan with you completely knowing all the layout and navigation that you want from the very beginning but you do need to get down to basics.

a. Why do you need a website?

Is it because everybody else has one? Actually this isn’t a very good reason. A lot of businesses have websites that either don’t do anything for them or are so bad that they send people away!

b. What is the purpose of your site?

A brochure site just giving contact details and some information about you and your services or products.

A shopping site – customers can order directly from the site through an online shopping cart.

A lead generation device. Visitors can get something i.e. a report, e-book, offer etc. in exchange for leaving their contact details.

To position you as an expert in your field.

Each of these requires different functionality and most sites will need to fulfil two or more of these functions for your business.

c. Who is your ideal customer or client?

This is a standard marketing question but when you come to plan your site it is no less important. In fact it is probably more important than ever to know your audience. Can you answer the following questions about your target audience?

Male or female?

Occupation?

Age?

Location?

What newspaper do they read? What car do they drive? Where do they shop?

It's easy to say that your service or product is for everybody, however this makes designing your site virtually impossible. Instead of appealing and working for everyone it will end up appealing to no-one!

It may be that you need more than one site if you have different sets of customers rather than trying to cater for all sectors within one.

You also need to remember who your site isn't for i.e. it isn't for you, or your aunty Mabel or indeed your web or graphic designer (unless of course they are your ideal client!)

d. What is your Most Wanted Response (MWR)?

To explain a little your most wanted response will be the action you want visitors to take when they visit your site. It could be that you want them to buy something, to call or email you or to leave their details so that you can build up a list of people who are interested in what you have to offer.

The MWR needs to be a very clear call to action. It is often said that visitors on the internet will decide what to do on your site within a very few seconds. You need to make it really easy for them to do the thing you want them to do which, generally, isn't to click away on to another site.

Part of your planning will undoubtedly be choosing a 'good' domain name. It's usually the first thing people consider when thinking about a website for their business. If you aren't tied to using your business name it is a very good idea to use keywords in the domain name. It is wise to stick to the adage 'it does what it says on the tin'. For example, if your site is about horse grooming products then www.horsegroomingproducts.co.uk is a good domain name www.somethingcompletelyrandom.com isn't!

To find out what keywords will be good to use for your product or service take a look at <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal> . You can also use a more sophisticated tool such as <http://www.justaskjean.co.uk/marketsamurai> which gives much more information and can also be used to spy on your competitors to see what keywords they are using!

The best test of a good domain name is the pub test. In other words if someone told you the name down the pub would it be memorable and appropriate enough to remember without writing it down? This also brings in the subject of spelling. Make sure it is something that is easy to spell and that isn't easily confused with another spelling.

.com, .co.uk or what?? Many internet marketers will tell you that you must ALWAYS buy the .com version of your domain name. This makes sense if your market is worldwide but makes little or no sense if you are trading exclusively in the UK when .co.uk is more appropriate. You could always buy both to be on the safe side. Each domain name only costs a few pounds and lasts for 2 years normally, after which you will need to renew it. If the .com version isn't available, it may not matter but make sure you check out what the .com site is. You wouldn't want to be confused with a dodgy 'adult' site for example.

When you want to buy a domain name I would suggest using one of the big domain and hosting companies in the UK. We use UK2.net

Mistake No. 2 Too fancy a design – or the ‘Who’s a Pretty Boy?’ Syndrome

Once you start building a website, particularly if you go it alone, it is tempting to add in every bell and whistle – because you can! This can be one of the quickest ways to put people off your site. A good website isn’t necessarily a pretty site or a fancy one technically. A good website is one that keeps your visitors on the site long enough to engage with the content and hopefully for them to show themselves as prospective clients.

If you are going to engage a web-designer to build your site then it is really worth while spending a substantial amount of time planning the site yourself beforehand. It will save you money if you know what you want (and don’t want) in advance.

Take a critical look at other websites in the same sector as you and make a note of what works and doesn’t work for you. You can then plan your site with all the best bits!

Think carefully about what you actually want your visitors to do and make sure it is easy for them to do it i.e. the MWR.

For example if you want them to call you make sure your number is on every page. Don’t make your visitors work too hard or it will turn a lot of them off and they will look elsewhere for what they want.

Use images wisely to break up copy but make sure that the images are small enough to load quickly. Don’t make excessive use of flash animations or audio unless absolutely essential.

Think through the navigation of the site. Is it easy for visitors to find what they are looking for? Try it out with a friend who will give you honest feedback.

To sum up, be very critical of anything that is on your site; does it add to the purpose of your site? If not, really consider whether it needs to be there.

Mistake No. 3 Can you just...?

