

# THE TRUTH ABOUT WEB DESIGN AND THE BIGGEST WEBSITE DESIGN RIPOFFS

## 7 SURE SIGNS YOU'RE ABOUT TO THROW AWAY HARD- EARNED MONEY ON AN INEFFECTIVE WEBSITE

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### INTRODUCTION

Thanks for taking time to check out this free special report. As an Internet marketing consultant and web designer, I continue to come across website after website that fails to meet some basic measures for what most small business owners really need to have – **a website that actually helps them make money.**

Unfortunately, some designers fail to understand the true needs for a small business website. The end result for most busy business owners is that when asked if they have a website, answers like **"Yeah, we had a guy put one together for us"** are far more common than what *should* be the reply - **"Yeah, and that site is making me a ton of money"**.

If you're a business owner that's about to invest in a website, this report will explain  
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some of the biggest mistakes your counterparts probably wish they had known about before paying for their current website and how you can avoid those same, all-too-common mistakes..

On the other hand, if you already have a site and it's not producing the level of leads and sales you thought it would, this report will hopefully help you determine why that's the case and how you might go about turning that around.

And finally, if your site is already bringing in a good number of leads and sales, a few of these tips will hopefully show you how to ratchet things up a notch.

So enough of the intro material...let's get started!

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## 1. "WEBSITES MADE ENTIRELY IN FLASH

This is a particularly huge pet peeve of mine as someone who both creates websites and is well-versed in search engine optimization and online marketing. If your designer is trying to create an "all flash" website, you should be sure you understand the impact of doing so. First, a couple of examples of what an "all flash" site looks like, in case you're not aware.

[Flash Site Demo 1](#) <sup>1</sup>

[Flash Site Demo 2](#) <sup>2</sup>

You can see that each of these sites looks absolutely stunning, with great animations, audio and so on. Unfortunately, if your plan includes making your website easy to find in the search engines when people search for the types of products and services your business offers, this is one of the worst types of sites you can invest in. Why would I make such a seemingly harsh statement about such a great looking pair of sites?

### Search Engine Basics and Why You Might Want to Avoid Flash-Only Sites

The short explanation is that the search engines are relatively low-tech. We humans can understand all the fancy animations, audio, video and so forth. But the search

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.maxresponsemedia.com/flashsite1/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.maxresponsemedia.com/flashsite2/>

engines understand text, basic images, links and that's about it. They use these and a few other webpage elements to determine what each page is about. Then they rank pages so that you (or your potential customers) see the very best results when a specific search is typed in.

So as they send their little programs (called spiders) throughout the Internet looking at webpages like yours, they need to have some sort of text on the page in order to tell what the page is about. And when it comes to figuring out the topic of a page, it's really the text that matters most. The problem is that sites that are made entirely from flash don't really have any text for the search engines to read. How about a quick example? Follow these instructions:

- Go to one of the demo sites again.
- Get past the intro screen to the main part of the site, which will open in a new window.
- Then, **right-click** on the background on either side of the webpage. Not on the site itself, but the white or black background (depending on which site you decided to use for this test)
- When you right-click, you'll see a menu appear. Select the option labeled "**View Source**". This will show you the actual source code that makes up the site.
- Scan through it and see if you can make heads or tails of any of it. Probably not since it's almost ALL code. You'll see that there's not much text and there aren't many links.

Now, do the same thing by going to [www.maxresponsemedia.com](http://www.maxresponsemedia.com). That's the homepage for our main site. Again, just right-click anywhere on the page and select "View Source" from the menu that appears. Scroll through and see if you can read any of it.

Well, you might not understand some of the HTML that's included in the source code, but you'll certainly see that all of the text shown on our site also appears in the source code. This is how the search engine spiders see things too and having a text-rich webpage gives them lots of clues for figuring out how to categorize and rank your website.

