

A blurred background of an office environment. Several people are visible working at desks with computers. The lighting is bright, suggesting large windows in the background. The overall tone is professional and modern.

12 SEO Mistakes to Avoid When Redesigning Your Website

SmartBug.

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Introduction

Redesigning your website can be one of the biggest projects you work on as a marketer. There are dozens if not hundreds of technical, financial, creative, operational, and strategic decisions you'll have think through. Then after months of planning, designing, writing, and developing, you finally get to show off your masterpiece to the world.

How do you ensure that your launch goes off without a hitch? How do you make sure that any SEO value you've built up is not only retained but enhanced with your new website?

We created this e-book to to help you avoid the 12 most common SEO mistakes marketers make.

MISTAKE 01

Redesigning without a goal or objective



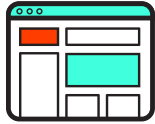
Before choosing a theme or even what content you want on your new website, you need to ask yourself:

“What are my primary objectives or goals for my website redesign.”

If you plan to use your website to generate leads, then format, content, and user experience need to align with converting visitors into leads.

If the sole purpose of your site is to generate awareness by increasing traffic, then content creation, social sharing, and keeping people coming back to your site should be front and center.

There is no one-size-fits-all website. This is why, when discussing a redesign with your team, you should think through these core elements:



Goal of Redesign - What will success look like three to six months after we launch our redesign?



Personas - Who are your ideal buyers? Depending on your business, you may have two or more specific types of ideal prospects.



Buyer's Journey - What are the phases that a prospect goes through when making the decision to purchase a product like yours?



Key Elements - Needed on site to work towards our goals



MISTAKE 02

Not capturing the data before you redesign, so you can't benchmark the results.

Now that you've made the decision to redesign your site, you need to obtain metrics on your old site. Get benchmarks on your analytics so that you can show your progression toward your goals post-launch. These metrics will vary based on your goal.

B2B publishers who monetize based on ad revenue will likely be more concerned with benchmarking time on site, visits, and average banner click-through rates. On the other hand, a Healthcare SAAS organization may be more concerned with lead generation or leads nurtured.



From an SEO perspective, in order to retain link equity and any value you've built on your domain, you should benchmark these metrics:

- Organic traffic visits / Leads
- Number of pages getting organic traffic
- Usage metrics: bounce rate/TOS
- Number of first-page Google rankings
- Impressions (WMT)



MISTAKE 03

Picking a non-search engine friendly CMS



Picking the right CMS is one of the biggest decisions you'll make in a redesign. You'll have to weigh cost, functionality, support, security, reliability, and speed. A common mistake marketers make is to cut corners on this decision without knowing the outcome.

We redesign our clients' sites on the HubSpot CMS (a.k.a., HubSpot), which puts the marketer in the driver's seat. Though HubSpot CMS will cost you more than WordPress, out-of-the-box HubSpot CMS provides these benefits:

RESPONSIVENESS

Your website will work seamlessly and be fully functional across any computer, tablet, and mobile device. Google specifically calls this out as an SEO signal.

FUNCTIONALITY

Marketers don't want to have to reach out to their developer or IT every time they make a minor change to their site. HubSpot makes it easy for you to jump into a page or template and tweak the page to your liking.

SUPPORT

Most CMS's don't have a fully staffed support team available anytime you have a one-off question. This is included without extra charge as a part of HubSpot.

RELIABILITY AND SPEED

Some hosting providers have downtime. You want to make sure your site is running blazing fast 24/7.

SECURITY

Some CMS's are more vulnerable to cyberattacks than others. Make sure you have systems in place to monitor suspicious activity. Google does sometimes take manual action against your site if your site is hacked. This is detrimental toward your SEO. Avoid this by picking a secure CMS and hosting provider to start with.

MISTAKE 04

Improperly Using Redirects

Redirects are important when redesigning your site if you ever have to change URLs or domains. Redirects tell search engines that your content is no longer at this URL, it has been moved permanently to this new URL/domain.

