7 deadly website mistakes

don't let them happen on your website

by Claes Jonasson

Why this matters!

1,858,782,897 websites online

3,868,563,743 internet users

only 1 you

You want your website to be noticed.

That's tough enough if you do everything right.

Sure, you really don't care if *all* internet users come to your site. After all, that would definitely crash your site!

But are the people who ***need*** to see your site going to see it and if they get there, will they stick around?

They'll decide to stay or leave in about 3 seconds!

You need to get it right on your website. Not for the entire world, but for your tribe (or those who would be in your tribe, if your website helped connect them with you).

And it's doable.

Read on, be a hero for your tribe and banish the 7 deadly website mistakes from your site.

7 deadly website mistakes

1. Non-secure website

2. Non-responsive website

3. Your website is not connected with your business goals (and bottom line)

4. Lack of call to action

5. No social proof

6. Verbal and visual clutters

7. No Search Engine Optimization

Don't let them happen on your website!

① Non-secure website

It used to be that we'd make sure banks and other really important places were using secure, encrypted connections (starting with HTTPS: instead of HTTP:). That's changed. Now *all* websites need to use secured transmissions. Browsers indicate if a site is "not secure". Obviously that affects site rankings and visitor's trust in the site.

With a non-secure website (HTTP), the traffic between your browser and the server is sent in the open. That means it's susceptible to being interfered with. Someone could hijack the data stream and make you think you are communicating with your intended web server when really communicating with a totally different server.

In contrast, a secure site (HTTPS) establishes an encrypted connection between browser and server. The data is encrypted (nobody can "listen" to the conversation) and there's authentication (proves your site visitors communicate with your site and not some site pretending to be your site).

It has become common for websites to collect personal information — think contact forms, email signup forms or even a simple order form. Secure transmission of data is essential.

Truly sensitive things like payment or donation info (think credit card numbers) may be handled by a secure 3rd party, but our site visitors want to know that their *whole* experience on our websites is secure.

Plus now search engines rank your website lower if it's not secure.

THE FIX:
Purchase and install a security certificate from a reliable Certificate Authority on your website. You may even be able to get one for free from Let's Encrypt. Also make sure that your site is hosted on a web server that uses HTTP Strict Transport Security (HTTPS).

2 Non-responsive website

Almost 60% of all web searches today are from mobile devices. That trend is increasing.

Do you really, intentionally want to not be available on those devices? Did you know that Google penalizes your website ranking if the site is not designed for mobile first? Plus, visitors are 5 times more likely to leave a site that isn't mobile friendly.

A non-responsive website has one layout that doesn't change, no matter what device you are looking at it on. On a small screen, you'll only see part of the page at a time.

If your website is mobile friendly, it automatically adjusts for different screen sizes (big screen TV, desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet or smart phone). That means it presents your content to work look good equally well on all those devices.

Responsive web design is fluid and adapts to the screen size no matter what the target device. All users will get the same content. It just formats differently on different size screens. For the website owner, this means there's only one set of content to keep updated. Yay! The coding can get a bit complex, because it's like developing several websites at the same time. But it's the most cost-effective way to reach all users on all screens.

Websites today are commonly built with a "mobile first" approach. That means the site design starts with the smallest screen. It affects all content (text, images, video, graphics), and provides an equally satisfying user experience on any device. And because the code for the smallest screen comes first, load times are shorter on mobile devices.

THE FIX:

A mobile friendly, responsive website requires a redesign from the ground up. If your website is a few years old, it's probably time for a redesign anyway.

Since it's your website, be sure to actually test what it looks like on different devices or by resizing your browser window, watching the site layout change as the window changes.
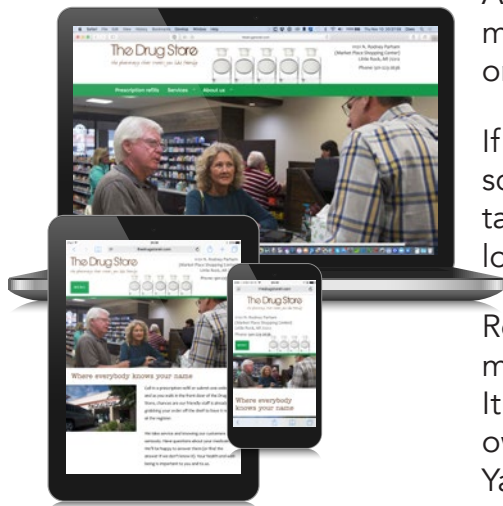
Your website is not connected with your business goals

Why does your website exist?

