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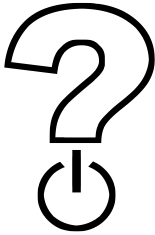
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About East Texas Computer Help



Our company began in 1991 as Michael Brown Computer Consulting. After working at companies such as General Electric and Texas Instruments, Michael decided to strike out on his own and began providing personalized on-site computer repair, support and training to business clients as well as individuals.

In 1994, we moved to the East Texas area and have now been serving clients locally and across the country for over twenty years. A lot has changed with technology in the past two decades, so in 2012, we decided to change our name to East Texas Computer Help to reflect our expanding vision.

It is our goal to help our clients get the best use out of their technology WITHOUT the headaches and hassle that can often accompany new things. We hope the information contained in this resource guide will be helpful to you. We would love to hear from you with any comments or questions you may have.

Find us online at:

<http://www.easttxcomputerhelp.com/>

Would you like to find new customers and boost your business profits? Bring your business online!

It really is not an option any more. **If you want your business to thrive, you must have an online presence.** Every year, more people rely on searching the internet rather than the phone book for local products and services. If you do not have an online presence, **you are losing business.** One of the best investments you can make is planning, designing and maintaining your business website; however, you need to avoid making some **big** mistakes that could cost you and your company a lot of time, money and missed opportunities.

In this guide, we will share some potentially harmful website mistakes that you will need to avoid if you really want to use your online presence effectively so you can attract more local customers, increase sales, and boost profits for your business. If you already have a website, you can use this guide as a checklist to see where you can make improvements. If you don't have a website yet, being aware of these common mistakes will save you time and frustration as you develop your online presence.

Critical Mistake #1: Having an Unprofessional Website

When people visit your website, their first impression matters a lot. Yes, it is important to have a site that looks great, but that is only one piece of the puzzle. There are certain tools which are necessary to have on your site in order to help you turn your virtual visitors into paying customers. For instance, it is very important that your website loads quickly and is easy for visitors to find the information they need.

Some of the most common website problems are...

- confusing layouts
- loud colors
- fonts that are too large or small
- fonts that are too fancy
- slow loading times
- lack of relevant content
- confusing navigation



Overall, your website should reflect the atmosphere, personality or branding of your business. Be sure to use a modern theme and professional graphics. It is sometimes

difficult to have an objective opinion about our own websites. Get a friend or colleague whom you trust to take your site for a test-drive and get their honest feedback. Then make changes as needed.

Also be careful about using Flash and music on your website. Unless these are *absolutely* necessary for your marketing goals, leave them off. They can be really annoying to some visitors and could literally drive them away from your site. If you do feel these things add to your branding or marketing, be sure to add controls which allow the visitor to decide when to start/stop the music or flash presentation.

Critical Mistake #2: Having a Confusing Navigation Structure

When potential customers land on your website, **the *last* thing they want to do is have to guess where they should go** to find the information they want. It should be crystal clear. If you leave them guessing, they will leave.

As important as this is, you might be surprised how many companies still have confusing navigation structures. As a general rule of thumb, make sure your navigation menu is clearly visible and contains the most important links that your visitors will be looking for. If possible, avoid having drop-down menus in your navigation as this can be confusing for some visitors.



When labeling your navigation, don't get too creative. Keep things simple and make sure your visitors can understand where to click for specific information. For example, "Contact Us" may not be a very original title for the link to your contact information, but it is **exactly** what people are going to be looking for if they want to find out how to get in touch with you.

Where should you put your navigation? You can be very creative with the look and style of your navigation as long as it is easy to find and use. Typically, people expect to find navigation links near the top of the page, just under the header or in the side bar of a page. It does sometimes make sense to place certain navigation links in the footer of your site, but we do not recommend using the footer for your main navigation links. Be sure to keep your navigation consistent throughout your site. It can be very annoying to visitors when they have to search for navigation all over again every time they go to a new page.

Critical Mistake #3: Trying to Build Your Own Website

We encourage our clients to take an active role in developing and maintaining their own websites. Knowing how to edit your website at any time can not only save you money, but can also give you the flexibility to add content such as sales announcements, photos, or other time-sensitive information immediately without having to wait on a web designer's schedule.



On the other hand, we strongly discourage the use of most free website builders or templates to create your website. While these tools may be fine for creating a personal blog or hobby site, they are typically missing important functionality necessary for a professional business site. Also, many business owners who build their own websites neglect some critical pieces of the puzzle. Even if you have web design experience, it is still important to have up-to-date information about what works and what does not work best for a business website.

