

How to Piss of a Search Engine in 10 Easy Steps

By: Chris Bachman | February 19, 2014

Your girl friend grew up and got wise to you, your boss got smarter, heck, even the search engines have gotten pickier ! What used to be SOP can now be a recipe for disaster. Read it and wince.

Bogus Links

Too many links too fast, link farms, links from bad areas, too much keyword anchor text, broken links within the site. Even linking out to low quality sites can hurt you. Check your Google Webmaster Tools for warnings. Meantime, If you think you are, you probably are.

Misleading Landing Pages

Give the visitor exactly what you promised you would give them if they visit that page. That means honesty in your Adwords, your links, your Title and Description, yes, even the page content needs to fulfill the promise. Sometimes we mix up landing pages, set up a new page but forget to change the Title or Description tags, make an adjustment in one place and forget to finish it in the other place. All these can hurt you. The search engines like things clear and consistent; don't behave otherwise.

Misleading or inaccurate Title and/or Description tags

Same as above but site wide. Review your Title and Description tags for every single page you have. I can almost guarantee you will find mistakes or duplicate tags. Fix them. Remember, keywords to the left side and finish the Title with the city, state.



Keyword Stuffing

Seriously, what was good strategy two years ago is triggering flags now. Go back through your perfectly optimized pages and see if you can't strip out some of the redundant keywords. Makes it a tad more readable and it won't be nearly as likely to tick off the search engine.

Hidden Text

Ooohhh...you don't still do this, do you? Good. Even so, you may have some pages left over from who knows when that have hidden text placed within them, perhaps by that weird but self-proclaimed whiz kid you hired one summer. Have someone look inside all the old pages you have and see if there is ANY of this floating around. Better yet, if the page is that old just create a new one. (remember, it is "hidden" so looking at the page itself won't tell you.)

Including infected 3rd party plug ins

Need a widget? Hey, grab any old one off the web, long as it works you are good to go, right? No.... Widgets are a great way to infect your website, a lot of other websites and bring the wrath of GOOG down on you hard. Be sure you are using quality widgets from reputable sources.

Endless loops

Redirect to redirect, query strings with endless variables, 301 to a 301 to a 301.....you get the idea. I even saw a case of reciprocal canonicals once....what the h***?! If a spider gets stuck or even thinks it might get stuck it will abandon crawling your site in a moment.

Topic cramming

Sometimes, perhaps in an effort to save money on building pages, or simply out of ignorance, I will see where someone has crammed every possible sub topic onto a page. Search engines hate this. They much prefer to see each page have a distinct focus, a purpose, a solution to a question. Having everything jumbled up on one page makes it very difficult to accurately rank that page for anything.

Imagine you had a Title keyword of Cars. Sub Titles might include; Compact, Family, SUV, Sports, EV, Hybrid, Natural Gas, etc. Clearly, placing all of these subtopics on one page makes little sense to a search engine. Sure, you have a great page about cars, which will rank at #1,037,238. Instead, how about having a separate page for each of the Sub Titles? All linking off a main page of Cars.



Content Mill Copy

Garbage in = garbage out. If you are using any service or software that you think may be generating anything less than top quality, unique and useful content. Stop. The search engines have drawn the line in the sand and will now wipe you away without even blinking. And rightfully so.

Over Optimization

You read a few articles, asked a few friends how to do SEO, and then went at it with a triple espresso by your side. Excessive footer links, spammy on-page links, pages super structured for SE's - you get the picture.

It reminds me of a clueless teenager trying to pick up a girl. Slicked back hair, too much cologne, talks about himself way too much, all "look at me!"

Subtle. Refined. Mature. Considerate. Respectful. All those things your mammy hoped you would figure out some day...apply that thinking to your website and you will go a lot further than "Hey! Look at me!"

Low Quality

Poor quality design, poor quality coding, non mobile friendly, useless content, poor navigation, broken links. The search engines know what turns people off and it turns them off too. This one is easy to grasp; produce a low quality site, get ranked way down in the dark recesses of the SERPs.

Ooops... that's 11 ways to piss off a search engine. Hey, you got a bonus for finishing the article.



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