

# Avoid the 7 Most Costly Web Site Mistakes

*(And Save Yourself Thousands of Dollars)*

"There are no traffic jams along the extra mile."  
ROGER STAUBACH

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# Avoid the 7 Most Costly Web Design Mistakes

Getting ready to build a web site? Perhaps it's only a twinkle in your eye. You know you need one but you haven't yet taken the plunge. Or perhaps your web site was built 5 years ago by a friend's child who has gone off to college now and you can't remember how to log in anymore. Either way, you know it's time to step up your game. Where do you start? Preparation. Which brings us to the first costly Mistake many entrepreneurs make:

## Mistake #1 - Hiring a Web Designer Without Doing Any Preparation

Spend some time looking at other websites and getting a firm idea of what you'd like your site to look like before you hire a firm. You can narrow down colors, font, and layout by looking at your competitors and at other industry sites that attract you and would be ideal for representing your company brand. You don't want to copy these web sites, just note your preferences so your designer can create your own statement of online style.

You should also determine what pages your web site will require. Grab a stack of paper and spread them out on the boardroom table or your living room floor. Consider each topic that you will want covered on your site, write one topic down on each piece of paper. You can now lay all the pages out so that you can see the page hierarchy of your site. Move them around until the grouping makes the most sense.

Doing these two things before hiring a designer will save you time and won't keep the designer waiting while you work out the details. You may make changes as you go into the process, but you will get a lot of the basics out of the way and you'll be able to publish your site sooner rather than later. Saving time always saves money.

Now that you know what you want, we're on to the second Mistake

## Mistake #2 - Knowing What You Want and Ignoring Advice

Just because you've done the preparation suggested above, and you know your preferences, doesn't mean you shouldn't listen to the input of the designer. They may have tips and tricks that will save you money in the long term. For example if you don't have a logo, a good web design firm may suggest you also create a higher quality version of the site logo for future use in print. It's less expensive to have a graphic designer create a print ready version and save it for use online vs having the design created online and then having someone else recreate it from scratch in the future.

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## Mistake #3 - Failing to Consider Search Engine Optimization

Many people pay to create a website, and then wonder why they're not getting any traffic. If you want people to find you on the search engines (Google for example), there are some techniques that should be employed to help the process along. Some people don't realize that Flash-based sites aren't search engine friendly. They sure are pretty, though. If being found on the search engines is a priority and you are not an already famous brand, stick to a web format that will help you be found. Can you imagine paying thousands for a stunning web site only to discover no amount of SEO will help you climb the search engine ratings organically? It's a given you'll have to pay for placement. This tip alone is worth thousands of dollars.

Not to mention it is more work and more expensive to retro-fit your site for keywords than it is to embed them during the initial design. Spend a little extra now, do the keyword research up front, and you will save money that way too.

## Mistake #4 - Not Choosing the Right Design Firm for Your Needs

Is expensive the best choice for every product? Coach or Dooney & Burke might want you believe that an extravagant bag is always the best option, but if you only need a backpack to carry books to school, a Coach clutch isn't going to be best choice for you. At the same time, if you require a carefully handwoven custom-designed bag and you end up with a recycled plastic tote, that's not going to work either! Interview firms, look at what they've built and ask for references. Keep in mind that color choices are typically client choices - not the designers!

Also determine who you are hiring. Typically a site is created with the expertise of multiple professions: graphic designer, programmer, SEO specialist, etc. If you are hiring a professional programmer, it's unlikely they are well versed in all the aspects of website creation. You may be required to hire additional professionals for things such as content editing or graphic design. A graphic design team may create a beautiful design, but you may need the services of a programmer to improve functionality, or a copywriter for attractive product descriptions. Be aware that even if their fees are the same, a team of multiple specialists and a single professional or single-focus team may not be able to offer the same end product, or meet all of your needs.

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## Mistake #5 - Not Being in Control of Your Hosting and Domain Name

Many business owners aren't familiar with the ins and outs of websites and leave the hosting and domain name sign-ups in the hands of the site creation firm. It's a wise leader who takes some time to learn a little, to save a lot down the road.

Did you know that many hosting companies offer an affiliate program, and there may be a kickback to your design firm for signing you up for hosting with their preferred company? Are you running a 501(c)3? Some hosting companies offer free hosting or minimal fees for non-profits. Shop around, ask questions, and be a part of the decision. It can save you hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Please get involved with purchasing your domain name, too. Domain names need to be renewed, often annually. If your design firm doesn't remember to do it, and you don't have your own site information, you could lose your domain name forever, or have to buy it from someone for a steep fee!

Keep in mind that you own your site and your domain name. You've paid for them, they are yours. You should have all the usernames, passwords, purchase agreements and relevant information about your site at your fingertips... not stored only on your design firm's computers. If something should happen to their computer system, or if you should decide to part ways in the future, you want to retain ownership and control (and the security!) of your own website.

## Mistake #6 - Not Having Access to Make Changes to Your Own Website

You need to retain not only ownership, but access to your own website. Many people are so intimidated by the technological side of their website, that they don't even have access to its inner workings. They rely on the designer to make all changes, and ensure site security. Neither job may appeal to your designer, and that can lead to your site being neglected over time.

Make sure your designer gives you all the usernames and passwords to the site, and a tour of what you have paid to create. You may discover it's simpler than you thought, and the idea of waiting two weeks to have a mistyped phone number changed is worse than looking at the code to find the numbers and change them yourself in minutes!

Again, to protect your investment and keep control of your site, ensure you have the admin name and password, which gives you control over everyone else's access to your site. That not only allows you free use of your site, but the ability to change professionals at will, and maintain control of your site security as well.

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## Mistake #7 - Not Considering the Needs of Mobile Users of Your Site

Websites are affected by the device on which they are viewed. Mobile devices have smaller screens than standard computers, even netbooks. Smaller real estate on the screen means that some sites appear only in part, or some coding is not being read by the smart phone or tablet and the site appears jumbled or overwritten in parts.

A savvy designer or team will take the mobile users of your site into consideration during design, so that every user will have a positive experience on your site. Since some studies show that significant percentages of users search for businesses and services with their mobile devices, this is a very wise move.

Retro-fitting your website for mobile users will cost more than simply planning for it during the initial design phase. It's far easier for the designer or programmer, too.

## In Summary

Planning ahead to avoid all seven mistakes will save you time, money, and potential problems down the road. Since some of those problems can be nearly fatal to your business, such as being unable to renew a domain name or failing to maintain access to your site so that changes and updates can be made, it's well worth a little time to plan and learn what you need to know to add a successful online component to your business!

**CyberCletch** LLC. Your Marketing Management Team offers package rates and retainers to accommodate a variety of online business needs focusing around traffic generation and online visibility. Services offered include web design, search engine optimization, content creation, social media management, graphic design, and more. Ask for a complete list!

If you are looking for a partner for your company, and want the peace of knowing your work is being completed to the highest standards, we'd love to work with you. Please contact us to discuss how we can best help you.