

Got The Web Woes?

by Rickey Gold

If your website is up and that's the best you can say about it, no doubt you've got the "web woes".

Web woes are what happens when your website is underperforming.... or not performing. Fortunately, this is a problem that's easily corrected.

Here's a partial list of fixes. Odds are there are some things you could do right now to turn your website into the profitable marketing tool it was meant to be.

1. Can a visitor to your site easily understand what you're selling or offering? Or are the benefits hidden in a lot of overblown marketing hype?
The Fix: Say what you do. No gibberish. If you offer the most complete selection of scuba diving gear in the Midwest, say so. Clearly and simply. On the Home page as well as the Products page.
2. Is your copy reader-friendly? Or is it loaded with confusing technical jargon?
The Fix: Hire a copywriter who knows how to write for the web. Get rid of the formal, grammatically perfect copy. A website is a direct marketing tool. Think one-on-one. Write the way you talk when you're having a conversation.
3. Is the site navigation intuitive or is finding information a nightmare?
The Fix: Sit down with a few people who know little or nothing about what you offer. Have them go to your site and find a few specific items. You'll know pretty quickly where there are problems. Get them fixed so that a visitor can get anything he needs with no more than three clicks.
4. Are fonts large enough to read without straining your eyes? Or is tiny type used to make the site look hip and cool?
The Fix: Don't make it tough for people to read your copy. As it is, you have no control over how people's monitors are set. So stick with Web-friendly fonts in sizes that people can read.
5. Are there blinking lights and moving objects that have no particular relevance to what you do?
The Fix: Unless you're an artist, musician or designer who uses Flash to highlight your work, Trash the Flash! It's distracting and annoying and keeps visitors from reading your (hopefully legible) copy.
6. Is your contact info easily found and on every page? Emails are great but not when you're in a hurry.
The Fix: Simple. Put your phone number on every page – in the header or footer works. Bold-faced and near the top of the page is even better. And if you have instant messaging, put that on too. Make it easy for your customers to reach you.

7. Do pages come up quickly or is there a lag time while the site loads? Few things are more annoying online than waiting for a site to load.
The Fix: Make the images smaller and a lower resolution. If you can't do it, a designer or developer can. Plus, a developer can check to see how your site comes up on all of the different platforms with all of the various browsers – in case (say it isn't so) this was never done when your site was first launched.

8. Does your site come up quickly in a search? Or are you on page 4 while all your competitors are in the top ten?
The Fix: Get your site optimized for the search engines. This could be as simple as some rewrites to add more keywords and phrases to your copy. Or, depending on how your site was initially designed, might involve a full redesign. If you have an older site that was built using frames, or keywords that are hidden in graphics, or key search terms way down at the bottom of the page – or no key search terms, you'll need a redesign.

The good news is that bad websites can be fixed. And web woes can be turned into web wonders!

Rickey Gold & Associates is a Chicago-based marketing communications firm that helps clients reach new markets and build sales.

www.rickeygold.com

rg@rickeygold.com

773.348.4973