

Top 10 SEO mistakes you need to fix now on your website

Author: PENNIInk Productions

Website: <https://www.pennink.com>

Twitter: @penninkpro



Introduction

When people have a site built, they often get carried away with the design or rankings, forgetting SEO best practices that will safeguard the integrity of their site.

If you want the website that you had built to stand the test of time, don't make these terrible SEO mistakes or your site will be devastated by the next Google algorithm update.

Over the past 10 years, we've carried out SEO audits for a variety of clients' websites. In that time, we've seen it all, from poor website copy to outrageous attempts to manipulate Google PageRank.

Here are the top ten erroneous tactics on our SEO list of shame. Employ these at your peril!



1. Keyword stuffing

For search engines, there's nothing worse than poor website copy. Copy repeated over and over again just looks poor. You probably hate to see bad website copy, too.

Keyword stuffing is the shady tactic of stuffing a page full of words and phrases in an attempt to manipulate a site's rankings in Google's search results.

Repeating a word or phrase intentionally won't boost your rankings. You'll certainly attract Google's attention, swiftly followed by a demotion on the results pages.

Actionable:

Review your website copy for repeated copy.

2. Broken links

A *broken link* is the name given to a hyperlink that no longer points to its intended destination.

Let's say that you've been won over by an article's sales pitch about looking 10 years younger and you're desperate to see what's on the other side of the link.

You click a link that promised to make look 10 years younger and then discover it's broken!

Of course, sites do naturally accumulate broken links. However, they're a major nuisance to your visitors and search engines don't like them either. If they're so natural, though, why are you penalised for them?

The reason is simple. Bad links will earn you a bad reputation. People with online reputations aren't viewed as authorities on anything (apart from getting bad reputations, of course).

Google demotes the rankings of sites with lots of issues like this, so don't be a rebel without a cause.

Actionable:

Review the links in all your website copy.

3. Copied copy

When performing SEO audits for websites, it's common to find that another website has ripped off all of their original content. Worse yet, it's sometimes even vice versa.

It can seem like a tall order to craft unique, compelling content. Stealing it from a competitor is not only illegal, though: Google can push your site so far down the rankings that no-one will ever find it, and in severe cases, de-index the entire website.

So don't do it.

Actionable:

Review ideas for unique content in our [Content Copywriting Cheat Sheet](#).

4. Duplicate content

Here we're talking duplication within your own site, not stealing copy from other websites. Content duplication happens in a number of ways, so we've separated out two of the most common below.

Fortunately these issues are easily solved, so don't just start chopping around your site content.

Duplicate content that appears in more than one location

This type of duplication is definitely detrimental to SEO, but often happens on large sites or ecommerce sites that have several pages listing the same set of products.

Multiple pages with the same content present a search engine with a number of problems:

- Which version should I retrieve for the search query?
- Which versions should I include or exclude from my indices?
- Which version should I direct the link to?
- Should I just spread it across the variations?

All of the above can lead to lower rankings and a loss in traffic.

The most effective method to combat this is to implement 301 redirect rules from the lower quality pages to the preferred web page.

Non unique title tags and meta descriptions

Here we have a repeat offender. We regularly see websites with the same page titles on many, if not all, of their web pages.

Sometimes CMSs (content management systems such as WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla) auto-generate page titles, but this doesn't mean you should allow this to continue. Many SEO experts will tell you the title tag is one of the most important on-page SEO factors. There's a simple reason for this: it's true.

Page titles should be unique and reflect the content of the web page so that:

- A search engine crawler can index it correctly
- It tells a searcher that your content is relevant to what they're looking for
- It makes sense and looks click-worthy in tweets

Similarly, you shouldn't overlook meta descriptions. They're your web page's sales pitch in the search results, so you should aim to make these as persuasive and descriptive as possible within the 160 character limit.

Actionable:

Optimise your title tags and meta descriptions.

5. Links from non-credible sources

Every time someone links to your site, it is as though they are giving you a vote of confidence.