### So Is Flash Ever Okay to Use?

If you're like a lot of people, you might kinda' like the flash sites shown above. **In fact, I commend the designers for creating such great looking work.** And even though we just went over some of the downsides of flash, you might be wondering if there's ever a time when you could use flash and not diminish your site's chances for performing well. Here are a couple of thoughts on that.

- Flash is okay when you anticipate more traffic coming to your website from word of mouth, offline promotions and other marketing than from people searching the Internet for what your business offers. There might be instances where you have a product or service that, for some reason, no one is looking for it online. But don't be so quick to assume that's the case. You'd be surprised what people search for online these days,

including very focused geographic searches for traditional, local businesses.

- Flash is okay when your website requires some special type of functionality that can only be accomplished using flash. If you have to use flash to create a website that has the functionality you require, then so be it. But don't sacrifice "profitability" for "functionality" if some of those features aren't really needed.
- Flash is okay if you use it sparingly on your site to add to the user experience, while keeping most of your site in traditional HTML. You can see from the examples that by using flash, you can create some fantastic effects that can differentiate your site from the competition. If you decide you'd like to have a banner, footer or other element of your site done in flash to "spice things up", that might also be a reasonable use for flash. But again, I'm assuming that your website is online to make you money, not necessarily win any design awards. So don't go overboard with fancy webpage elements that might turn off your website visitors.

So are flash sites really a ripoff? Not exactly...not if you know the potential downsides of using flash to build your entire website and how that might impact your online marketing strategy. The problem is that some web designers are either unaware of these issues or choose not to inform their clients so that clients can make an informed decision.

That being said, flash can be a great way to add exciting features to engage your visitors, but those decisions should almost always be

based on what leads to the highest conversion of website visitors to sales.

## 2. WEBSITES WITH “INTRO” PAGES

This is another website element that's best to avoid if you can help it. Luckily it's easy to avoid and any good web designer would never use it anyway. As a general rule, when people go to your website address, they should IMMEDIATELY get to your site, not an entry page, intro page, welcome page, or whatever you want to call it.

The only alternative is if you're using a page to capture online leads and you have a signup page that they have to fill out before getting to the main site. But even then, such a lead generation system is best setup on a separate website address and not your primary site. You can see an example of how not to do it by going to one of the flash example sites mentioned in the previous section. You'll see that each of these sites first forces you to click a link to "Enter the Site". That's a bad idea from a usability standpoint and from a search engine optimization perspective.

First, it makes it more difficult for people to get to your site. You don't see Amazon, eBay or Google using an "Enter the Site" page do you?

And from a search engine optimization perspective, you almost always want your homepage to be [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com), not

[www.mysite.com/home.html](http://www.mysite.com/home.html),  
[www.mysite.com/default.aspx](http://www.mysite.com/default.aspx) or  
[www.mysite.com/whatever](http://www.mysite.com/whatever).

The main reason is that two of the most important factors affecting your site's rankings are (1) the content on the site and (2) the links to your site from other sites throughout the Internet.

Keep in mind that most people linking to your site will simply link to your homepage. But if your homepage only has a link to "Enter the Site" and no other content, there's probably not enough content for it to rank well unless you have a very uncompetitive business even though the homepage could have many links pointing to it.

## 3. INSISTING ON A CUSTOM DESIGN VS. A TEMPLATE-BASED LAYOUT

Some designers will almost insist on creating a completely custom website for you. However, the shocking truth is that most businesses really don't need a custom web design. This is mostly ego trip stuff. But some designers use the fact that they're creating a custom design from scratch as a selling point...which is true if that's really what your business needs. **I say again...IF.**

For an excellent discussion on this, check out the following article by Internet Guru Seth Godin on the topic:

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### [How to Create a "Good Enough" Website](#) <sup>3</sup>

Here's an excerpt:

*I'm going to go out on a limb and beg you not to create an original design. There are more than a billion pages on the web. Surely there's one that you can start with? If your organization can't find a website that you all agree can serve as a model, you need to stop right now and find a new job. Not a site to rip-off, but an inspiration. Fonts and colors and layout. The line spacing. The interactions. Why not? Your car isn't unique, and your house might not be either."*

- Seth Godin

To add to that, as someone who has been involved with custom designs (as a customer not a designer), those have almost always been projects that were **over budget, late and wrong**. Does your business have time to deal with that type of hassle?

