



# 10 Website Mistakes You MUST Avoid

by Nicolette Tallmadge

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Building a website? Want the process to go smoothly and result in a successful website? Then there's a few mistakes that you simply **MUST** avoid when you're building your website. Some of these mistakes are made by first-time website owners. Some of the mistakes are even made by veterans of the Internet. But no matter what your experience level, if you can avoid the following 10 mistakes, you'll be well on your way to building a successful website.

## 1. Not Having a Goal for Your Website



Whenever a client contacts me to build a website, one of the first questions I ask is “What do you want to accomplish with your website?” If the answer comes in the form of dead silence, I know I'm in for a lot of trouble.



Every website, blog, or web page has to have a clearly defined reason to exist. It could be to sell your new book. It could be to build your mailing list. It could be to help you get speaking jobs. Whatever the goal, your website must have one. Why?

Because this goal will dictate how your website is built, what content will go on the website, and how you will promote it after it is done. A goal provides the foundation for your website...and just like you can't build a house without a good foundation, you can't build a good website without a clearly defined goal.

It's also important to remember that this goal or vision must come from you. I've had clients ask me what they should use their websites for, and in those cases, I usually tell them that they need to reconsider doing a website until they can work that out themselves. While a designer or another professional can help you refine or improve your goal, no one knows your business and your needs better than you. The vision for your business is not something you can outsource.

## 2. Wanting Your Website to Appeal to Everyone

Another question that I ask clients is who they are building their websites for. Again, I know that there's going to be trouble if the answer is “everyone”.

Just like every website needs a clearly defined goal, every website needs a clearly defined

audience. That audience is usually dictated by the goal of the website. If your goal is to sell your new book about life after retirement, you're obviously don't want to attract teenagers. If your goal is to sell information on getting into college, retirees isn't your market...unless it's about going to college after retirement. There are very few products that appeal to everyone and your website should reflect this.

Going back to the example of a website promoting a book about retirement, this goal will also effect your web design and website promotion plans. Your audience will most likely be in their late fifties and early to mid-sixties. You'll need to make sure that your text can be easily read by these folks and that the design and navigation for your website makes it easy for your audience to find the information they need. When you're promoting your website, you'll most likely will doing search engine marketing and perhaps using a social networking site like Facebook rather than Myspace because the demographic tends to skew older on Facebook. It's these issues that are affected by your potential audience.

### 3. Not Doing Your Keyword Research

A report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project that stated about half (49%) of all Internet users use search engines as a routine part of their day. Another report also stated that the popular search engine Google is close to getting 70% of the U.S. search market. Right away, this should tell you several things...



1. More and more people are using search (most likely Google) to find what they want on the Internet.
2. If you want these people to find you, your website had better show up in search engine results.

Designing your website so to show up high in search engine results is one way to get new customers to your website for free. If a person is taking the time to do a search, then they will already be interested in what your website offers, **if** your website gives them what they are looking for. This means that you must do your research into what people type into

Google and other search engines when they are looking for websites like yours. Once you find that information, you'll know how to better optimize your website for search.

Doing your keyword research is also a helpful research tool when you're creating new services or products. There are plenty of products and ideas for products out there, but is it something that people would be interested in? One way to find out is to do some keyword research to see if anyone is even looking for a product or a website like yours before you go to the trouble of building it. Doing this could end up saving you a lot of time and effort.

#### 4. Wanting Your Website to Do Everything

Earlier I mentioned that not knowing what you want your website to accomplish is a big mistake. Well, that can certainly go the opposite direction too. Some clients come to me wanting what I call a “swiss-army knife” website. They want their website to be able to sell their new book on leadership, and to help promote them as a motivational speaker, and to promote their outsourcing services, and oh, also to sell their natural herbal remedies affiliate products as well.



