



Small Business Web Sites and SEO

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Over the past 3 months I've conducted approximately 50 SEO audits on small business web sites and I've duly sent off to the respective web site owners 25 page audit reports on what they can do to improve their web site, and improve their rankings on the major search engines including Google and Bing. I've included for these business owners their current rank for the most commonly searched terms and keywords relevant to their industries.

While conducting these audits, several issues have become more than clear to me, (1) most of these web sites have been very badly optimised to start with by the web developer, and (2) some owners do not have access to their web sites admin section which includes the header files and they have to pay their design company every time they want to change a piece of code.

How about that for being held to ransom, who actually owns the site, well let me tell you, it is not you!

One web company just outright refuses to provide the owners access and insists on charging them every time they want to change information, which makes it very hard to actually optimise the site.

SEO is not set and forget, and sometimes each web page needs to be massaged to get it to rank, well just imagine the cost if you were charged every time changes to content and coding were recommended. Of course this is the point of this exercise, to get as much revenue out of you as possible and given that most of the small business owners I've done the audits for have no idea about web site design or SEO, you are easy pickings.

So how do you avoid being fleeced forever by these companies? Firstly make sure you have total access to all the files on your web site, so that if you need to make changes to your site it can be done via your back-end administration page, that is total control over your HTML title tag and your meta description tag, also make sure that your CMS does not generate dynamic URL's, these are much harder to rank on search engines, static URL's are really what you need.

Make sure that you can change the wording on all your pages and that you have control over your images including adding alt tags and correct descriptions, these are an important part of on page optimisation.

Make sure when your site is launched you get a search engine submission report and also get what keywords they have optimised your content for, 90% of the sites I've audited have been optimised for the clients name, have you ever wondered how many times your brand was searched on Google for instance?

Your web site needs to be optimised for the key searches that relate to the industry and your location. Remember, Google indexes web pages not web sites so the more pages your site has the more chance you have of having your pages rank for different keywords.

Try and have at least 300 words or more on your home page, search engines love text, so image heavy home pages are harder to optimise.

Where ever possible add a blog to your site, better still add a standalone blog on a different domain and link it to your site, WordPress.org is one of the best blog platforms to use and search engines love it, adding engagement objects such as video is an absolute must, videos produced by you and uploaded on a regular basis will be indexed and ranked very fast, and getting a search engine to visit your site more often because of frequently updated content means higher rankings. Google looks at the freshness factor among other things.

One area that you should have your web designer integrate social media icons, so that your customers can bookmark your site easily and engage with you on their social network, also make sure you get your web designer to check the page speed of your site, Google has indicated this could be a ranking factor.

You don't need to be a web design expert, you just need to make sure you are in control of your own site and your SEO and don't have to keep putting your hands in your pocket whenever you want to change something, so take control back from these pirates.

Small business needs to really start to take action on this and fast.

We can help you save time and money in building your SEO strategy; we provide weekly coaching clinics that provide information and advice on content and tactics for SEO.

If you'd like to find out more about our SEO integration plans and coaching clinics contact me at Mike Andrew Consulting and we'll design and set up a coaching plan for you.