Custom designs are also among the most expensive websites to have created and rightly so. Creating custom graphics, images and so on is a huge task. Do you really want to invest in that at this point in the game? Or do you simply need a decent looking website that gets people in the door, on the phone or buying your stuff online?

Instead of looking to invest this amount of time and money into your web project,

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[http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths\\_blog/2007/10/how-to-create-a.html](http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2007/10/how-to-create-a.html)

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consider starting with a great looking layout, then having it customized to suit your business needs. You can always go custom later.

There's one caveat to that advice, so be sure to read the next section too.

## 4. TEMPLATE-BASED LAYOUTS WITH THE EXACT SAME CONTENT

This is the one exception to the previous advice of just starting with a good layout. If you're in real estate, the mortgage industry, a doctor, lawyer, contractor or other professional, you probably have someone selling stock websites to you and your peers. As a former real estate agent and investor, I know both of those industries see these sorts of offers all the time. Most of the sites are fine in terms of how they look, but there's still a major problem.

The big problem is that all of the sites contain the exact same content and the service providers usually make it difficult if not impossible to change it. My thoughts are that if you're paying for the site (especially the fees some of these services charge), you should be in full control of the content.

Keep in mind that Google flat out doesn't want duplicate pages in its index. Think about it. You go to Google to look for info on a certain topic and the whole first page contains links to the exact same article posted on different websites. Would you use Google again?

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That's why Google will either rank sites with duplicate content much lower in the rankings (like at #100+ in the results) or simply remove duplicate sites from it's index altogether. So keep an eye on that if you're hoping to get good rankings for your site. If you're using one of these template sites with cookie cutter content, high rankings probably aren't likely.

## 5. NOT BEING ABLE TO EASILY MAKE CHANGES TO THE SITE YOURSELF

Another problem with some services is that you tend to be at the mercy of your web designer or web development company when it comes to making changes to your site. But since your website is essentially the online presence for your business, you (as the business owner) will ideally be able to make simple changes, updates or additions to your site yourself, or by having a staff person take care of it. The last thing you want to have to do is pay an additional fee to your web designer to make some simple change to your website, then have to wait a week for that change to be made.

Most web design companies (including our company) are going to charge a monthly fee for hosting the site, providing support/maintenance, software updates and so on. And part of this should include taking care of the really technical changes that may need to be made to the site. As the business owner, you definitely should NOT be concerned

with these types of issues. That's what your web company is there for.

But for simple site changes, any reputable web design or web marketing company will encourage the use of some type of content management system (CMS) which enables you as the business owner to easily make website changes. Most CMS tools allow you to use an interface that looks much like a standard word processor, with bold, underline, centering, bullets and other familiar buttons that allow you to format the text the anyway you like.

If you're being sold a site that doesn't allow this type of interface, you may want to consider looking around a bit more before taking the plunge. These days, CMS systems are widely used, widely available, and are the most popular methods for keeping a site updated and easy to use.

## 6. MORE FOCUS ON "DESIGN" THAN ON "MAKING YOU MONEY"

Most designers are excellent when it comes to creating great looking websites. However, most will also admit that when it comes to marketing, that's not necessarily their focus. Therefore, be wary of dealing with someone who's more focused on creating a "*beautiful site that engages your visitors*" rather than "*a site that converts those visitors into paying customers or clients*". Of course, I'm assuming that you're putting up a website to bring in

more business, otherwise this advice might not be so relevant.

But if you're looking to boost the bottom line for your business, you should work with someone that offers a full range of marketing options and the savvy to make things happen. For example, at the very least, they should offer email marketing options. As a business owner, you know it takes more than an initial contact to make a sale in most cases. It's no different online.