If your answer isn't something like "to support my business", please stop and think again.

Too many websites do little to nothing to help bring in customers or revenue for their business or non-profit.

Years ago, it might be enough to have a website. Today, your website must be aligned with your business, fitting into the overall business strategy and marketing plans.

What is the main purpose of your business? How does your website help achieve that purpose?

For instance, if you have a pharmacy and I can't reliably renew my prescriptions on your website, then the website isn't helping the business. If you are a home remodeler, can I easily book a consultation with you on your website? Does your website make it easy to do business with you (or be part of your cause if you are a non-profit)?

When I come to your website, I should be able to see that it's your site. This includes consistent branding throughout your business and website. Someone visiting your business or your website should immediately know with whom they are dealing.

THE FIX:

If your website mostly matches your business, a solid review and update of all your content may provide the alignment you need.

In other cases, a redesign, starting with aligning the website with your business, may be needed. Either way, if you are working with a web designer/developer, he or she must thoroughly understand your organization to deliver a solution that fits you and not just a cookie-cutter package.

4 Lack of call to action

What do you want visitors to your website to do? The purpose of your website should be obvious to visitors as soon as they get to the site. Selling product? Building your email list? Offering consultations? Whatever your primary purpose – make it clear and make the site work for that purpose with clear calls to action.

Remember that a call to action has to make sense for your website visitor. If not, they will ignore it and your organization loses out.

Not only does your website need a clear call to action right on the homepage, but (almost) every page of the website needs a call to action. If there is no action to take after visiting the page, why does the page exist?

With none or unclear calls to action on your website, people will visit and go away, taking no action and you lose business. Same thing if the calls to action are there, but hard to find.

Claiming that a site exists simply to build "awareness" is not enough — once the visitor is more aware, what should they do next? Give them an easy way to do just that, turning awareness into action.

THE FIX:

Review all the content on your website and make sure that you have strategically placed meaningful calls to action througout the website.

5 No social proof

Social proof is our human tendency to look at what others are doing when we decide our next actions. Consider an empty restaurant and one that is full with a line out the door: Which one are you more likely to pick? The full one, right? Because somewhere in your mind you wonder what's wrong with the empty place since no one is there.

Anyone can create a website and offer products or services. But is it for real? People coming to your website want to know that you are genunie and can deliver on your offers and promises.

Do you have fans, customers who are pleased with their experience with you? Including them on your website is a must and helps build your credibility.

So does giving examples of results you have created for others. Or it may be relationships, or licensing/accreditation.

THE FIX:

Make it a habit to collect testimonials from your customers. If they are happy with what you delivered, they will be glad to give you testimonials and in doing so be more likely to tell their friends about you.

If you are licensed, bonded, accredited or a member of a professional organization, be sure to include that on your website.

I WANT TO PLAY

"The Unity Games are not only about winning, they are about coming together as a team, no matter what race and just plain having fun.... I will cherish these days."

Jessica N.

6 Verbal and visual clutter

How do you feel when you get to a website that fills the entire screen, edge to edge, with text, pictures, animations, graphics and buttons? Leaving no empty space on the screen!

It's overwhelming, right?

It's easy to fall into this trap when you build a website. After all, there's so much you want your site visitors to know. What if we forget that one piece of info that would make that particular visitor become a star customer? So we put too much stuff on the web page, but success is not measured in how many words we cram onto a web page!

Studies show that when we are presented with too much information or content that seems to conflict with other content on the same page, we get confused and frequently make no choice at all (except to move on). There's a reason for the old Sears "good, better, best" – providing 3 easy-to-understand options. We simply do better with fewer choices and only relevant information.