This is the type of quality on which you should focus your link-building efforts. It is much easier for you to get a backlink to your site from a credible source related to your industry.

Links from quality sites are harder to obtain than links from directories, though quantity should never be a substitute for quality. A link from an authoritative blog is more likely to boost your rankings and traffic than a couple of hundred links, typically purchased, from low quality sources.

Actionable:

Review links to your site (check analytics) and try to get backlinks from an authoritative source.

6. Meta keyword tags

Using meta keywords is very old-fashioned now. At one time, search engine algorithms took meta keywords into account, but they now have a negligible impact on SEO.

Meta keywords can be found in the header element in a website's HTML code. They're an inadvertent way of publicising your digital strategy to rivals who can take the keywords, input them into a PPC (pay-per-click) advertising campaign and steal your visitors, so don't use them - *ever*.

Actionable:

Review your meta keyword tags and remove any you find.

7. Avoiding analytics

If you aren't measuring your website's traffic data, you're missing out on a key piece of the puzzle in measuring ROI (return on investment) on your digital marketing. You'll want to know which areas of your site are performing or underperforming in order to grow and optimise your site.

Setting up conversion goals and weekly reports are only the beginning, though. You'll certainly need to monitor which phrases are converting, rather than terms that are driving most traffic.

Actionable:

Ensure you have Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools configured for your website, so that you are able to analyse your data in detail.

8. Wrong keywords

You'll need to populate your text content with words that not only suit the purpose of your site and match the products or services you sell, they should also be the words that reflect what people actually type into search engines.

For example, if you're a party planner you probably don't want to describe yourself as an "organiser of social gatherings". To make sure that you're using the keywords that people are actually search with, check out the [Wordtracker Keyword Tool](#).

It may seem obvious that writing website copy should reflect your customers' vocabulary. You might be surprised how many companies try to rank for totally unrelated keywords, though. Sometimes it seems they *really* don't want people to visit their site.

You should aim to be as specific as possible. If you use broad keywords, they may yield large numbers of visits, but it might not be the type of traffic that converts.

Actionable:

Research long tail keywords and find out about being specific.

9. Not allowing your site to be crawled

Matt Cutts, Head of Search Spam at Google, recently cited this one error as one of the biggest mistakes people make when creating their websites.

In a [video about basic SEO mistakes](#), he explains that if you make your content difficult for a search engine crawler to find, Google cannot index it and therefore won't rank it.

By configuring Google and Bing Webmaster Tools for your site, accessibility to it is constantly monitored.

Actionable:

Ensure that your site is correctly configured to be indexed by search engines and check Google and Bing Webmaster Tools are set up.

10. Irrelevant anchor text links

Anchor text is the name given to the clickable hyperlink text on a web page.

SEO experts consider the creation of cleverly phrased anchor text links a coveted skill because they're the main source of food for a search engine crawler.

Progressing from page to page, a search engine crawler uses links as indicators of the subject matter of the pages it's heading to and how to rank them. Whenever you see "click here" used as an anchor text link, you should see a completely wasted SEO opportunity to build a link.

Although tailoring your anchor text links to include keywords that you want to rank for can be tedious – and you'll need to vary the pattern of anchor text so as to not attract suspicion from Google – it's something that you should definitely get into the habit of doing.

Actionable:

Watch Matt Cutts' video on [keywords in internal links](#).

11. Conclusion

These SEO errors are by no means ranked in order of consequence, nor is the list exhaustive. We see all manner of errors including thin content, purchased links and illogical site navigation. All these and more contribute to a poor user experience, resulting in low search engine rankings.

The Internet provides business owners with huge opportunities to connect with new clients and better service our existing clients. It also provides us with an enormous amount of information, white noise and distraction.

The aim of this short ebook is to cut through the clutter and give you some actionable steps that will make a real difference to how your website is performing for your business.

For more information, visit <https://www.pennink.com>.