So your site should include some sort of sign up form that people can fill out in exchange for something of value (a coupon, special report, how-to guide, buyer's guide, what to avoid guide, white paper, etc). A marketing-savvy consultant or company should be able to help you come up with this or may even create this for you.

The beauty of this method is that when done correctly, you're able to completely automate the follow-up sequence for people that visit your site but don't purchase immediately. Let's do a quick example with some actual numbers:

- Let's say you're a local handyman.
- Your average project is worth \$500 to you.
- You get 1000 people to your site per month.
- 5% of those people sign up for your email list. (50 people added to the list)
- You offer a special report that exposes the "7 Biggest Home Repair Ripoffs"

- You know that people typically make their decision within two weeks or less, so you have emails pre-written and set to be automatically sent to them with a new message sent out every couple of days for the next 2 weeks. Each message has important tips for such-and-such repair, tips for choosing a handyman, your contact info and an offer for 10% off.
- 5% of the 50 people on your email list turn into paying customers at your average project rate of \$500 per project.
- That equals \$1250 extra per month (1000 x .05 x .05 x \$500) - not to mention the referrals and repeat business if you do a halfway decent job.
- Every quarter, you offer everyone on your growing email list a special offer on a home checkup (like what the oil change places do for cars, but for a house instead).
- Oh, and you (or your web marketing expert) set this system up once and it continues to work over and over again (indefinitely).

Of course, this example will vary based on how much your average project is worth and how many people visit your site, sign up for your list and turn into buyers. But clearly you see the point. Now go check out your top 5 competitors. More than likely, none of them is doing anything like this on their websites. They just have a pretty website that some designer created, without a clear focus on **making you more money**. But at least now you know better.

## 7. DIRT CHEAP PRICES

The last red flag to keep an eye out for is dirt cheap prices. **You should never shop for anything like website creation or Internet marketing services based solely on cheapest price.** These are services that, if done properly, can directly impact your bottom line. But if you end up with a flaky web designer or marketing strategy that doesn't deliver results, your website is going to end up impacting your expense column, not the income column. No designer worth hiring will have so little to offer that all they can say is "I'm the cheapest".

I'm not saying that you need to spend \$5,000 or \$10,000 on a website, but be wary of promotions where the website only costs \$100 - \$200. As someone with the know-how to create websites, I can tell you that doing so at that price means that they're either super busy doing enough websites to keep a roof over their heads (i.e., poor support and other problems) or they're cranking out sites so fast that you'll end up with a "problem child" website that's just going to cost your business more time and money to get fixed.

### P.S.:

If you found this report useful, then you'll get even more value when we work together on creating (or updating) your website. By investing in a quality website from Max Response Media, you'll enjoy the following:

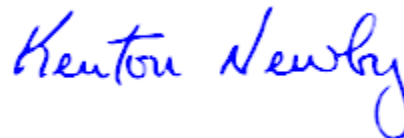
- **Professional layouts** – choose from several layouts that are completely customizable with your logo, colors, and images (or we can find images for you).

- **Search engine friendly web design** - these sites are search engine friendly out of the box but we add a few tweaks to help you get even better results
- **Unique content specific to your site** - we'll work with you to create unique content specific to your site and your business. You'll see better search engine results by having unique content not found on other websites.
- **Easy updates and changes** - you'll be able to easily add new pages, articles, links and other info to your site. If you can use a word processor, you can learn how to update your site in about 5 minutes.
- **Built-in contact form** - have contact info sent directly to your email Inbox.
- **Built-in blog** - easily add fresh, new content and articles to your site using text, audio, or video

You can contact me several ways to discuss your web design or Internet marketing project:

- 1 Complete the contact form found on our website at: [www.MaxResponseMedia.com](http://www.MaxResponseMedia.com) and I'll follow-up via email or phone in the next 24-48 hours.
- 2 Email: [info@maxresponsemedia.com](mailto:info@maxresponsemedia.com)
- 3 Phone: (888) 889-1538

Thanks again for reading,



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