If you really want to stand out from the crowd online, we highly recommend creating your website in partnership with a professional website designer and/or marketing consultant. Not only can a professional make knowledgeable recommendations, but he or she can help you plan, design, and build the perfect site for your specific type of business. Working with someone else on a project like this can also be a lot more fun and a lot less stressful.

Critical Mistake #4: Not Capturing Visitors' Email Addresses

Many businesses still do not have an email opt-in form on their website. This is like sitting in silence as you watch a potential customer enter your store, look around for a while and then leave. Would you do that in "real" life? Most likely, you would at least greet your visitors and ask them if you could help them, wouldn't you? While you have visitors on your website, **you need to capture their email addresses so you can have the opportunity to engage with them.** Online marketing is no different than offline marketing – you must build relationships with your leads in order to turn them into customers. You can create these connections very nicely via email.

A graphic of a dark red rectangular box with rounded corners, representing an email opt-in form. At the top, the text 'FREE REPORT' is written in yellow. Below it, in white, is the text 'Just Enter Your Name and Email Address To Get INSTANT ACCESS Now!'. Two yellow arrows point downwards from this text to two white input fields. The first field is labeled 'Name' and the second is labeled 'Email'. Below these fields is a yellow button with the text 'Yes, Give Me INSTANT ACCESS' in black. A small white mouse cursor arrow is pointing at the button.

Getting a visitor's email addresses is not as difficult as you may think; as long as you offer your visitor something of real value for opting-in, most people will not mind giving you their email address. What you decide to offer will depend on the needs of your potential customers as well as your own business model. Some examples are...

- a free report related to your industry
- checklists or "how-to" information which helps solve a problem your customers have
- a discount or coupon for your product or service
- access to your newsletter or other helpful resources that your target audience would find valuable

Critical Mistake #5: Asking for Too Much Info on Your Email-Opt in Form

Here's the opposite extreme from mistake #4. Some companies that do capture email addresses on their website tend to ask for **too much** information: first name, last name, email address, home address, phone number, birthday, etc... all of that is just too much! You have not yet earned enough trust for a first-time visitor to feel comfortable giving you that much information. The first name and email address are all you really need, and asking for this minimal amount of information has proven to be more effective than using the longer, more detailed opt-in forms.

Critical Mistake #6: Not Having a Call-to-Action or Contact Info on the Home Page

You only have a few seconds to capture the attention of your website visitors, so your website needs to be equipped to handle the job. Most website visitors land on your home page first. However, many businesses do not have their contact information anywhere on their home page. Many mistakenly think that having their phone number and address on the "Contact Us" page is good enough, but it is not.



Let's say a potential customer lands on your home page because they're looking for a local business that can provide exactly what you have to offer. But they are in a hurry, so when they get to your home page, all they want to do is find your phone

number so they can give you a call – but there's no phone number that can be easily located.

Now this visitor has two choices:

1. Continue to hunt around your website for your phone number
2. Leave and go to one of your competitors' websites

Which one do you think most people choose? You can "hope" they choose to search your site for your phone number. In reality, most people hit the "back" button and move on.

Some handy places to include your phone number are in your header, in your footer or in your sidebar. You can incorporate it into a graphic to make it more difficult for spam bots to collect. Using this trick for your phone number is not quite as critical as it is for listing your email address on your site however. We usually recommend using a contact form rather than displaying your email address directly on your site. If you do wish to list your email address on your site, we always recommend making it into a graphic instead of using actual text.



Also, not having a strong, clear call-to-action on your home page is another costly mistake. If you want your website visitors to do something, such as call you, email you, or come to see you, **tell them to do it!** It is not being "rude" or "pushy." It is simply letting people know what the next logical step is so you can serve them.

Calls-to-action have proven to boost conversion rates. That means they help turn your visitors into customers. Not using appropriate calls to action is a **huge** missed opportunity for you to drive more sales to your business.

Critical Mistake #7: Not Using Video, Images and Graphics on Your Website

Videos, pictures and graphics speak so much louder than plain old text on a page. People today are extremely "visual" and graphics help you get your message across more quickly and effectively than words alone.

Most people don't like to read a lot of long, drawn-out website content. Graphics and images will help you break up the content on your website, as well as keep your

visitors engaged and informed at the same time. **Here's a handy tip:** make sure you include alt text for every graphic you use on your site. This makes your site more useable for people who are blind or have low vision and use screen reading software to browse the internet. It also helps improve search engine optimization (SEO) for your site since the search engine bots can't tell what your pictures are without the alt text – at least, not yet.