One of the more common SEO mistakes marketers make is either using 302 (temporary) redirects or using the 301 (permanent) redirects the **WRONG** way.



When redesigning your site, if you can avoid changing URLs at all, that would be ideal. However, if you're changing domains or restructuring your site, you'll want to make sure that the URLs you're redirecting are redirecting to a page that is most similar to the historical version. Here is a table to better illustrate this:

	Type of Redirect	Old URL	New URL
✗ Wrong	301 - Permanent	http://SEOmoz.com/learn/seo/redirection	http://moz.com/
✗ Wrong	302 - Temporary	http://SEOmoz.com/learn/seo/redirection	http://moz.com/learn/seo/redirection
✓ Right	301 - Permanent	http://SEOmoz.com/learn/seo/redirection	http://moz.com/learn/seo/redirection

What if you have to eliminate pages from your old site? In this case, redirect your old page to the most relevant new page. For example, if you are a bank and are eliminating a certain financial product page, then redirect that old URL to the main financial product category page or similar product page. This is a much better option than just sending people to your homepage or your blog.

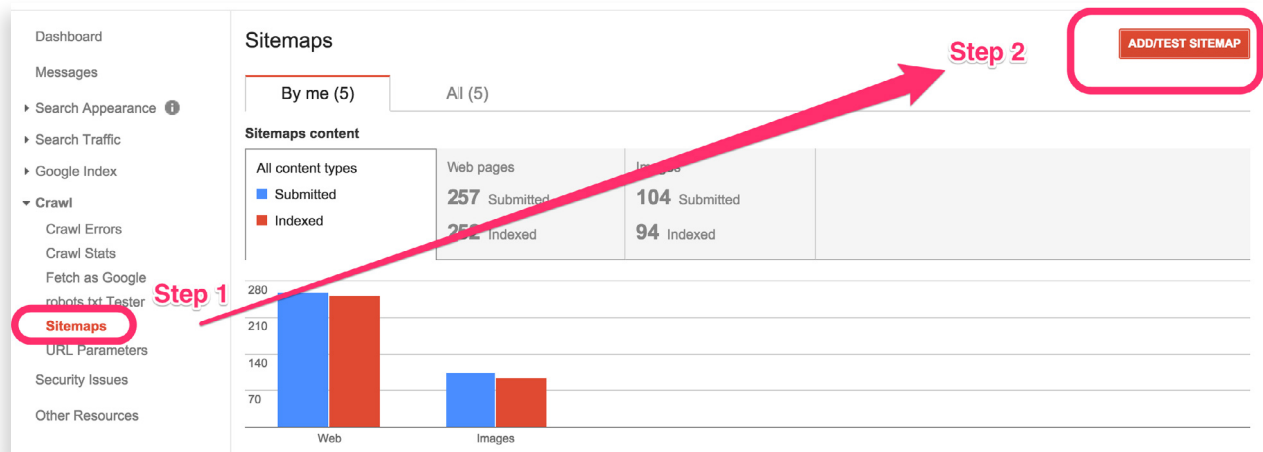
MISTAKE 05

Not submitting a site map

Make it easy for search engines to find and index all of your content. Submit a site map to Google and Bing Webmaster Tools that shows the URLs for your entire site. If you're fully hosted on HubSpot, then your life is going to be very easy. The site map is generated at Domain.com/sitemap.xml.

If you're fully hosted on HubSpot, there are numerous site map generators that will accomplish the same thing.

Here's the two-step process to submit your site map in Google Webmaster Tools:



