SMALL BUSINESS WEBSITE TUNE-UP GUIDE

**How to Optimize Your Pages for Search and Conversions**

Do you ever feel like

you aren't getting the bottom line results from your website you hoped for? Does it sometimes seem as if your site looks great, but isn't actually helping you to grow your business? Or, did you invest in web design but remain invisible on Google's search listings?

We hear from business owners who are struggling with these problems every day. Even worse than struggling with these issues is seeking common sense answers that are affordable and point you in the right direction. You probably just want your website to help you attract more business, not necessarily to spend a ton of money on a brand-new web presence or start over from scratch.

Luckily, the answers to your challenges might be closer than you think. That's because a lot of the problems that plague small business websites are actually easy to identify and correct – but only if you have the right tools and know what you're looking for. That's because some of the biggest issues affecting your website performance can be difficult to spot with a naked eye. To an experienced web design and online marketing team, though, they stand out like flashing red warning lights.

To give you a sense of just how easy they are to miss, let's look at a eight easy-to-miss problems that could stop your website from showing up on Google, prevent conversions, and keep customers away from your pages…
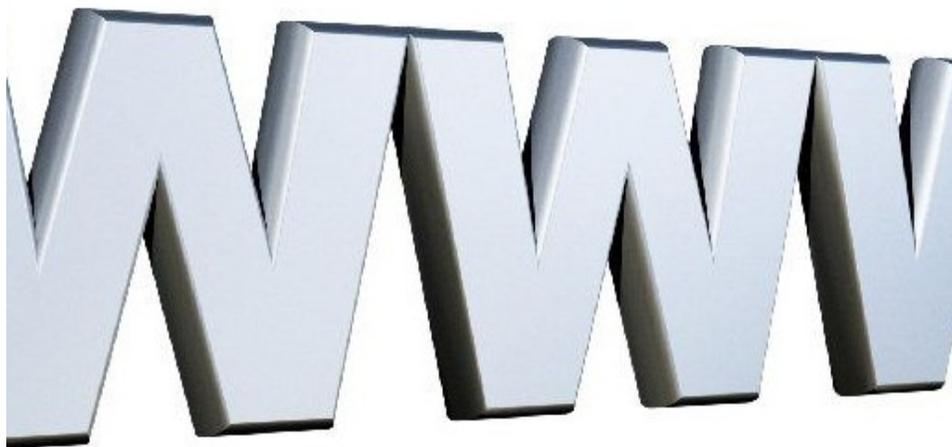
#1 Poor Website Usability

Most business owners focus on the way a website looks. Your customers, however, only take a few seconds to evaluate the aesthetics of your pages. Then they actually have to *use* them.

It's important to remember searchers and prospects arrive on your site because they have an interest in a product or service. They are looking for answers. If those answers are difficult to find, because your website is poorly organized, lacks a clear menu structure, or doesn't have a working search bar, then it's incredibly easy for them to take their attention elsewhere.

In the industry, we measure how easy it is to find information on a website in terms of *usability*. Websites with high usability tend to attract searchers and repeat visits; the ones that are hard to use drive customers away. How confident are you that your content is arranged efficiently?

Sometimes, you do have to push people to your site using social media or making sure you are listed consistently in local listing directories. We can help with all of this.

#2 Outdated CMS Software or Plugins

If you manage your own website, you probably get a few different reminders a week to update WordPress, plugins, or other pieces of software you have installed. Annoying, isn't it?

Millions of business owners feel the same way. In fact, they often neglect to make updates to their websites regularly, even when prompted. That can leave them using outdated bits of code, which cause all sorts of recurring problems.

When you don't update your CMS or plug-ins, you often lose compatibility with apps and browsers. This could lead to crashes when users try to access your site, which depresses traffic, triggers red flags with Google's search algorithm, and leads to a poor user experience. Even worse, those outdated bits of code can contain known security issues, which practically invite hackers into your site.

All of these keep customers away and reduce the effectiveness of your web pages. Of course, if we host your website,

#3 Slow or Unreliable Web Hosting

When someone clicks through to your website from Google's search listings, or types your domain into their browser, how long does it take for your content to load? This is a more important question than you might realize. Studies have shown that, on average, most internet users will hang around for about three seconds on a new website before they take their attention elsewhere.

That's particularly true for mobile web users, who don't like to stare at their phones or tablets while waiting for content to appear. There are structural issues with a website that can lead to slow page loading times (more on this in a minute), but the real culprit is often a bad web hosting package.

If you're using a shared hosting plan that crams your website onto a server with hundreds of other sites, it could be affecting website performance. Make sure your site is hosted with us. Our speedy servers can make an enormous difference.