Critical Mistake #8: Not Adding Fresh, New Content to Your Website

If you want higher search engine rankings, fresh, new content is the best way to “bribe” the search engines. Stagnant websites or online brochures simply are no longer effective. The search engines are constantly roaming sites, and businesses with the most recent relevant content will win their attention. This also includes social media content, which does play a role in website rankings.

Good, relevant content is not only appealing to the search engines, it's also appealing to real people - your customers and potential customers. Posting fresh content on a consistent schedule gives them a reason to keep visiting your site, following you on social media and engaging with you. so they can get the information they crave. The more you keep the content flowing, the more traffic will flow to your site

Critical Mistake #9: Having Long Pages of Content

Having lots of fresh relevant content is important, but there is an extreme to this as well. Excessive page scrolling can be a complete turn-off for most website visitors; yet, many businesses are still loading their sites up with long pages of content. People today are on the hunt for quick, easy information. They often do not have the patience to read multiple paragraphs of content – especially when they're looking for a solution to a problem they are having – ***right now***.



Instead of trying to squeeze everything in on one page, break up the content into different topics and post them on different pages or blog posts. This will help your

visitors find what they need more quickly. Also, arrange your content in a way that visitors can easily scan it and get the information they need. Use bullet points, headlines, bold text or anything else that will help your readers consume your content quickly and effortlessly.

Critical Mistake #10: Making the Home Page All About “Your Business”

Yes, it's true that most consumers feel more comfortable doing business with reputable companies with a long track record of success. However, many companies make the mistake of putting all of their “About Us” information right on the home page.



If you look around online, you will see many business home pages packed full of information all about how the business started, the company goals, the mission statement, business credentials, etc. This is all great information! The home page is simply not the best place for it. The truth is, **your website visitors really don't care about all that “stuff” until they know if you can solve their problems.**

When consumers are looking for local products and services, what they really want to see on the home page is content that talks about how you can help **them**. So instead of making your home page all about your company, make it about your target market. Talk about the **pains, needs, or wants** that your target audience may have, followed by the **solutions** your business can offer.

Critical Mistake #11: Having Spelling and Grammatical Errors

Your website is a virtual representation of your business. If it is filled with spelling and grammatical errors, it could potentially be a big turn-off to your visitors. Many people will assume your site's overall level of “professionalism” reflects the quality of your product or service – even if there is no direct correlation.

You might be relieved to find out that you do not have to write your website content using perfect grammar. The wording and style you use will depend on your target market and your own business personality. However, this does not mean you can do away with proof-reading and editing your content before posting it.

Critical Mistake #12: Not Making Clickable Links Visible



You will want to incorporate links into the text on your website in order to help your visitors find their way around on your site or perhaps send them to another site for more information. This is great. However, many companies fail to make their links “noticeable,” which means some of their website visitors will likely overlook them. If you add links to your website content, make them stand out so your visitors know that they are clickable. For instance, you can make them a different color or underline them so they are easily identifiable as “clickable.”

On the flip side, avoid using colors or underlines for your regular, non-linked text. This is so you don’t confuse visitors as they may think this text is actually a clickable link when it is not.

Critical Mistake #13: Not Optimizing Your Website for Mobile Users

A **large** percentage of internet traffic now comes from people using mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. This means your business is probably getting a lot of hits to your website from mobile users. What happens when they get there? Are they presented with a nice, mobile-friendly website that they can quickly view and move around? Or are they presented with a slow-loading, jumbled website where it is impossible to navigate or find what they need?

If you still have not taken the time to make sure your business website is mobile friendly, do it as soon as possible! Not being “mobile-friendly” is a huge error that could be costing you a lot of money. Most of the time, mobile visitors are simply looking for an address or phone number; but websites that are not mobile-optimized usually have a problem delivering this simple information. As you can imagine, this is extremely frustrating for users. If **your** mobile web visitors are unable to view your website while on-the-go from their mobile phones, they are likely to move on to one of your competitors who **does** have a mobile-friendly website.



Critical Mistake #14: Not Implementing Social Media

Chances are, you are already familiar with the booming social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus, YouTube and Twitter (among others). These sites are taking over the internet. People flock to them on a daily basis to socialize with friends and family members, but they are also using social media sites to research and interact with businesses online.



Although many companies do understand the value of interacting with their customers via social media, there are still many that have yet to connect with their website visitors this way. Their websites may not have links to their social media pages, or they may simply not engage in social media at all. Ignoring or neglecting social media marketing can be a costly mistake for local businesses. Your customers are on

these sites and they are talking about lots of things with other local people. If you aren't present for the conversation, they aren't going to be talking about your business.

