

# Three ways to sabotage your website

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I've had many clients who are on their third or fourth website overhaul. They've spent a ton of money on design and redesign, development and redevelopment. They've reinvented their brand voices, hired new online marketers, run PPC campaigns, started tweeting...And it's still not working.

All of these things are important aspects of a successful online presence. But they will amount to nothing if you are blowing huge holes below the waterline of your online ship.



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Here's how to do that...

## **Spend lots of time and money on everything - except your content**

Over the last 16 years I've been involved in dozens of large website projects. Time and again I've seen companies spend hundreds of thousands on design and development, and then balk at spending the same kind of money on the content.

I'll leave it to you to imagine how many meetings I've attended six months later where they try to work out why the website isn't working for them. Why it isn't generating the required return on investment.

Yes, a good layout is crucially important in making your website attractive and usable. So is great functionality. But it's the content that does the really heavy lifting - that engages your visitors, creates trust, persuades them.

The functionality and layout of your website are there to present your content as efficiently and attractively as possible. The content is there to convert visitors into customers.

It's the content that brings in the money. Don't undervalue it.

## **Make it all about you**

You wouldn't dream of opening a shop and training all the staff just to tell every customer how wonderful your company is. You train them to ask what the customer needs and to respond accordingly.

So why do so many companies take exactly the opposite approach on their websites?

Don't make your company the centre of attention on your website. Put the visitor - the customer - at the centre of the experience. Make the website all about them. Work out what information is most useful and valuable to them and focus the website around it.

To illustrate, here's a home truth that may be a bit hard to hear...

No matter how much time you've spent crafting your company mission and values statement, no one is ever going to read it. Let alone care about it.

Think about it. Let's say you're considering buying a bicycle. You have 20 minutes between appointments, so you quickly go to a bike seller's website. You look at the bicycles they have for sale. You read information that helps you decide which bike will suit you. You check the prices. You read about the after-sales service. You check if they deliver or not. Do you

ever - EVER - read the company's mission statement?

Neither do the people who visit your website.

So by all means, have a mission statement, but don't give it any prominence on your website. And whatever you do, don't put it on your home page.

## **Force your visitors to find the information they want**

Over the years, the typical company website layout has settled on a standard format. There will usually be a main section of the website entitled "Our Products" or "Our Services". This contains a well-ordered, nicely categorised catalogue, with descriptions of each item. All very easy and logical, right?

Thing is, no matter how clear your website navigation, by presenting all your products and services to everyone at the same time, you're forcing visitors to go through a process of discovery to find the information they want. Don't forget, what seems clear and logical to you - because you are so familiar with your products - may not be as intuitive to them. And when you add effort to your visitors' experience of your website, you're adding a barrier to conversion.

So why not make it easier for them?

Before you build your website, take the time to get a clear idea of each type of customer or visitor. Start by asking who they are and what they want. Then structure the content and its presentation to create "journeys" through your website that take each type of customer straight to the information they need. Don't make your customers find the right aisle - lead them down it.

## **ABOUT MARC PIENAAR**

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