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is thinking that you won't want to change your site. I'll come on to the reasons why you need fresh content in a little while but for now just take it from me there will be situations when you need to change something on your site quickly and, as importantly, cheaply.

In the past web sites have been difficult and expensive to manage but these days there is no excuse for a web designer charging you a lot to update a newsletter or add an offer for example.

You may not want to be able to do too much (for fear of messing it up?) but you should be able to update and add content as and when you want. For this you need a CMS or content management system. There are some very complex ones about but one of the very best is free and open-source and that means anyone can use it for free. It is Wordpress and Google loves it!

If you don't already have a site, make this a priority question when talking to your web designer. If you won't be able to change the site yourself you will be wasting money.

Mistake No. 4 Having Poor Sales Copy!

Would you like to know what the most important element to copywriting is that so many don't know and even the best copywriters forget?

If you're reading this, the chances are you have, or are going to be writing a piece of copy. Below is one principle that distinguishes good copy from bad. If applied correctly it will result in your copy generating sales or leads. But, if ignored, the chances are no one will read it and you will have wasted your time and money. So, do you want to know what it is yet?

OK, in a nutshell: **Write for the reader, not yourself.**

I'll elaborate: so there's a new product or service you are passionate about and want to tell the whole world. Before you start writing, hold back. Whilst some might love to read what *you* have to say about your product, many don't. They are too busy focusing on themselves; their business, their challenges, their life.

And, the chances are, your copy – if they happen to focus on it for a second - will be an interruption to their day.

So, how do you get and keep their attention?

Make it about them. Write for them, tell them how their lives will be changed by your product, how it will improve their happiness their relationships or make them money – list the benefits.

Now, you may be wondering how you do this when you don't even know this person. That's an excellent question – one that copywriters have to grapple with every time they take a brief.

The answer lies in the preparation you take before you start writing – remember when I said hold back? Use this time to brainstorm who you're writing to, where they might be when they read your copy. Question how might you feel if you were reading the copy, and what you would keep you reading if you had never heard of the product before? Also, what are universal things we all desire and how can your product help them active these things?*

By brainstorming this first, you are much more likely to produce a piece of copy that will engage the reader, keep them reading and get them to buy, than had you simply wrote about how you feel about your product.

If you have any questions or think I could be help you, feel free to get in touch.

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*Robert Kiyosaki, author of Rich Dad Poor Dad, says that the three biggest desires that sell products are God, sex and money. God meaning all things spiritual, sex meaning anything that is likely to make you more attractive to others and money is anything that promises to help make you more money.

Mistake No. 5 No Action!

I mentioned early on that you must drive visitors to engage in your Most Wanted Response. The Most Wanted Response for your site must be some sort of action.

Are your contact details prominent on every page?

Does your site collect leads for you?

Is there a good reason for your visitors to leave their details? This may be in the form of a special report, white paper, video, tutorial or special offer only available to subscribers.

Once you have the leads signed up you need to contact them regularly to build up a relationship. For this you need to have an automated system. The one I recommend and use myself is www.totalbusinesscart.biz, As it handles products as well as automating autoresponder sequences and newsletter broadcasts in one affordable package.

Keep in touch with the people on your list. Send them interesting and useful information as well as offering them special deals and announcing new products. It often quoted that a prospective customer has to hear the same message 7 times before they will take action so keep going!

Dr Ken Evoy introduced the Most Wanted Response (MWR) in his 'net-selling bible' Make Your Site Sell. It's probably the most important lesson in all of Make Your Site Sell. In essence, the MWR is what you most want your visitor to do after reviewing your content. And it should always:

- be reasonable
- be measurable
- be a good fit
- qualify the visitor

Some techniques of getting your most wanted response include using the word YOU often in sentences, using commands, making sentences active (rather than passive) and creating powerful headlines.

These are just a few ways to achieve your site's most wanted response (there are more).

What's MOST IMPORTANT, however, is that you understand the concept of a Most Wanted Response for your website, and you set about trying to achieve it. Then, and only then, will all the effort you make in generating traffic to your website be worth it!

Mistake No. 5 No Traffic Generation Strategy

There is sometimes a 'Field of Dreams' belief amongst business owners that if they build it (their website) people will come. Unfortunately as much, if not more effort has to go into attracting visitors to your site as in the construction of it in the first place.

