

# 10 Critical Mistakes Businesses Make

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## 1. They do not have a clear web strategy and objective for their business

The importance of websites is clear to most people, businesses and corporate organizations but most are often lost on the strategic benefits. This is why most companies to desperately start looking for a web designer to put together some pages with [www.mycompany.com](http://www.mycompany.com) name to go with it to ensure they are part of the Internet buzz. But just like everything that is a success, a good website is a product of good planning based on a strategy and a clear and specific goal. Flash intros, great graphics, interesting pop-ups, cool colours and the like can be good; However, if they do not bring in business, they are simply useless and not adding value. Business is about delivering the “goods”, producing results, giving value and you must never lose sight of this. You must have a strategy for your business; what do you want customers to think about your product/service? What makes you unique and gives you competitive advantage? Who are your target market and how do you aim to get them to be your loyal customers? These are issues behind the development of your strategy and every successful company must clearly think about this to guarantee its success. When you understand this, you can then develop strategic goals that you want to achieve through your website which enhances your corporate strategy. A great website cannot make up for a good strategy; your business must ultimately add value for it to succeed. So in summary, your web strategy should support your overall corporate strategy. It is this synthesis and corporate harmony that often makes the difference between a “successful company” and a company with a “good website”. This is why as a company; we do not emphasise our website design ability instead we prefer to be seen as web strategy developers. Website designers come now in dozens but a great web strategist is a vital key for your business. You may have heard about the “dotcom burst”, these were companies with fantastic, often complex and beautiful websites but with a faulty strategy/business model and guess what; they failed. I’m sure you want to be a successful company rather than a “me too” company with a “great website”. I know what I would choose.

## 2. They do not measure their online performance

You cannot measure what you do not know; you can only measure if you have set goals and objectives and what you wish to achieve. However some people set the goals and have a clear strategy but end there; they do not measure and analyse their performance in order to improve and sustain their success. The corporate world is dynamic and constantly changing and strategy is not a fixed brick; it does and should change. The only way you can guarantee continual success for your business and web strategy is by measuring your online performance constantly to assess what you need to change and when you need to do so. The fact that you are number 1 today in your sector is no reason to be complacent; you need to invest in web analytics and intelligence to see how you are doing compared to your competitors. This is the way to stay up. Where was Google, 10 years ago? Nowhere. But today they are the Number 1 search engine with most searches being done through Google. What were the other more established search engines companies doing letting Google overrun them?

Now talking about goals; have you heard about “SMART”? It stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. I suggest that your web goals and objectives should have these 5 qualities. If you say; we want a website that “enhances our corporate brand”. What exactly does that mean? How do you measure that your website has enhanced your corporate brand? Anyway what exactly do you mean by corporate brand? If I had a shop that sell fashion accessories; I would for an example prefer to set my web objectives like this:

**“To increase sales revenue through our e-commerce site to £30,550 monthly and generating 2400 new sales leads within the next three months”**

Now depending on the particular circumstances, you can see how the statement meets the 5 qualities. When you have this kind of clear objective, it becomes extremely easy to measure and see if you have met your goals.

### **3. They have no strategy to market or promote their website**

What's the use of your website, if no one knows about it or there is no constant traffic to it; Nothing. You must roll up your sleeve and do everything possible to get the word out and market your website so that there will be a constant stream of traffic to it. Web Marketing and Promotions is very important for any successful web strategy. First and foremost make sure that your website address is on every print and promotional material that you have including business cards, letter-headed papers, vehicles, return-stamps, envelopes, brochures etc. Search Engine Promotion involves creating a unique position for your website through effective optimization of your web content. This is an art that you can learn with the support of a good consultant to help you with. Why is it so important? Forrester Research says 80% of internet users who are also your potential customers, use search engines and yet less than 10% of companies have done something about positioning themselves in the major search engines. Create integration between your online and offline marketing by directing people to your site through your advertisement and other means. Give people a reason to visit your site, offer discounts for using your online order system, do all you can to make sure people visit your site because it is the key to repeat business. At Webstrat, we help customers create an e-business marketing plan so that you do not leave your website promotions to chance. If you do nothing about it, you will get nothing out of your investment on the internet. Even for search engines, people can only find you if you have done your work properly. Per-Per-Click involves paying for the number of clicks directed to your site through major search engines; this is another means of promoting your site. You need however to effectively fix your budget and optimize your site with the best key words people will use to find or locate your business. Ideally, a company will drive prospects to specific URL's to accept an appealing offer that might have been presented in a direct mailer or advertisement.

### **4. They have no means of retaining contact information**

Every visitor to your website is a potential lifetime customer and you must see it that way. Great businesses use innovation to ensure they improve their prospect-to-customer conversion rate. It is therefore important that you have a way of getting your visitors' contact details when they visit you. Their name and e-mail address is often enough. Imagine the opportunity to get their attention for a lifetime with different products and services that bring in a healthy profit for your business. There are different ways of doing this; using a contact form, offering a free e-book, gift, product or service for which customers first have to register with their brief details. All these are intelligent approaches to building a customer database that you can get repeat business from. You however must be aware that you must get their permission to send information to them and also offer them a way to opt out of your list if they so require. The goal is to make your mailing to them so valuable that they will not want to get out of your list. Don't only "sell"; create long term value by offering advice and free help relevant to your customers' needs. Recently, I got a mailing from one of the UK's most successful marketing consultants. His mail was so insightful that I instantly decided to contact him for marketing support for our latest product yet his mail

was not selling anything to me. It only gave him credibility as someone that was extremely knowledgeable and who could add value to our company. When you add value to your prospects and customers, you attract more patronage.