MISTAKE 06

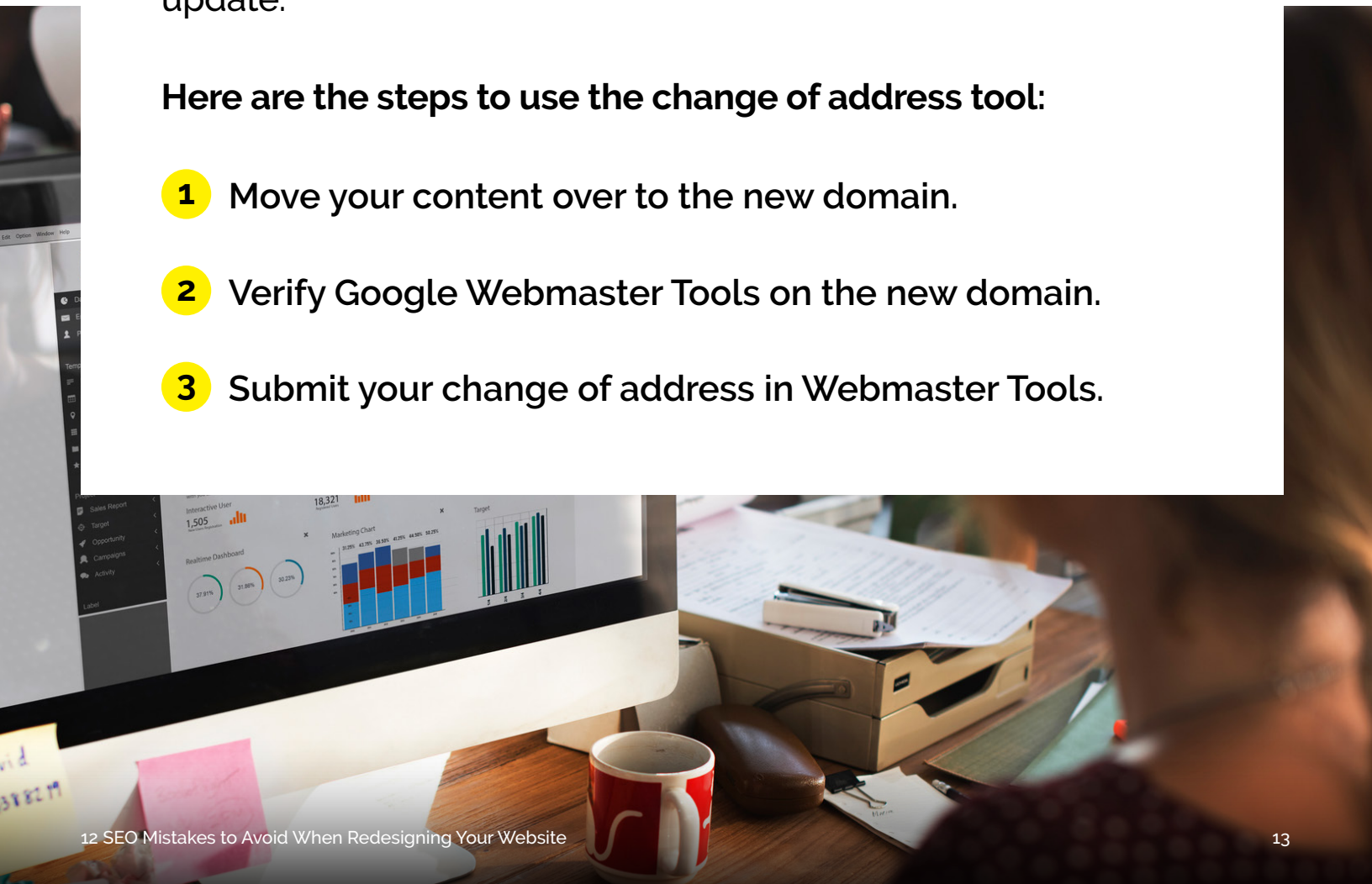
Not telling search engines you've packed up and left domains

Redesigning your site as a result of a rebrand, merger, or company name change is common.

Just like you'd tell the post office when you're changing residences, you need to tell search engines that your new website is no longer the same domain. Use the change of address tool in Google Webmaster Tools to give them an update.

Here are the steps to use the change of address tool:

- 1** Move your content over to the new domain.
- 2** Verify Google Webmaster Tools on the new domain.
- 3** Submit your change of address in Webmaster Tools.



MISTAKE 07

Using content formats that search engines won't easily crawl

Make sure when redesigning your site that search engines can crawl every word, image, and video on the site. Here are some content formats that are less search friendly.