While swiss-army knives can be useful in a pinch for quick jobs, they're never as useful as just a knife, just a cork-screw, or just a pair of scissors when the job goes beyond a quick emergency. “Swiss-army knife” websites are the same. While you can use them to accomplish a bunch of different things the results aren't going to be as effective as a website that's dedicated to one or two goals.

“Well what about websites like Yahoo? You can do a whole bunch of different things there.”, is the argument that people throw back at me. True, Yahoo! does a bunch of things too. But then again, Yahoo! has the staff, the money, and the name recognition to be able to build, maintain, and promote a gigantic website like that. If you're an individual or a small business, you can't afford the time and expense of



building, maintaining, and promoting a big website like that...and you certainly don't want to have to be competing with the likes of Yahoo!.

When you're planning your website, keep your goals tightly focused on one or two related goals. Keeping your website focused will make it easier for you to build and promote. If you have another idea or another unrelated product, you can simply build another tightly focused website.

## 5. Focusing on the Design More Than the Content

What most everyone is initially concerned about when they're building or redesigning a website is what it looks like. First impressions are important and what your website looks like is an important part of that first impression. But while the look of your website is important, the reason why customers will buy something, sign up for your mailing list, or decide to visit your website over and over again is the content...the information that you provide on your website.

Don't give your website content the shaft! Consider **what** you're going to put on your website just as carefully as you consider the design of your website. Every word, every photo, every graphic that you display, needs to tie into the goal of your website. It also must be useful and appealing with your expected audience. Take careful consideration of the format of your content. Text is pretty universal, but don't forget other forms of content like video, audio, and interactive content like polls, surveys, quizzes, and assessments.

## 6. Not Using Your Website to Build Your List



What is **the** most important thing your website must do? Make sales? No. Win advertising awards? Nope. Impress your colleagues and neighbors? Definitely no. The most important thing your website must do is help you build a list of prospective customers.

Why is building a list even more important than making a sale? Because even if a prospect is interested in what you're offering, it's highly unlikely they'll buy from you after a single visit

to your website. Perhaps they don't have their credit card information with them, or maybe they want to do more research first. For whatever reason, they may not be in the position to buy from you right now. So...what happens? They leave...and 90% of the time they don't ever come back.

So how do you ensure that prospects return to your website when they **are** in a position to buy? Instead of waiting for them to remember you (they won't), you need to have **their** contact information so you can remind them of your website, products, and your services. Design your website so that it's easy to gather names and email addresses from people that are interested in you. Encourage visitors to sign up for a monthly newsletter or for a free report or audio download. One of the most valuable things you can have in your business is a list of people that are interested in purchasing what you offer. Make sure your website helps you build that list.

## 7. Going Cheap

Money is always a consideration when it comes to building your website. If you're just starting up or you're in an economic crunch, it's natural to want to hold on to every dollar. But don't let your need to be frugal lead you to make mistakes that will end up costing you in the long run.



While there are ways that you can build a website for a reasonable price (and that price varies depending on what kind of site you want to build), there are some areas that you simply should not skimp on if you can help it. The most important areas include design, e-commerce capabilities if you're selling online, and email list management. In most cases, what you gain in savings, you sacrifice in quality and reliability.

If you need to build your website on a budget, there are a number of things that you can do to reduce your cost without taking a "cheap" method that will cost you in the end. Things like careful planning and budgeting, rolling your website out in stages, and doing some of the work yourself can help you save some money. And of course, carefully researching your options and choosing what's appropriate for your project will go a long way towards stretching that web building dollar.



## 8. Not Getting Help When You Need It

A lot of times in the interest of saving money or because you like to know how to do things yourself, you might decide take on the task of building your website yourself. While there's nothing wrong with learning how to build a website, there's plenty of website stuff that you **should** know how to do, it does take a bit of a learning curve. If you're already busy with other aspects of your business, at a certain point you have to decide whether it's worth it to do it yourself.