#4 Missing or Broken Links

On even a small website, there are going to be dozens of links. Some of these will be internal, pointing visitors from one page on the site to another. There are also likely to be anchor links, which direct prospects to specific places on a page. And of course, there may even be outbound links, pointing to other websites and resources across the internet.

However, the constant shifting and evolving nature of the web, not to mention a business website itself, means these links can quickly become outdated. Or, a web developer might include a link as a placeholder and never update it. When these kinds of mishaps occur, they create "dead ends" on a website that can't be followed.

Those dead ends are incredibly frustrating to users, and they kill your credibility with Google. However, checking dozens or hundreds of links manually can be next to impossible for business owners.

#5 Duplicated Content

It takes a lot of content to put together a good business website, and even more if you want to establish a strong search engine presence. That leads some marketers to "borrow" text and images from their own pages… or even worse, from their competitors.

Duplicate content on your website can cause a number of problems, though. The first and most important is that it ensures your pages don't offer anything unique. That's wasted space from a marketing perspective. Secondly, Google won't give you any credit for duplicated content (and may in fact punish you). So, if you have copied items on your website – even if they've been copied between pages – they could hurt you. And finally, it's worth pointing out that using someone else's copyrighted material can open you up to legal liabilities.

As with broken links, duplicate content is difficult to identify without specialized tools. And, it can wreak havoc on your website and online marketing campaigns.

#6 No Mobile Functionality

As you've probably heard by now, more than half of all the people on the internet in any given moment are accessing the web through phones and tablets. That means mobile compatibility isn't just a good idea, it's a basic prerequisite for any online marketing or search engine optimization campaign.

If your website isn't mobile-friendly (usually through the use of responsive coding), then a large percentage of your would-be customers are going to leave your pages before viewing. They aren't going to display correctly, so why would those buyers hang around? Additionally, Google will heavily penalize you for being behind the times with your web design.

In today's mobile-first world, your pages don't just need to load on mobile devices, they have to be configured (with optimized images, small text blocks, etc.) in a way that makes them attractive to customers on the go. If your website lacks mobile functionality, it's going to hold you back.

#7 Incomplete Keyword Research

If you ask most business owners what they really want from the web, they would say a site that attracts customers with a top Google ranking. Unfortunately, turning that goal into a success depends a lot on which search terms are being targeted. After all, you don't want to waste your time and money worrying about phrases your customers don't actually use.

That might seem pretty obvious, but we see websites that are optimized for the wrong search terms and phrases all the time. In some cases, it might be that the initial keyword research wasn't specific enough. Or, it could ignore changes in search patterns, or the growth of local search. Either way, you have business owners spending millions and millions each year to attract visits that won't ever turn into conversions.

Periodic keyword research is absolutely crucial to online marketing success. When did you last review and update your approach?

#8 Incorrect Website Configurations

Whether you realize it or not, there are a lot of underlying settings that control the way your website displays, grows, and formats pages.

For example, your content management system (like Word-Press) controls the way new additions to your website are named. Some of these configurations are more search-friendly than others. The same goes for things that happen when a particular page can't be loaded, or the ways that times, locations, and currencies are noted.

Put these issues together, and you can have lots of little problems that make your website confusing at best, and inaccurate at worst. These can cause credibility issues when you're trying to appeal to buyers, and signal to search engines that your website is sloppy or out of date. Incorrect website configurations are typically easy to fix, but can cause big problems if left uncorrected.

How to Get Your Website Tuned Up For Top Performance

Is your website being held back by one of these eight all-too-common problems? If so, it's probably costing you a lot of money, even though you didn't know it.

However, there is a fast, simple, and affordable way to spot and deal with these issues. It doesn't require you to invest in a new website or learn the ins and outs of HTML. Instead, all you have to do to get your website tuned up for 2018 is take an important first step: *contact us today for a website audit*.

You might not be familiar with the term, but a website audit is simply a thorough, "under the hood" check of your site structure, pages, and HTML. It's a deep dive into the code of your website that lets us do things like:

Look for obvious structural or coding errors with your website

Put the usability of your website and content under a microscope

Test your website speed and hosting package for problems

Evaluate your website the way Google's search software would

Identify key problems leading to mobile performance issues

Scan your pages for broken links, duplicate content, and other problems

Find opportunities for improvement with search engine optimization

In other words, it lets us use specialized tools – and years of experience in working with small business websites – to spot any big challenges and get your online marketing campaigns firing on all cylinders.

If you're ready to start getting more from your website, and want to kick this year off on the right foot, then this is your chance. Contact us today so we can audit your existing business website and show you how to start pushing past the competition online!

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and products

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