
Webmaster Pitfalls

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As much as site development is an exercise in creativity and resourcefulness, there are certain elements that can doom any website.

As I watch the boards, one of the most frequently asked questions is, "What steps should I take to make money?" Valid as that question may be, I like to reflect instead on hard lessons learned and what should be avoided. Therefore, in no particular order, I offer the following 10 common webmaster pitfalls when developing your online empire:

Automation: In my opinion, my No. 1 mistake on my first adult site was a tedious and manual operation. In a large site, a heavily manual operation will tie you down to working your butt off to update your site. Teaching others to do so is a near impossibility. I cannot place enough emphasis on the need to automate as much as possible. It is very difficult to expand your horizons when you have to spend most of your time beating on your own monster creation.

Advertising: This would seem obvious to many webmasters, but the reality is that even experienced webmasters overlook avenues of advertising. The possibilities are vast and failure to have a good understanding can waste money, time and other resources. Take the time to know the free resources at your disposal and gain a good understanding of the paid ones. Advertising in the wrong places puts just as much a burden on your bottom line as no advertising does.

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Buying Traffic: Several articles can and have been written on the subject of buying traffic. Doing an archive search will reveal tons of materials written on the do's and don't of buying traffic. A basic rule of thumb here is that not unlike advertising, buying traffic is a learned art. A traffic gold mine for one subject isn't necessarily going to work for your product. Research this completely. Get onto the resource boards and ask questions relevant to your niche. Buying irrelevant traffic is just as much a waste of money as advertising in the wrong places is, if not more, because now you're wasting bandwidth too.

Inadequate Hosting: In an effort to curb costs, many webmasters make the mistake of too tightly fitting their requirements with hosting. If the whole goal of marketing your web endeavor is to grow, then by all means, you should ensure that as your traffic increases they have some place to go. Low cost hosting can actually raise costs in terms of bandwidth overages, slow performance that surfers hate, and loss of connectivity on limited accounts. Leave yourself some room for growth.

The Sleaze Factor: Professional looking site development is a must if you are marketing on the Internet. Potential customers will bolt from paying for a site that just simply doesn't look professional. The number one rule in Internet marketing is to instill confidence in the buyer. Confidence in a cheap looking front-end design is a hard sell regardless of your

product.

Lack of Planning: This point has been said a million times in almost as many ways. Jumping around aimlessly will only increase work, slow efforts and makes informed business decisions difficult. Development of a business plan is an essential part of any business venture. It establishes goals, milestones and future targets.

Funding Avenues: A lack of available billing options has been the downfall of many promising businesses. With so many options available for webmasters to use there is little to justify carrying all of your eggs in one basket. Processors come and go on the Internet in quick fashion and as such it is essential to diversify your payment options portfolio to provide a cushion against closures. I personally run five processors at any given time and I rotate their position on my join page to encourage spreading the sales load.

Tunnel Vision: Specializing in a niche or product area is fine, but not unlike the funding option above, tunnel vision on one product can be leave you vulnerable to surfer trends. If micro niches are your thing, then select a few of them to work with. Get into some PPV programs, affiliate sales, as well as your primary bread and butter. Being spread out will allow you to weather the seasonal lulls a little better and help keep you profitable.

Customer Support: You created a killer tour, have the sales and are rolling along, now you have to keep them. Customer Support is a must to keeping happy customers. Ignoring your customers or making gruff replies makes for cancellations, charge backs and bad reviews. Applying customer support in a professional manner is many times the difference between a rebill and a cancellation.

Participation: In interactive sites, there is an unfortunate tendency to depend too heavily on surfer participation. The fact is that it is difficult to foster and maintain surfer participation without helping it along. If you have forums or message systems, an effective host or hostess prompting the action is essential to keeping a healthy program going.

In closing, it is without a doubt becoming increasingly harder to generate new income on the Internet. Remembering the basics of what not to do will go a very long way toward answering the initial question of "What steps should I take to make money?" These basics seem to be common sense but in reality they sometimes get lost in the rush to gain profitability. Make them part of your operating policy and embed them into your routines before reaching for a bigger slice of the pie. Then as you move forward, the forgotten fine points won't close off behind you.

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