

3 Deadly Sins of Business Web Design

1. The first deadly sin - a spectacular design that cannot be searched, ranked or found
 2. The second deadly sin - your content doesn't know who your market is
 3. The third deadly sin - your pages are thin, gorgeous and cold
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#1 The first deadly sin - a spectacular design that cannot be searched, ranked or found?

You think that you need a web design but what you really need is a business solution for web marketing. You can get a web design from a thousand different designers, but where will you get a business solution for marketing your business on the web?

Next:

Now that you're looking for a real solution, not a design, playing the search engines should always come first. No matter what your web designer says about the visual impact to attract business it will be the search engines that make your site visible in the first place.

Are you in business? Of course you are, so let's stick to business and let a graphic artist support your business instead ruining your business. An old trick ad copy guys use is to take a page of text mixed with illustrations or images and then cover up the text. Can you get any information out of the images? Maybe a little.

Now, cover up the images and leave the text exposed. Can you get any information from the text? Yes, a lot. In the information age it is text that we all seek and it is text that search engines use in order to find and rank your site. So why do web designers want to fade the text and make it teeny tiny? There is only one reason... so their art work and layout has the greatest impact.

All of your business is based on communication and the faded small print destroys your communication. What you have left is a dysfunctional, but pretty page that you paid more for than if you built solid content.

It is important to keep in mind that many web designers and design firms are doing two things to get your business...

1. Designers want to inflate your ego with a delicious design, even though your market pays very little attention to "artistic appeal." What your market wants is to easily find a solution to their problem.
2. Designers claim that the visual design will make your web site stand out in a crowd, and that it will generate more business. Even if this were true, which it isn't, your site has to be found first.

First off, inflating the ego works. Big companies spent thousands of dollars on magazine ads that no one but the executives themselves ever read. It's true. They check out the ad when the magazine is published and say to themselves, "Now, that's one smart looking ad, if I do say so myself."

These fat cats can afford to impress themselves with cool looking ads, but you and I have to play smarter and stick to business or we pay too high a price.

Secondly, the only thing that will make your site stand out in a crowd is your position on the first page with Google. That is your number one goal and there is nothing that comes before the search engines. Keep foremost in your business mind that search engines feed on text. If you get top placement with the engines then you are standing apart from the crowd, and it will cost you far less to make this happen than it will for your big time graphic design, which offers nothing for search engines to feed on.

You don't believe me. You think a search engine top spot is unattainable or enormously expensive. This is not true. Do you have any idea how many poorly built business websites are out there? Just look at how the graphics take precedence over the text content. And when the content is thin the search engines drop the placement as soon as they can find a site with more relevant content.

Apparently, finding relevant content is not easy for search engines and yet they have to have a top 10. This means that the top 10 on the first page is not made up of stellar contributors and you can do a lot better than the thin content your competitors put out.

Let's stick to business decisions because they are always more grounded and practical - and they earn a profit. Art, on the other hand, has always needed patrons to finance the artist. Is your website a patron of the arts? Is that what you want to accomplish?

If your answer is "No", then let's talk business and focus on strong content built for your market and the search engines.

Isn't it interesting that the very things you need to do to support your market and your business are the very things you need to do to get a top position with the search engines. The search engines run a business too.

#2 The second deadly sin - your content doesn't know who your market is

It is easy to tell when a website doesn't recognize its own market because the page content will talk about the business instead.

The tendency is always to talk about what you know, and what you know is your own business and your products or services. You naturally think that your market wants to know about your company and its products/services. But they don't.

Your market can find all kinds of products and services so they are not interested in your business. Not yet. And if you take too long to tell them how you are going to solve their biggest problem they won't be there when you finally get around to it.

Step #1:

Name the market's biggest problem. Their biggest problem will be the very problem that your product or service is going to solve. There is no mystery here, just common sense. Now that you can name the problem, can you give that market a name? If not, Why not?

Don't look to demographics to help you because demographics do not naturally exist on the web. Every visitor to your site is anonymous, and what is even worse is that they control their experience. What you need is psychographics so that you can attract them with psychological information.

This is not a case of manipulation in a nasty way. You are simply giving your market what they want because you know what they want. Psychologically speaking, you have their number and they are happy that you are going to get right to the very things they are interested in.

This is what your market wants from you. You can give it to them as a research report in neutral language. It's called pre-selling and there's no emphasis on any sales language because the report is written to build trust. In fact, your sales tactic doesn't seem like a sales tactic at all.

At the end of your report you can make a pitch by way of a special offer. At this point you have earned their trust as an expert and you have educated them about the solution you offer to solve their problem. You have closed the gap between your company as an unknown entity and the market's need to trust. And this means that they will appreciate a special offer. At the very least they will not feel rushed into making a purchase, but coaxed into knowing more until they are ready to buy.

“The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary”

Peter Drucker

Enough said.

#3 The third deadly sin - your pages are thin, gorgeous and cold

All the marketing professionals and web usability experts say that content is king. If your business website doesn't have good content for search engines and for a target market then those

experts will say that you have wasted your money. And you will have.

But, why, then, do small business owners prefer web designers that like thin content? The answer may not be the same for every business owner, but usually it has to do with the amount of work it takes to create good content. And it does take some work.

But you've got a web designer that says that they will make your website stand out in a crowd with a spectacular design. To you this means less work for your company because the web designer is going to make you shine. You don't really believe it - but you want to, and if you want to believe it strongly enough then you'll buy it.

The thing is... thin content doesn't carry any weight. Not with the search engines and not with your market.

If you don't feel comfortable writing web content for your market then find someone that will do it for you, but not just anyone. Your web content needs to be written like a story whenever possible.

Your market will read and remember more if there is a story being told. A story adds personality to your web site, and everyone remembers a story. You've got stories to tell, lots of them. The stories will provide the warmth and interest in creating relationships with your market.

Writing for the web is about being of service and letting your visitors scan the headlines for those pieces that interest them. This is what they will read and then they eye scan more of your page to see what other information they are missing.

When it is easy for visitors to find the content they want then you can have a lot of content present and it won't be intimidating. They simply eye scan to find what they need, and they will read much more if it is informative and helpful.

The big reward for writing this way and including a lot of information is that the search engines like to see 300 words or more of relevant content per page. As daunting as it seems, creating this info will happen more quickly than you think, and it only has to be done once. All improvements and touch ups will happen over time as a result of feedback or testing. Don't expect perfection. Relax, be kind to yourself and write about your market's needs, not boring stuff about your own company.

Tell them what their biggest problem is. It is the very problem your product or service solves for them. Therefore you know about this problem and you can talk about it. You can teach them about different solution and point out how your solution is better.

What more do you need to know about small business web designs?

There will be specific issues for your business that are related to each one of the 3 deadly sins and they will surface through a dialogue as you discuss your needs with a web designer/marketer, but only if they value business over design.

Do you really want a mind blowing, ego driven web design that has no marketing skills? Web Psyche could get someone to do that for you, but why? The cool stuff gets old so fast while good marketing pleases everyone for a long time.

Statistics show that there are 84,812 new domain names being created daily while there are 56,800 expired domains daily. (<http://www.domaintools.com/internet-statistics/>)

Almost 57,000 domains cease to exist on a daily basis because they do not function in business terms. Your web site will not be among them, and that's a guarantee.

For more information you can instantly download the free "5 Business Questions to Ask Your Designer." On the Web Psyche home page you may have noticed this download in the left column. All you have to do is register for free with your name and e-mail address. Not to worry, your e-mail is never shared and you won't be bombarded with communications from Web Psyche.

If you have specific questions then you are invited to make inquiries through the contact page.