One of The simplest things you can do is to make sure you include links to your social media pages everywhere - your website, your email signature line, your business cards, your brochures etc. Then, spend a few minutes each day to post new information and interact with your followers on your favorite social media sites. It does not need to take a long time. If you tend to get sucked in and spend too much time on social media, set a timer for 10 minutes and only spend that amount of time on social media. Another way to save some time each day is to schedule your social media posts using a tool like Hootsuite.com.

Critical Mistake #15: Not Doing "On-Page" Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization consists of several factors, such as on-page and off-page optimization. Many businesses have given little or no thought to their "on-page" optimization. This means that their websites are not structured to help them get better search engine rankings and more visibility from local consumers.

On-page optimization helps the search engines easily determine what your business is about so they can place your website in the proper ranking spots in relation to your competitors. Without on-page optimization, your website is confusing to the search engines. This makes it harder for them to rank your website for relevant search terms.

Critical Mistake #16: Not Monitoring and Tracking Website Statistics

You may have already invested a lot of time, money and energy in building your website. So, how is it doing? What is your return on investment? Many business owners have no idea how their website is doing in terms of traffic and conversions because they do not know what is going on behind the scenes.

Monitoring your website's performance is a vital piece of maintaining and improving your overall online presence. If you do not know how much traffic you are getting or how well your website is converting visitors into more customers, you are missing a huge piece of the puzzle. Only when you have a grip on this information can you take steps to make sure your website is truly working for your business instead of just costing you money.



There are many great tools available to you to help you keep track of your site's statistics. One you may have heard of is Google Analytics. It may surprise you to learn just how much information you can glean about your visitors. This can help you determine exactly what is working and what is not. It can help you know what kind of content your visitors prefer, where your visitors are coming from and how long they are staying on your site. This kind of information will help you know how to best spend your money and time on your site.

Critical Mistake #17: Not Clearly Listing Your Products and/or Services

Most of your website visitors come to your site for one thing – to see what you can do for them. If they're unable to see that information right away, they will probably leave your site within seconds. Many business owners make the mistake of not listing their products and services visibly on their websites. In a nutshell, your site needs to show your visitors why they should stick around – and do it fast!

A great way to accomplish this is to make it easy to find your product or service list so they can tell right away if your business is what they're looking for. Don't bury this information in layers of sub-navigation menus. Being able to immediately capture the attention of your website visitors is crucial. If they cannot see what you have to offer

shortly after hitting your site, they will assume that you do not offer what they want or need and move on to one of your local competitors instead.

Critical Mistake #18: Appealing to Everyone

Yes, you read that right. At first, it might seem like a good idea to appeal to all comers, but trying to do this will be frustrating at best and at worst, it can doom your online marketing efforts to failure. Think about it. Would you open an “Everything for Everyone” store on downtown Main Street? Of course not! You would give some thought to whom you wanted to sell your product/service and where you could find those people. You would probably go speak for organizations to which they belong, advertise in publications that they read or find other ways to make contact with those specific people. You wouldn’t waste your time chasing down every single person who passed by your door.



Unfortunately, when people decide to bring their businesses online, they often forget these basic marketing principles. Just as in the “real world”, it is important to design your website and your online marketing efforts around your ideal target market. The great news is that there are lots of examples online already. Do your research, find out what your ideal customer is looking for and see what other successful

people in your business are doing. Then, use that knowledge along with what you have learned in this guide to create a great foundation from which to launch your business into the expanding world of online marketing.

Critical Mistake #19: Not Having a Website at All

Yes, it's true... many small businesses still do not have an online presence. Your website is the virtual equivalent of your brick and mortar business in the online world. If someone offered you a very inexpensive place to set up your business with tons of traffic driving by and unlimited free and inexpensive options for connecting with potential new customers, would you turn them down? If you don't have a website online, that is exactly what you are doing, and you are literally non-existent to a growing number of people who socialize and do business more and more in the online world.

Did you find any of these critical mistakes on your own business website? If you did, please know you are not alone. Most businesses have at least a few areas that could use improvement. Part of the problem is that online marketing practices are constantly evolving and it can be daunting to try and keep up with all the new things going on. If you take steps to avoid the mistakes outlined in this report however, you will be well on your way to having a great foundation for your online marketing efforts.

We hope this guide has been helpful. At East Texas Computer Help we work with local businesses to analyze their online marketing efforts and develop a plan to help them manage and improve their efforts going forward.

If you would like more information about how you can avoid these and other potential online marketing mistakes, please contact us at help@easttxcomputerhelp.com or 903-586-0938 for a free consultation.

Wishing you much success!

The Brown family

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