Flash - Search engines are getting better at indexing flash. However, Google recommends that if you have to use it, use it for decorative purposes and not to serve up the entire page's content and navigation. Flash also won't work on iPhones. Your SEO is not beneficial if your website doesn't work on one of the most popular mobile devices out there.



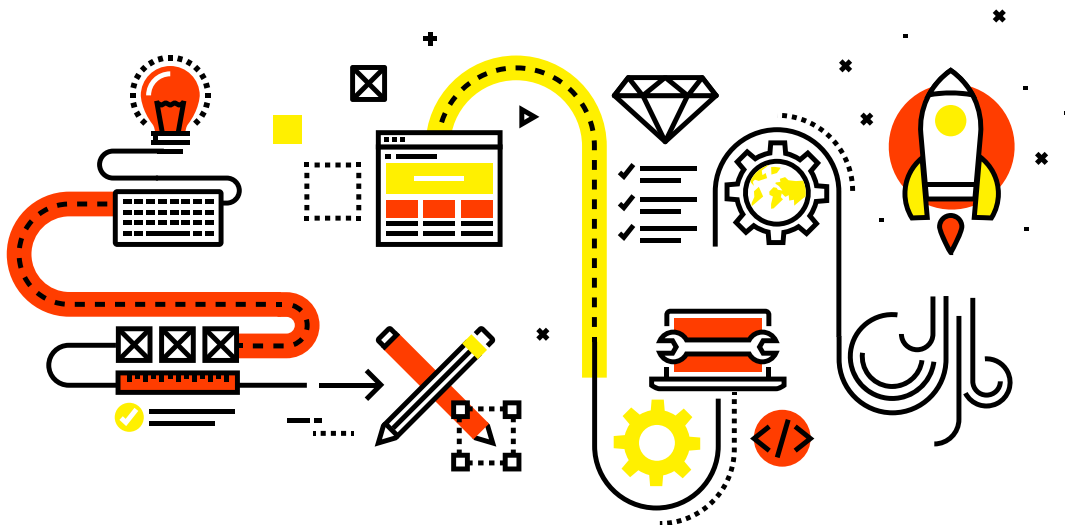
Silverlight and Rich Media Formats - Some designers will build websites purely with aesthetics in mind. This isn't always the best solution from an SEO perspective. Some rich media formats are filled with graphics that contain text, and this text may not be crawled. Make sure all of the content you want indexed is written in HTML.



IFrames - IFrames are used when you want to add in content from another website to yours. IFrames aren't inherently bad, however, you want to make sure that all content on your site is on your domain and not piped in from another website. From a tracking perspective, iFrames can increase complexity and can cause double counting of pages within your analytics.



Videos - Videos are amazing to showcase your brand's story and products. Make sure when using video, whether it's from YouTube or a native video, app, that you include content surrounding the video player. This content could include a description of what's on the video, a transcription of the video or content that adds to the value of the video. A popular trend is to use video to showcase your story on your site. Just make sure to include HTML text around the video to ensure search engines understand the content of your page.

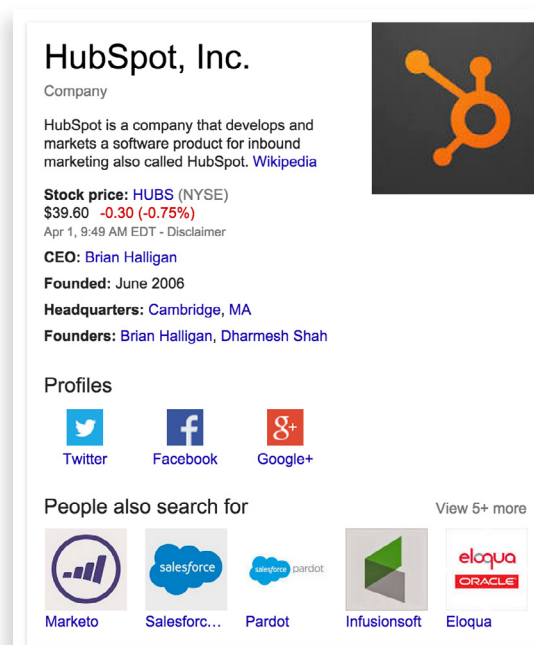


MISTAKE 08

Not taking advantage of the knowledge graph or rich snippets

About 25 percent of search results get a knowledge graph result. We can expect this to percentage rise.

