

10 Website-Killing Mistakes that you Need to Avoid

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Well howdy there! I've put together this quick guide for you to be able to easily reference before planning out the structure of your next site, or to evaluate your current site. If you have any questions or want some help, just shoot me an email!

1. **Having a non-offer-driven homepage** - It's very important to know exactly what you want your visitors to do. If you don't have clarity about this, it will show through on your site, and your homepage will end up being a random assembly of junk. **Know what you want your visitors to do and help them get there.**
2. **Not thinking about your users** - This closely ties in with #1, but deserves its own list item. When planning out your site, put yourself in the shoes of your user. Ask yourself what they're looking for on your site. If you're not sure, try to think of questions you're frequently asked by customers in person or on the phone. They're probably looking for these same things on the site.
3. **Not incorporating credibility indicators** - Credibility indicators are not always the cliché icons from the different media outlets where you've been featured -- they truly vary from industry-to-industry. For example, a key thing someone in my industry needs is examples of work, because it proves that I know my stuff. Think a little bit about what your customers might be looking for in order to feel like they can trust you, and make that visible right off the bat.
4. **Being too wordy** - People don't read too much. Hell, I'm legitimately surprised that you're even reading this right now! It's important that you get your message across quickly and clearly, with visual aids where appropriate. Once your reader is interested in what you have to say, they're apt to dig around and read more, but too much copy too early is only going to scare someone off.
5. **Bad member's back-end** - Have you ever paid a lot of money for a premium training, only to log in to the member's back-end and find yourself caught up in a horrible mess? It sucks, and even if the training ends up being good, you have to struggle through it because you're battling against a poorly-built system. Don't do that to your users. Make the member's area just as kick-ass as your sales pages if you don't want your customers to feel taken advantage of.

6. **Not catering to all devices** - There's a huge number of web users on their mobile devices. If memory serves correct, it's around 50%. So what this means is that if your site doesn't work on phones and tablets, you could be turning away half of your visitors. It's just like my mama used to say, "Go responsive or go home." (My mama has never actually said that.)
7. **Trying to serve too broad of an audience** - Just like you need a directed call-to-action and offer on your homepage, you also need to identify who your top 1-3 key user types are and build the site for them. Ideally, you will do this in a way that doesn't totally exclude other user groups, of course. But if your messaging is so broad that no one is excluded, it could also mean that you do not have any focus, which creates another one of those users-not-knowing-where-to-go experiences.
8. **Having an ugly design** - I know, it's obvious. But it needed to be said. I'm not saying that a site is a failure if it's not a masterpiece of modern art, but I am saying that I shouldn't have to cringe when I see your website.
9. **Not backing up your website** - If you've ever been hacked, accidentally deleted all of your files, or run into any other kind of website mishap, you'll know why this one makes the list. In short, losing data sucks. Not keeping your website backed up could very well be **the worst** mistake you can make. If you go with a host like WP Engine, they have a great backup system built into their service. If you're on another host, but still want a great Wordpress backup solution, you can take a look at vaultpress, which has some awesome capabilities, is very easy to set up, and is pretty cheap.
10. **Not securing your website** - I don't go overboard with website security procedures, but there are a few basic things I like to do on every site I build. First off, don't choose bad passwords. Next, avoid using "admin" as your username. It makes it much easier for robots to hack your account, since they only have to guess your password, instead of having to guess your username *and* password. And lastly, set up a plugin like Limit Login Attempts. What this plugin does is locks out an IP address after the pre-configured number of unsuccessful logins. So in other words, if someone fails to log in to your site 9 times in a day (or whatever you set it to), they get locked out for 48 hours. This step alone is going to protect you from the vast majority of Wordpress site hacks.

And there you have it! 10 mistakes that you can now avoid! If you have any questions about any of them, or would like to talk to me about helping you with a project, just shoot me an email at Zach@ZachSwinehart.com. I'll be happy to talk with you.

Thanks!

Zach Swinehart