

# How Web Designers Are Sabotaging Their Clients

By Ken Kowalsky

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Three Common Mistakes Web Developers Make When Designing Web Sites

By: Kenneth Kowalsky, SEM Professional

One of the things that pains me the most as a search engine marketing (SEM) professional is how so many business owners are having their web site's ability to attract targeted visitors compromised by their own web development company.

You would think that any service that charges clients thousands of dollars to design, build and host a business web site would know enough about basic SEM as to not damage their client site's chances of generating search engine traffic. Sadly, its usually after the damage has been done that the client learns that the money they spent on their web site was partly wasted due to lack of SEM smarts.

Having been in the business of getting web sites to rank well in the search engines since 1995 as well as having worked with countless webmasters, I've noticed three areas where web developers consistently sabotage their client's web sites because they lack SEM savvy. These mistakes are;

## MISTAKE #1: Improper or Incomplete Search Engine Submission

There used to be a time when all you had to do to add a web site's pages to a search engine was to submit the page's URLs (or web addresses) to said engine. Not anymore. These days, its better with some search engines that you NOT submit a site URL's to it while with other engines require that you ONLY submit the site's homepage URL. Knowing which search engines you should submit which web pages to and when will make a difference not only in how fast it will be indexed (or added) by the engine but also how high it will rank.

Still another way web developers practice improper search engine submission is when they use automatic search engine submission software to register a web site with the engines. The problem with the use of this type of software is that it does not verify the successful acceptance of a web site by the search engines. Thus, many sites are rejected without the web developer ever knowing so.

Rejected submissions, slower indexing times and lower rankings all add up to less search engine referred visitors. Obviously, the less of these types of visitors a web site gets the more lost sales it will have.

## MISTAKE #2: Deleting All The Old Files When Redesigning An Existing Web Site

When a web site owner decides that its time to get their site redesigned, it seems that the web

development company can hardly wait to delete the old design's web page files. This is especially true if the old design was done by a different web developer. The problem here is that some of these old web page files may still be generating web traffic from the search engines, traffic that would be totally lost if these files were deleted.

Instead of deleting old web page files, webmasters should use their redesign as an opportunity to provide visitors with the information they came for by taking their old files and either updating the information, redirecting users to a specific page with new information, or make it clear that the information may be outdated and is for reference purposes only.

"If you have old pages that are indexed, don't remove them!" says Robin Nobles, Director of Training for the Academy of Web Specialists (<http://AcademyWebSpecialists.com>). "Instead, create new pages based on high performance keywords, and bring in additional traffic that way. You never know when those old pages will make it to the top of the rankings, so it's best to leave them alone and create new pages, always working toward increasing your targeted traffic. Algorithms change constantly, so a page that isn't doing well today may be on top of the rankings tomorrow!"

### MISTAKE #3: Web Site Design With Little, If Any, Thought To 'Search Engine Friendliness'

This third way many web developers sabotage their client's sites is a bit more problematic than the first two because it involves the use of legitimate web design techniques, some of which would make the client's web pages "unfriendly" to search engines.

By definition, search engine friendly web design is creating one's web pages so that they rank well in the search engines for one or more keywords. This is accomplished by designing the pages so that when the search engine "robots" or "spiders" visit, they'll find elements (ie. headlines, body text, links, etc.) that clearly tell it what that page is about and what search terms (or keywords) it should rank well under.

The biggest problem that many web developers have with the search engines, is that they fail to understand what the search engines are going to do with each web page they have designed. Because of this failure to understand the search engines, there are many fantastically beautiful Web sites out there which will never receive the exposure they deserve. It's this "duality in visitorship" (i.e. that web sites get two different types of visitors; human/people and robotic/search engine) that is overlooked by some web developers who don't realize that Web sites should be designed for both types of visitors.

The question now is "What web design techniques cause a Web site to be search engine unfriendly"? While there are several design elements that make it harder for a web page to rank well in the search engines (some which I list on my Web site <http://PromotionIsMyBusiness.com/weekstip.htm>), years of experience have shown that most of these elements can be overcome with savvy SEM techniques save one: lack of text on a web site's homepage.

Search engines consider a given Web site's homepage to be its most important, a starting point from which visitors can quickly determine what the site is about and if it contains anything of interest to them, the visitor. Whether its body, headline or hyper, the more descriptive the homepage text is, the better chance all its pages will have of ranking well.

The reason that its so important that there be some text on a site's homepage is that text is what the engines "see" when it comes to evaluating how that page will appear in its index; not cool graphics, fancy JavaScript, or even META tags. It's a common misconception that the World Wide Web is a visual medium, but to the search engines, it's all about words as pages are indexed textually. Good web design should reflect this fact and always take it into account or you risk making

web pages that aren't "search engine friendly".

"Don't lose site of the reason your client is building their Web site", says John Romano Jr. of Creative Web Inc. (<http://CreateWeb.com>). "If its to attract new customers, then you'll need to design the site in such a fashion that it will enable others to find it quickly. We strive to design and implement a site that is not only appealing in its presentation, but that is able to receive the traffic our clients need to achieve success."

#### IN CONCLUSION...

The bottom line here is that with all the competition for being positioned in the top 10 to 20 in the search engines these days, its tough enough for one's web pages to rank well without having this process sabotaged by a misinformed Web developer.

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Kenneth Kowalsky has been involved in the search engine marketing (SEM) business since its inception in 1995 and has helped countless clients generate targeted traffic to their Web sites via the search engines, directories and other marketing-related sites. You can contact him about his affordable website promotion business by visiting his Web site at <http://PromotionIsMyBusiness.com> or emailing him direct at <mailto:Webmaster@PromotionIsMyBusiness.com>

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