### **5. They look for a Designer instead of a Consultant**

When you need to paint a house, you look for a painter, when you need financial service, you go to your bank when ..... Well when most companies need a website, they go to a web designer isn't it? But that's the problem. Well, I have explained that a good website is one that adequately supports your business strategy and enhances your competitive advantage in the market place. It is therefore important that when you decide to design a website, you look for a good web consultant/company that understands how web technologies integrate into your business. How many web designers will ask you about your business goals, strategy, web objective, competitive advantage etc. They would often ask you; how many pages do you want? Do you want animation, flash? What are your colour combinations? Well maybe all these are important but they obviously are not the critical aspects of any web project. You therefore need to be sure when you contract your web project out that you use a company that is thorough in understanding your business and see what value and creative suggestions they bring to the project apart from "the best colour combinations, the latest flash scripts or animations etc. This is why I think you should hesitate with website designers who ask you 2 or 3 questions or ask you to fill a 2 minute form and send you a quote. A good website is one that integrates the best technology no doubt, but is also one in which there is a deal of interaction between clients and consultants to understand what opportunities and new revenue can be created for the success of the business. Don't ask for less, otherwise you will soon shop for another "designer" if your competitors get right.

### **6. They Lack Ongoing Activity Analysis**

There is a great amount of information that you can gather as a result of evaluating what happens when visitors go to your website. Website log files largely contain data that will be useful in evaluating the success of your website. This often makes the difference between companies who succeed with their web strategy and those who do not. For example; you need to know how long your visitors spend on your website; what sites do they visit most; what path do they follow, which days you seem to get the most number of traffic and why, what exit pages do your visitors seem to use etc. This kind of information gathered and analysed regularly can help you optimize your website for improved performance. As a starting point and in line with your web strategy, key metrics should be defined, monitored and analysed on a weekly or monthly basis. This can then be discussed with your consultant and action taken to improve performance.

### **7. They use Templates or "Roadside" Designers**

Website Design is now so popular that everyone seems able to design a one maybe including you. If you want to stay alive for long, I am sure you will not accept a roadside doctor's prescription. Similarly if success is what you want for your business; get expert help with your website design as you will always get what you pay for. You require critical expertise that spans across several fields to get a great website; so look out for good help, pay for it and demand results for your business. Always remember that one quality advice and input can make the difference for your business. What you are trying to save could be an insignificant seed that will grow your business beyond where it is today. On the other hand a badly designed site can have negative effects that could affect the way people see your company into the future.

## 8. They do not understand the power of good Content

Content is King. Effective communication and good business writing skills are very important when developing your website. Your website is a communication tool and you need good web copy and content to ensure that your visitors understand what you are saying and that your content motivates the desired reaction from your visitors. Good content generates **Attention**, motivates **Interest** and **Desire** leading to an **Action** from your visitors(AIDA). You also need to make your website dynamic with fresh content and frequent updates. This is one area you need to enquire about from your web consultant; find out what it will take to frequently update your site. If you have in-house expertise for content generation, then ask for a content management system that is easy for non-technical people to work with. This is often a grey area that may lead to conflict with your web designer/consultant. So be wise, get the full facts in advance and don't allow anyone to hold your company to ransom.

## 9. Focus on Business Success not Technology

One vital attitude that will make all the difference for your business is how you view your website; Is it a Technology tool or a Marketing tool? Again this goes back to what we have been saying; your business is about a service or product which you deliver and your customers will judge you based on the quality of their experience so ultimately your success depends on your marketing and customer service. Technology is important but it should be seen as a tool to help you deliver the goods. Indeed a great website will involve a lot of technical integration, tools, software, databases, web service technology etc but ultimately these technologies should support your providing a good product or service. So every time your consultant talks about one fantastic tool or new web technology, your question should be "How does this help our business to deliver a good product/service or how does it help us have more efficient operations, or be more effective etc. This is why at Webstrat, we get our designers to produce your goal without confusing you because ultimately, it's your success that matters not some brilliant technology. So looking at a web project from the marketing perspective often produces a market-focused web strategy that produces the needed results.

## 10. They make invalid assumptions and wait for the perfect moment

I once worked for a great online company that was one of the first companies to start an online one-stop technology shop and I learnt a great deal from this company. First, starting early or what some people call "prime mover advantage" can be a great strategy. It is therefore important that you get your web strategy right and do something creative and innovative even if it puts you ahead of time. The way you use technology and the internet often sends a message to your customers that you are serious about your business. The second thing I learnt is that you can grow and improve your online strategy as the days go by and as you learn what works best for you. You will learn nothing if you are waiting for the perfect moment to launch your site. Get cracking and move your business to the next level. Finally, do not assume that you need to "break the bank" to get a first class website. If you work with the right company, a custom made design can greatly reduce what you pay for and eliminate other areas of expenses within your company. I wish you success.

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