Knowledge graph cards or answer boxes provide information that users are searching for. How does one get a knowledge graph result?



- 1 Data Highlighter** - The data highlighter allows you to use Google's tools to suggest how your data is structured across your pages. Here are the types of information that data highlighter supports:

Supported data types

You can use Data Highlighter to teach Google about the following types of data on your site:

- [Articles](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Local Businesses](#)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Products](#)
- [Software Applications](#)
- [Movies](#)
- [TV Episodes](#)
- [Books](#)

This is the easier and less technical way of showing Google the structure of your content.


- 2 Rich Schema Markup** - At the end of the day, we all want search engines to use rich snippets when showing our website's results. Marketers with a bit of HTML coding experience can implement structured data markup and start seeing these expanded rich results.



The data highlighter allows you to use Google's tools to suggest how your data is structured across your pages.

MISTAKE 09

Blocking search engines from crawling your site, or letting them crawl internal/staging pages



Robots.txt is useful for blocking search engines or crawlers from indexing your site. Pages in staging, internal pages, or thank you pages are often pages you'd block from search engines. During a redesign, your new website may be on a staging URL that is being blocked from search engines. On your new website launch date, make sure your website domain is NOT listed within robots.txt.

Here is what you want your Robots.txt to look like if you want search engines to crawl your entire site.

```
User-agent: *
```

```
Disallow:
```

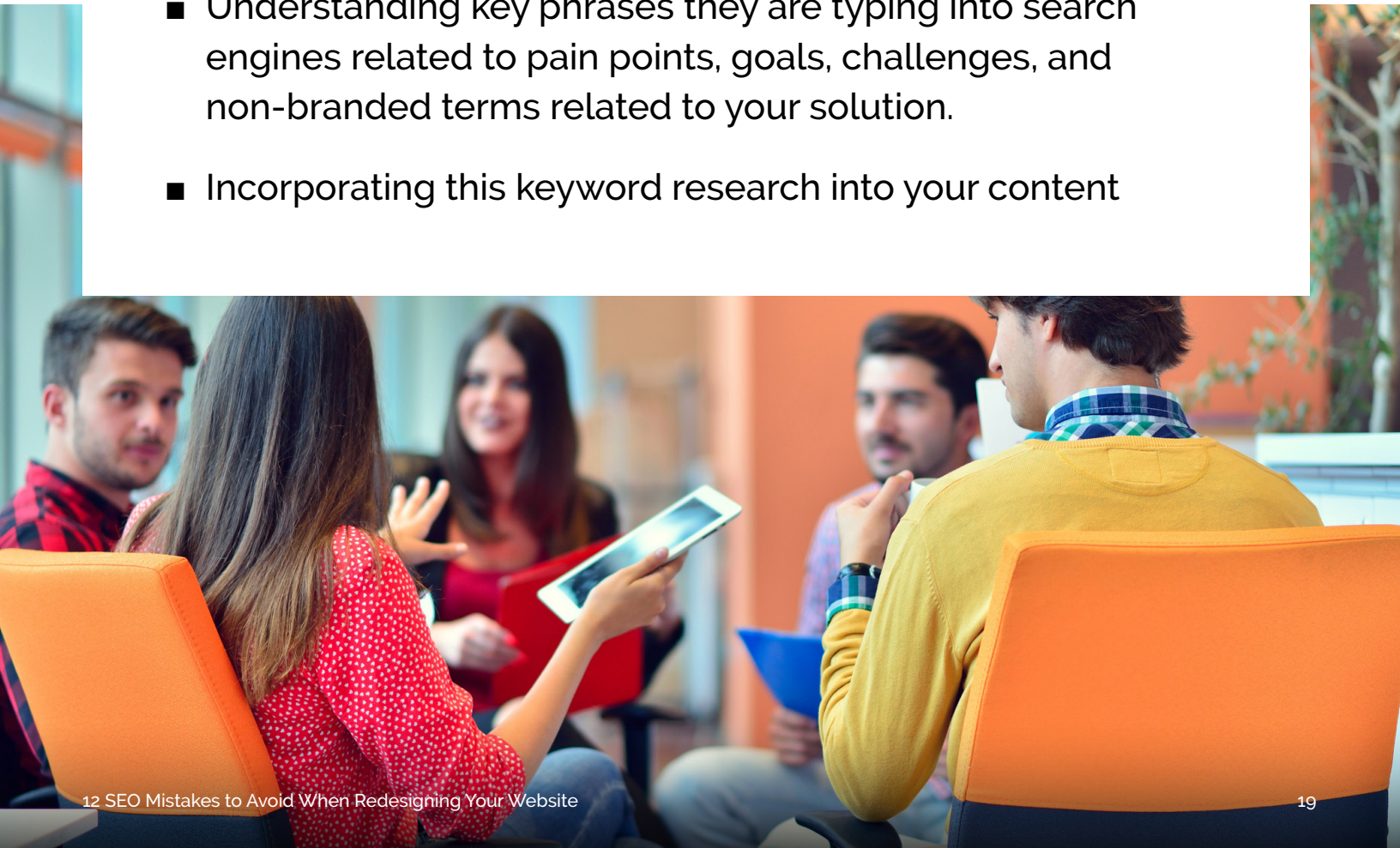
```
Sitemap: http://www.yoursite.com/sitemap.xml
```