Unfortunately, a lot of people who are learning build their own websites usually end up in one of two places. In one instance they manage to get a website up, but it's not as good or as professional looking as it could be. In other cases, they'll run into a problem right in the middle of building the site, get frustrated, and end up never launching the website. And in both cases, they've expended a lot of time and effort that could have been spent in promoting their businesses, dealing with customers, or making sales.



If you have a lot more time than money, then doing it yourself might be your only feasible option. But if you have the means to get help and you're already busy being chief cook and bottle washer in your business, think about whether it's really worth your time to add "web designer" to the list. You'll end up saving more time and frustration by hiring someone to either build your website or to help you with parts of your website that's outside of your skill set. Not only will you free up the time you would have spent doing it yourself, but you will probably get done a lot faster too.

## 9. Wanting Your Website to Look "Perfect"

If you're in business for yourself, chances are that you have a small (or large) bit of perfectionism in your personality. Wanting have things your way is probably a reason why you're in business for yourself. And if you're building a website, that perfectionist streak will definitely come out. You'll want everything on your website to reflect your vision from the colors, the layout, and the fonts all the way down to the alignment and spacing of each

individual paragraph. While there's nothing wrong with wanting your website to look great... spending your time to make sure things look "just so" is an exercise in futility.

Designing a website is quite different than designing a print a business card or a brochure. When you design a brochure, what you see is pretty much what you're going to get. It's not so on the Internet. A web page that looks great in Firefox on someone's brand new, state-of-the-art Dell laptop or Apple Macbook might look a bit different on someone's five-year old desktop clunker using Internet Explorer 5.5. In web design, you or a designer must account for differences in computer operating systems, monitor resolutions, and browsers. And in some cases, making sure that a certain element looks perfect on a web page is going to be a heck of a lot more trouble that it's really worth to you.

Again, while the look of your website is important, at a certain point, you simply have to decide good enough is "good enough" and just launch the site already. Every day spend fretting about fonts, graphics, copy, and color schemes is every day that your website is **not** making sales or building your list. Instead of concentrating on trying to make your website look exactly like your brochure or why you can't use your favorite font on your website, concentrate on what your website can do that your print brochure can't. Print is a static. The Internet is an ever-changing medium that allows you to interact directly with your customers. Those are the abilities you should embrace when designing your website.

## 10. Not Having a Plan to Promote Your Website

A lot of new website owners don't realize it, but building the website is only the beginning. The act of launching a website doesn't guarantee traffic, success, and sales. The only way to make your website a success is to have a plan to promote it.

During the web building process, a lot of people miss a golden opportunity by just focusing on getting the site **built** and not giving some thought as to how they are going to get people **to** the site once it's built. If you want people to come to your website, they have to know it's there.



If you've just started building your website, get ahead of the promotion game by developing your promotion plan **before** your website is finished. There's a few benefits to pre-planning your website promotion. One, you can build some "pre-launch" excitement with your customers which will give your new website traffic from day one. Two, it gives you the opportunity to start implementing tactics that require some lead time, like print advertising or direct mail. Three, you can design the website to have some promotional elements in place when you launch. It's easier to have search engine optimization and email list building features already built into the website rather than trying to add it on later.

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## About the Author

My name is Nicolette Tallmadge (“Nikki”) has been designing and building websites since she learned how to build her first web page by learning HTML out of a magazine in 1996. She's built a number of websites for individuals, businesses, corporations, non-profits, and organizations. She also had the privilege of working with a number of well known marketers including Tom Antion, James Malinchak, Connie

Ragen Green, and Jeanette Cates.

Nicolette now runs a web design company, Nikolena Designs, and offers a variety of web services for small business owners, Internet marketers, and entrepreneurs. Services include:

- Opt-in page design and setup
- Sales letter design and setup
- Wordpress installation and design
- Graphic design
- Blog header design
- 1Shopping Cart setup and consultation
- Product image and ebook cover design
- Web video and audio
- Social networking identity design (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)
- Custom web design
- AM Gold 100 point list setup
- Membership site setup



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