

6 Internet Marketing Blunders to Avoid

By Naren Arulrajah

Internet marketing continues to remain the most unpredictable and challenging form of marketing, considering the complex dynamics of the Internet and fast-changing Internet technologies. It is easy for even a seasoned Internet marketer to take a strategic misstep, which can send a carefully orchestrated online campaign into a tailspin. From a chiropractor's perspective, here is a list of six critical Internet marketing blunders that must be avoided:

1. Failure to Localize SEO

In most cases, an independent health care practice is a stand-alone entity operating within a localized area. It is largely pointless and a waste of marketing resources to promote the practice beyond the local area. Many Internet marketers make the cardinal mistake of ignoring a localized focus, which leads to a dilution of results. The primary goal of a chiropractic Internet marketing campaign must be to achieve a higher traffic of local patients visiting the chiropractor's office. Localized keywords and localized SEO strategies can help achieve this goal.

According to a [Forrester Research report](#), 93 percent of all online experiences begin at the search engine.¹ And the "2012 Search Marketing Benchmark Report" from [Marketing Sherpa](#) revealed that 74 percent of people find local search to be "important," and 18 percent of those call it "critical" to their buying process. If these figures are any indication, the importance of local SEO cannot be underestimated.²

2. Poor Emphasis on Content Quality



In the past two years, Google and other leading search engines have stepped up their efforts to identify websites that are weak on content and downgrade their search rankings. Google's algorithmic updates, Panda and Penguin, have been fairly successful in pulling down websites that were traditionally smart on SEO, but very poor on content.

However, many Internet marketers continue to remain trapped in the now-defunct strategy of pursuing "black hat" SEO techniques to achieve higher page rankings without improving content quality. The growing value of content quality can be gauged from an [eMarketer report](#) that forecasts marketing spent on online content creation will increase by 15 percent this year.³

3. Underestimating Social Media Power

With more than a billion active users on Facebook alone, it can be one of the worst mistakes for an Internet marketer to ignore the growing power of social media. Search-engine spiders pick up social media signals to help determine the real value of a particular website. Social networking can also lead to the generation of quality backlinks for the chiropractic website, which boosts the SEO value of the site.

A 2012 study by SearchMetrics.com revealed a very high correlation between social media signals and search engine rankings.⁴ A website's engagement with Facebook, Twitter and Google+ appears to influence the rankings on Google, Bing and other search engines. Facebook "Shares" and "Comments" seem to have the highest influence, followed by the number of "Tweets" on Twitter.⁴ Furthermore, Google has already been dropping sufficient hints to webmasters regarding the future importance of Google+ in impacting the search rankings of various websites. In fact, it is already no longer possible to get a new Gmail account without signing up for Google+.

4. Ignoring PR and Media Relations

The dynamics of Internet marketing are changing rapidly, and the good-old public-relations and traditional media campaigns have a new role to play in boosting the SEO value of a website. Public-relations exercise is a lot more than mere distribution of online press releases. It involves a close engagement with various media organizations, respected bloggers, review and ratings websites, and other key online and offline influencers. Integration of public-relations and Internet marketing is crucial in the new Internet environment to achieve high search rankings on major search engines.

Ted Ives of FindHow.com provided an interesting case in point regarding the importance of PR on Search Engine Land. When Ted launched FindHow, he placed an extraordinary emphasis on PR, rather than go the conventional ways to promote the site. The result was that FindHow received 15,000 unique visitors within the first month of its launch, and eventually reached 100,000 unique visitors a month. Within five months of the PR exercise, the site had achieved more than 18,000 links, particularly because of its prominent mentions in the media.⁵

5. Lack of Attention to Web Analytics

Many Internet marketers fail to realize that without a close tracking of strategic results, there is every chance of the marketing campaign going off the road. In a highly dynamic online environment, the parameters of the success of an Internet marketing campaign keep changing.

Objective monitoring and analyzing of results of the campaign can allow marketers to refine and repurpose their strategies more effectively before it's too late. It is worth investing time and energy in web analytics to know precisely where the marketing campaign is headed, and how it must be adapted to achieve the maximum results.

6. Overlooking Competitor Behavior

One of the easiest traps in Internet marketing is to get over-involved with one's own marketing strategy and become completely disconnected from competitor activity. A chiropractic marketing campaign must try to avoid falling into this trap and stay in touch with the external competitor environment. It is important to realize that Internet marketing is a constantly evolving field, and a marketer must be alert to new technologies and techniques that can impact existing strategies significantly.

Smart marketers do not mind picking up cues from their competitors' websites, social networks and other marketing activities and re-adapting themselves constantly to meet the new challenges successfully.

Legendary marketing guru Michael Porter called upon marketers to observe the behavior of competitors and learn from their current tactics and market strengths. Paying attention to the competitors' good points can be one of the drivers of effective marketing strategies.

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