MISTAKE 10

Not optimizing the pages for the keywords/topics your buyer persona is searching for

There are hours of work that go into content creation, design, analytics, and strategy before launching a site. One of the most direct ways you can influence your content showing up in search engines in front of the right people is by:

- Researching your buyer personas and buyer's journey
- Understanding key phrases they are typing into search engines related to pain points, goals, challenges, and non-branded terms related to your solution.
- Incorporating this keyword research into your content



This keyword research should influence your on-page optimization. After completing your persona and keyword research, make sure you optimize these sections on each page of your site:

- Title tag
- Meta description
- H1 header tag
- Body copy
- Images: image alt-text and file name
- Internal links from other pages pointing to that page
- Video and interactive content (if applicable)

This [helpful on-page SEO template](#) can help you organize these efforts.

Further, [here is a helpful chart](#) that goes more in-depth with optimizing every on-page element of your new site.



This keyword research should influence your on-page optimization.

AGENCY TOOLS

Here are a few of our favorite tools for doing keyword research and on-page SEO:

- **KeywordTool.io** - Wonderful for keyword discovery.
- **HubSpot Keywords and Page Performance Tool** - For tracking rankings of keywords and uncovering easy on-page SEO fixes.
- **Adwords Keywords Tool** - For additional information.
- **Moz Keyword Difficulty Tool** - Provides analysis for the websites that are showing up for your targeted keywords. This is helpful for understanding how likely it will be for you to show up for a specific phrase or set of phrases. Moz also allows you to track keywords locally. This is super helpful if you are a franchise or local business.



MISTAKE 11

Making it hard for people to share your content

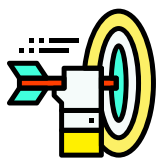
Social sharing improves the awareness you need to generate links and brand signals that result in SEO success. Here are three common reasons people aren't sharing your content:

- 1** Your content isn't sharable in the first place, a.k.a. they wouldn't want their network to see them endorsing your content. Your content could be too personal, too boring, or or too sales-y. Not every page on your site is going to be sharable.
- 2** Your content doesn't look pretty when posting on social. When sharing your content on social, if there isn't a clear title, pre-filled description, and large image on the post, your audience may not want to share it. Luckily, Cyrus from Moz created this walk-through on how to mark up your pages to make sure all of your content comes out swimmingly on the big social networks.

