



## **8 Common SEO Mistakes by Steven Howard**

Your website should enhance the credibility and reputation of your business, generate sales leads and attract prospective customers, or both.

For your website to be an effective sales and marketing tool, you need to drive traffic to it. And that's where Search Engine Optimization (SEO) comes in. Unfortunately, this is also where a lot of small business owners and entrepreneurs fall down, most due to a lack of knowledge on how to implement a SEO strategy.

Here are the eight most common SEO mistakes I see small businesses, industry associations and entrepreneurs making:

1. **Writing for Google** -- websites need to be written for their human readers, with the search engines kept in mind but not as the main focus of the copywriting. There is an art to writing a good website that is highly readable and informative, while simultaneously being highly functional to search engines. Great website copywriting also eliminates the mistakes of repetitious keywords and a lack of internal links (see below). Also, Google now penalizes sites that have spelling errors, another good reason to ensure you use a professional writer for your site.
2. **Wrong or no header information** -- technically called H1 and H2 headers, these need to incorporate key search phrases, not your company name or product brands. These should be written with search phrases in mind, and not advertising taglines or marketing slogans (unless you believe prospects or customers are likely to search on your advertising taglines and marketing slogans).
3. **Repetitious keywords** -- while it is important to include all your important keywords and key search phrases within your website, it is not necessary to do so on each and every page. This is especially true if your URL or company name already includes an important search phrase. For

instance, if you are "ABC Public Relations" then you do not need to use "public relations" on every page. Instead, highlight other services you might provide, such as government relations, press relations, media relations and media training. It is best to use a wide range of keywords and key search phrases throughout your website. Remember, it is not important to drive traffic only to your home page. Drive traffic to the other key pages of your website as well.

4. **Keyword stuffing** -- even worse than repetitious keyword usage is keyword stuffing, for Google actually penalizes websites for this. Keyword stuffing is basically any annoying repeating of the same keyword or search phrase over and over again on the same page. For instance: cheap airfares to Hong Kong, cheap airfares to Phuket, cheap airfares to Bangkok, cheap airfares to Gold Coast, etc. Trying to win better search results by stuffing a page with too many "cheap airfare" phrases will no longer fool Google.
5. **Competing with own pages** -- this is probably the most common error for those who actually have some SEO in place. Repeating the same header tag and page descriptions across numerous pages simply confuses Google, and hence it does not know how to properly evaluate and rank such pages. As a result, your own pages end up fighting with each other for Google's attention. Each page should have its own and unique header tag and page descriptions should be modified, even if slightly, so that each can attract different search phrases and keywords.
6. **Not using ALT Text for images** -- Google cannot read an image, so each image you use should have ALT Text that reflects an important keyword or key search phrase.
7. **Trying to trick Google** -- the last few years have seen a constant battle between people trying to trick the search engines, with Google and others fighting back by changing their algorithms. Using hidden text or keywords not relevant to your site will no longer trick Google. And most likely anything else someone suggests you do, other than having relevant text, strong header tags, and concise page descriptions, will not trick Google for long. If someone put these in place for your previously, they need to be removed quickly.

8. **Lack of links** -- you still need relevant inbound links, but don't go out and try to buy hundreds of links from so-called link farms. This old trick no longer works either and, in fact, may actually hurt your search results. Also, many websites do not use anchor text for internal links, or have a lack of internal links. Both are costly errors in terms of SEO. And by the way, almost all "click here" instructions in body text are useless in terms of SEO.

As we wrote in the previous Monday Morning Marketing Memo, SEO prominence is a winning marketing strategy, giving a smart business a competitive edge in the all-important search results that prospective buyers and customers see when conducting online searches for products, services and solutions to their needs.

### **Take Action Today**

It doesn't matter how big your business is, or in which industry your business is in. It doesn't matter where you are, or where your customers are. A proper SEO program will make a major difference in the returns you gain from your website.

If you are not sure about how to get started, or if some of the terms above seem like foreign words to you, don't worry. Just contact me and I will help you get on the right path.

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