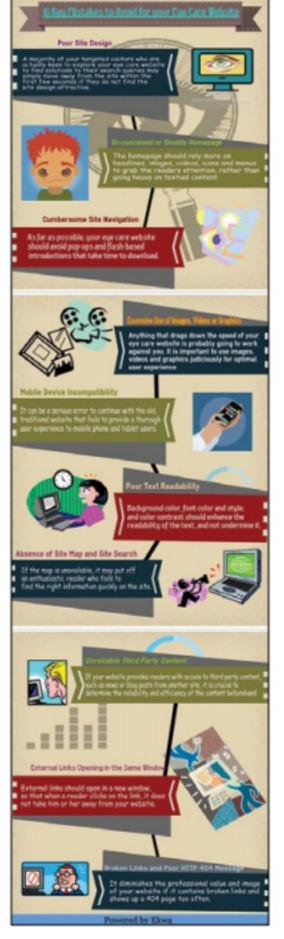# 10 Key Mistakes to Avoid for Your Eye Care Website

Analyze traffic patterns and review the content.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH WITH VIKAS VIJ

In an increasingly complex Internet search environment, it is easy for a website to lose focus at some point, and the result could be a steady decline in search rankings. This could occur due to two reasons: (1) the website may be receiving irrelevant or nonlocalized traffic of visitors who are not the target audience for the practice; or (2) even if the website manages to pull in the targeted traffic of localized potential patients, they may be leaving the website quickly without engaging with it in any responsive manner. The rankings of the website may not change, and the results in terms of new patients actually visiting the practice may not be forthcoming.

When a practice is not seeing an uptick in new patients as expected, it is important to analyze the website traffic patterns and evaluate the bounce rate. Web analytics must be reviewed on a regular basis to keep a tab on the direction that the website is taking. These analytics can provide insights into how many unique visitors accessed the practice's website during a given time period and how much time they spent on average on a particular web page. If the web pages on your site are experiencing poor "stickiness" in terms of the average viewing time spent, and/or low levels of reader engagement, it is a cause for concern. This situation will eventually affect search rankings, and the website will gradually lose traffic in absolute terms.

Following are 10 common mistakes that could potentially cause an eye care website to lose its targeted traffic and suffer from abnormally high bounce rates.

No. 1. POOR SITE DESIGN

Online, visitors are overwhelmed with choices about where to spend their time and, as a result, their tolerance levels are low. A majority of a practice's targeted visitors who are keen to explore its website to find answers to their search queries may simply move away from the site within the first few seconds if they do not find the site's design attractive. They will not have the patience to stay on the website if it is not user-friendly and does not encourage them to navigate through the content.

No. 2. ILL-CONCEIVED OR SHODDY HOMEPAGE

The homepage of a practice's website should be treated differently from all of the site's other web pages. It must effectively communicate the website's purpose and present all of the major options available on the site. A large number of visitors will reach the homepage first and draw their impressions about the entire site. This page should rely more on

Avoid these 10 mistakes when designing your website.

headlines, images, videos, icons, and menus to grab the reader's attention, rather than going heavy on textual content.

No. 3. CUMBERSOME SITE NAVIGATION

As much as possible, the eye care website should avoid pop-ups and flash-based introductions that take time to download. These can be unnecessary hurdles that are annoying to a majority of readers who probably have little time to navigate and want to get straight to the point. The website must open quickly and provide intuitive and obvious paths to help visitors get to the content they are looking for. A smart website will offer seamless integration between the web pages and the home page to achieve an optimal experience for its targeted readers.

No. 4. EXCESSIVE USE OF IMAGES, VIDEOS, OR GRAPHICS

Anything that drags down the speed of the website is a negative. It is important to use images, videos, and graphics judiciously, not recklessly. Very high-resolution images or video-heavy files may take some time to download, which could disrupt a reader's flow. The reader should have a choice of whether to view a video or not, and the video should not begin automatically as the page downloads.

No. 5. MOBILE DEVICE INCOMPATIBILITY

A growing number of US smartphone users access health-related information through their devices. Google recommends that webmasters make their sites compatible with mobile technology. It can be a serious error to continue with the old, traditional website that fails to provide a thorough user experience to smartphone and tablet users.

No. 6. POOR TEXT READABILITY

It is important to use the right sized fonts for headers, menu items, and body text. Each separate piece of information must be segmented under its appropriate category. Background and font colors, style, and color contrast should enhance the readability of the text and not undermine it. Wrong placement of icons, menu items, or images can break the content's flow and readability. This can disenchant even the most avid readers who are otherwise keen to receive new eye care information and advice that your website provides.

No. 7. ABSENCE OF SITE MAP, SITE SEARCH

Many websites make the cardinal mistake of not having a site map. Some of the website's visitors may prefer to begin perusing a site at its map, and others may try to locate a relevant section from the map. If there is no map, it may put off an enthusiastic reader who fails to find the information they want quickly. An internal search button is an excellent option to help readers search for very specific eye care related information that they may be looking for on the website.

No. 8. UNRELIABLE THIRD-PARTY CONTENT

If the website provides readers with access to third-party content, such as news or blog posts from another site, it is crucial to determine the reliability and efficiency of the content beforehand. Poorly loading third-party content can slow down the speed of the website and distract readers. Unreliable content may also have an impact on the site's search engine visibility.

No. 9. EXTERNAL LINKS OPENING IN THE SAME WINDOW

This is one of the most elementary rules of retaining visitors to the site, and yet a large number of eye care practices flout this mandate. External links should open in a new window, so that when a reader clicks on the link, it does not take him or her away from the website. This simple error proves to be costly in terms of reader retention and engagement for many websites.

No. 10. BROKEN LINKS AND HTTP 404 MESSAGE

Having broken or outdated links is a glaring mistake, but a surprisingly large number of websites make this error. It diminishes the professional value and image of a practice's website if it contains broken links and shows 404 pages too often. Although this can happen even to the best websites in rare situations, this potentially negative user experience can be offset to some extent with a creative and useful 404 page.

CONCLUSION

These 10 common mistakes are easily avoidable. If you are concerned about the traffic flow or search engine rankings of your eye care website, it may be a good idea to undertake a professional site audit. You may consult an Internet marketer to conduct an objective analysis of your website and point out any serious flaws that may be hampering its intended performance. ■

Naren Arulrajah is the president and CEO, and Vikas Vij is the marketing manager of SEO services at Ekwa Marketing. Contact Ekwa Marketing at (877) 249-9666; naren@ekwa.com.