MISTAKE 12

Not picking the right agency for your redesign

When choosing an agency to redesign your site, here are five takeaways to ensure that they aren't going to make an SEO disaster of your site:



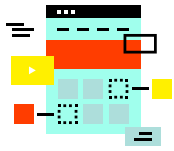
They should understand your marketing/company goals and start with strategy when redesigning your site. If they jump right into tactics—e.g., “You should post to Pinterest!”, then they’re thinking short-term wins. An agency should be setting you up for long-term success.



They should fully understand your buyer personas and buyer's journey. Your agency should understand the different types of content people need to consume on the path toward purchasing your product. They should also understand your prospects' goals, pain points, and where they research information on your product.

**They shouldn't guarantee keyword ranking results.**

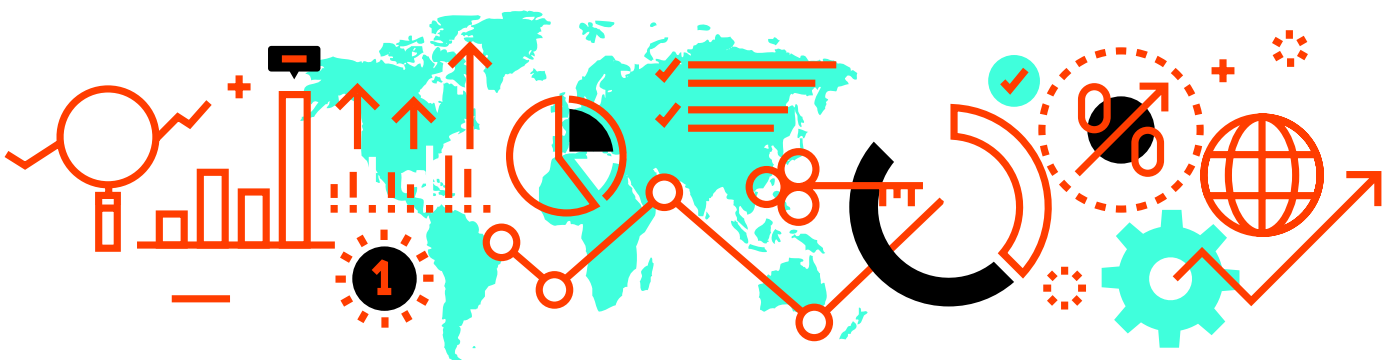
Google holds the keys to their ranking algorithm. Any agency that guarantees ranking results will either have black-hat tactics in mind OR doesn't fully understand that search engines are the ones deciding where your website will rank.



The agency should include people that are specialized in strategic marketing, design/UX, web development, content creation, social media, analytics, email, automation, and SEO. Don't trust a one-person shop to handle all of this for you.



Your agency should be side-by-side with you on launch day. They should report on how your redesigned site is performing compared to your initial benchmarks. They should also provide a clear plan for what needs to be accomplished tactically going forward to help you toward your ultimate goals.



Conclusion

In closing, those are the 12 SEO mistakes to avoid when redesigning your site. Whether you work with an agency partner or build the website in-house, be cautious to avoid any brick walls that could diminish the amount of SEO value you've built up.



About SmartBug



SmartBug Media is one of a handful of HubSpot Diamond partners in the world and is the highest-rated agency in the history of the HubSpot ecosystem. We also boast the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500% ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign, respectively. At Inbound 2015, SmartBug Media was the most recognized agency, having won or been named a finalist in nine awards.

SmartBug Media is one of the first HubSpot partners to implement growth-driven design and was an inaugural member of the HubSpot COS Advisory Board. For more than seven years, SmartBug Media has been helping businesses increase sales leads, close more customers, and enhance the reach of their brands. From building comprehensive online marketing programs to designing new websites, driving leads through social media or sales enablement, we're an extension of your marketing team that delivers.

For a free inbound marketing or web design consultation, or to learn more, visit www.smartbugmedia.com or call [949-236-6448](tel:949-236-6448).

Have a question? Curious how we can
help grow your business?

Let's Talk

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www.smartbugmedia.com

