

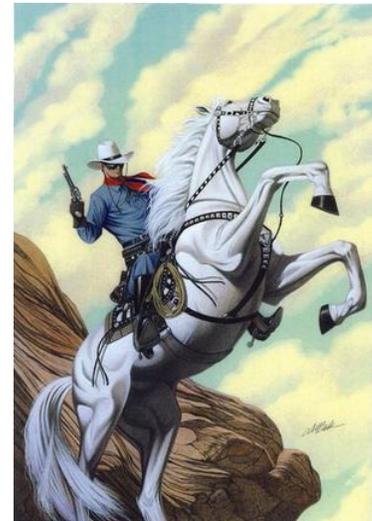


Why it May Not Pay to be the Lone Ranger with Your Website

You're just starting out and want to conserve your capital. You've seen those commercials about how easy it is to design your own website – after all, how hard can it be if pre-teen can do it, right? Well, with the caveat that you get what you pay for, here are some common mistakes made by Entrepreneurial Lone Rangers when it comes to creating their websites on their own.

Marketing without a Purpose

Having a website is one thing. Having a website that has a clear Call to Action that guides the visitor where you want to take them represents your marketing calling card. You need to have your marketing message clearly spelled out and focused so that the visitor knows what to do. And unless you want to hide your brilliance under the proverbial web barrel, you need to ensure that the message can be found easily and intuitively. I have been on sites where I cannot find out how to contact the owner of the business as the 'Contact Us' was buried under layers of steps – or was non-existent. If that is the case, your visitors will quickly move on to a competitor.



The Plethora of Plugins

Plugins may look cool to install and make you feel like the website genius that you think you are but don't get too carried away with them. Plugins can slow down your site so that it is incredibly tedious for your visitors to access. But they have an even more nefarious aspect – plugins represent security holes whose code can be exploited by the bad guys out there. With custom coded features that provide similar functionality, you can avoid the slows and the potential breaches, as well as continue to reinforce your design elements on a more consistent basis.

Free Isn't Always Best

From low rent hosting to free themes to doing it yourself, there are issues that can arise with "FREE". After all, it is a four letter word.

Take Hosting for example. Yes, you can find a 'cheap' hosting service for your site, but they may not have the site speeds, security monitoring, protection features for you and your visitors, or customer service to help you out of the jams in which you will invariably get yourself. For considerably less than the daily Starbucks™ in which you likely indulge, you can avail yourself of a premium hosting service that provides you what you need to be safe out in cyberspace and get the most bang from your marketing efforts.

As well, free themes may seem like the way to go, but your website is your brand, your online marketing calling card, and the way that visitors and surfers can find out who you are, what you do and your overall general awesomeness. Why would you want to short-change that to save a measly \$100? Again, free themes aren't free if they are not kept up to date, can be the way for the bad guys to come in and offer virtually no support. The one aspect that we continue to stress with our clients is the need to stay consistent with your branding design elements. Free themes and skins just don't cut it.

When you go it alone, you may not be aware of the need to update all of the elements of your site to keep them up to date. And when you update one area, sometimes others can break. We have had to assist self-developed site owners when this has happened. It often takes longer and could result in unplanned downtime to fix these issues.

Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan

A properly designed site isn't just about a list of services or products. Each page should be planned to lead the visitor to explore all of the elements of what you may offer them. By guiding them through the site, you demonstrate a well thought out journey rather than a haphazard, spur of the moment trip. In this way, you establish your role as trusted guide who is organized and will be there for the long term.

Is making any of these mistakes worth the potential business you may lose? When creating your online presence, remember to bring along your "Tonto" to get you the most bang for your marketing buck. It will be worthwhile in the long run. *"Hi – Yo Silver and Away!"*

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