Other strategies:

Backlinks

- Submitting articles to online article sites such as [ezinearticles](#), [articlecity](#)
- Listings in local directories
- Commenting on relevant blogs
- Social networking e.g. Twitter, Facebook Fan pages, Ecademy, LinkedIn
- Answering questions on forums or question sites e.g. Yahoo Answers

Content Marketing

- Video marketing –Youtube and other video sharing sites
 - e.g. use animoto produce free 30 second commercials view an example [here](#)
 - Or Jing for screen capture videos
 - Make a Youtube channel of videos that your customers may find useful.
- Press Releases –[Prweb.com](#)
- Squidoo and hub pages
- Local business listing with [Google](#).

Other traffic generation ideas:

1. Third party website ads
2. Affiliate marketing
3. Article marketing (online)
4. Articles in industry publications
5. Become an authority site
6. Auto-responders (drip feed)
7. Banner advertising
8. Blogging
9. Brochures
10. Business cards
11. Audio downloads
12. Celebrity endorsements
13. Charity sponsorship
14. Chat forums
15. Classified ads
16. Commenting on industry
17. Conference calls/ webinars
18. Email marketing
19. Email signature
20. Events
21. eZine advertising
22. Facebook advertising

23. fax broadcasting
24. Google Adwords
25. Guest blogging
26. Information products
27. Inserts
28. Joint Ventures
29. Letters
30. Line Ads
31. Link Building
32. Loyalty programmes
33. Magazines
34. Micro-blogging (Twitter etc)
35. Networking
36. Newsletters
37. Newspapers
38. Occasion cards
39. On hold message
40. Online auctions
41. Online directories
59. Social media commenting
60. Sponsorship
61. Strategic alliances
62. Tele-marketing
63. Tele-seminars
64. Tell-a-friend campaigns
65. Testimonials and endorsements
66. Till receipts
67. Trade exchange
68. Trade shows/exhibitions
69. Video marketing & advertising
70. Viral marketing
42. Outdoor signage
43. Partner loyalty programme
44. Pay per click
45. Pay per view
46. Piggy-backing 3rd party Direct Mail
47. Podcasting
48. Point of sale
49. Postcards
50. Press releases
51. Promotional products
52. Public relations
53. Radio (including internet radio stations)
54. Recorded messages
55. Referral marketing
56. Search engine marketing
57. Seminars & information events
58. SMS

Mistake No. 7 The Greta Garbo approach.

Once you have your site built you can't just leave it alone and hope it'll work for you. Even if you achieve a good initial ranking on Google it needs to be updated regularly with fresh relevant content (remember that's what Google is looking for). This is where a blog comes in as you can add short relevant posts on a regular basis without it becoming too onerous a task.

With most blogs you can pre-write the content and schedule it to become live in advance. Set aside a day to do your content and you may be able to pre-schedule a month's worth of postings, or more, in one go.

You also don't have to write it all yourself. Look at relevant articles in articlecity or ezine articles which you can use on your site. You can also comment on items in the news, or things that are happening in your industry if it is relevant.

Bonus Mistake No. 6 Squander it on SEO.

One thing to be very careful of is so called 'SEO experts' as they will sometimes offer to get you on the front page of Google (generally in exchange for quite a lot of money). As previously stated it can be very difficult to get on the first page but define your niche carefully and have a good traffic generation strategy and you stand a much better chance of attracting visitors.

Another mistake is to think that it is easy to get on to the first page of Google without any effort. The hard truth is that unless you have a very, very specialised niche it will be difficult to get natural rankings on the first page. Adwords are a completely different story but outside the remit of this report.

Getting a good Google ranking is very worthwhile goal, especially when you consider that an estimated 1 Billion local searches are made worldwide each and every month. Also 80% of people search online first before making a purchase vs for example using yellow pages. The first place on Google attracts 41% of all clicks and that drops to only 8.5% of clicks for the third place ranking.

So, what can you do to improve the chances that visitors who are looking for your services or product will find you?

In order to answer that question we need to take a step back and think about how Google works.

- Firstly they are there to provide a service to their customers (us!).
- They need to provide high quality, relevant results for people who are searching

How do they do that?

Google looks for:

- content that contains relevant words and phrases –so called 'keywords'
- 'Important' sites –those that have a lot of high quality links from 'authority' sites
- Up to date content –how often is it changed?

Therefore all you have to do (!) is provide highly relevant, frequently updated content that has been linked to from lots of big sites.

How???

- SEO 101

–Identify your keywords–what would people be searching for? Remember the two free keyword tools I mentioned earlier? <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
<http://www.justaskjean.co.uk/marketsamurai>

–Use the keywords frequently but appropriately in your content.

–Use associated words e.g. it would be appropriate if you own a stables to write about other horse and riding related subjects.

- Make some of the content (particularly keywords) bold, underlined or italic
- Use header tags
- Make sure you have metatags & appropriate page titles
- Update your content regularly –Google loves blogs!!