For each page, section and paragraph, establish what its purpose is. Then include what's needed to accomplish that — no more, no less. That way, you can provide breathing room on the page (known as "white space") to balance the content and let your visitor digest.

THE FIX:

Review each page on your website, keeping in mind what its purpose is and cut out anything that distracts from that purpose.

Depending on how the website was built, this may be as simple as updating your content or it may require a redesign to provide a clean, easy to digest presentation.

7 No search engine optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the modern version of alchemy, making gold out of non-precious stuff. At least it seems that way. If you have a website, you'll get offers from people who (for $$) promise to bring you lots of traffic using SEO. Many sound too good to be true and are.
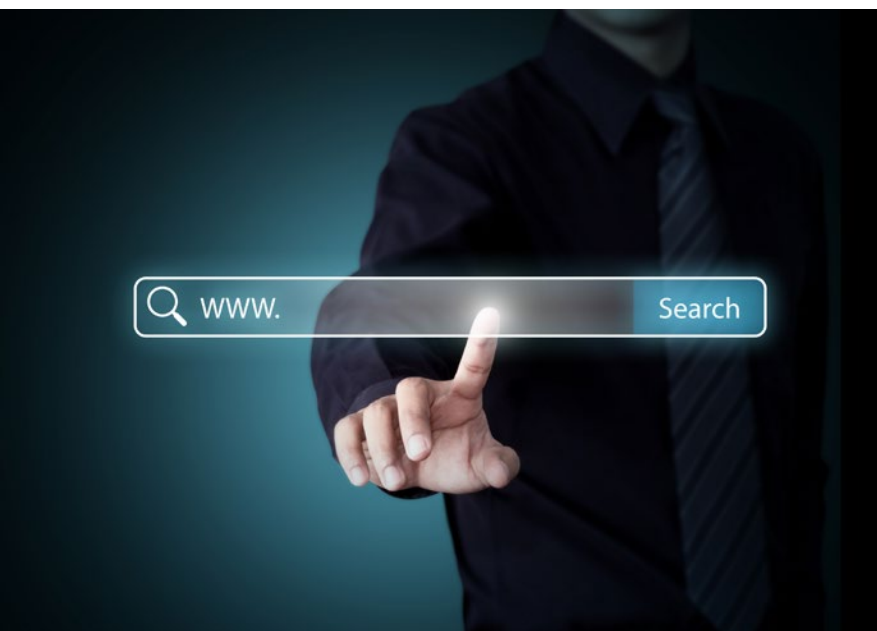
At heart SEO is about helping your website show up on search engines, so that when people in your desired audience go looking, they find you at or near the top of the search results. Ranking higher means more visitors to your site — visitors that can convert into paying customers. This is often referred to as organic traffic (as opposed to paid traffic).

SEO starts with a focus on providing relevant content that provides value for your audience ("content is king"). Then helping your audience find it with the right keywords. Your SEO goodness is greatly helped by having regular content updates on your website.

On the backend, you want to use analytics to see where your visitors come from and learn more about what they are looking for on your website.

THE FIX:

Develop an ongoing content plan for your website, so that you always provide fresh, relevant content to your visitors.

Monitor and understand the back end analytics for your website. Determine the keywords you want to rank for and include them in relevant content on your website. Good SEO takes work and rankings improve and are maintained over time.

If you hire a SEO consultant, be sure you understand what they are providing and that they can deliver.

Bonus items

Looking for some extra credit? Want to make sure your website really sizzles?

Here are 6 more mistakes that will sink your website (unless you take care of them and by now you are on a roll):

Broken links and missing content

Visitors come to your website expecting to find useful content that will make their lives better. Don't let them down.

If some of the content is missing, incomplete or a blank space, you will lose visitors (and business). It will also hurt your search engine rankings, making it harder for people to find you

No up-to-date contact info

Keep your contact info (name, address, phone) up to date and include a contact form that actually works.

Proper contact info helps build your credibility. Many customers will move on to another website if they can't find a physical address or a phone number, even if they don't plan to use either.

Slow loading site

If your website takes too long to load, people don't wait, they move on, meaning you lose customers and sales. Good web design combines a great looking site with minimal file sizes and coding that helps the site load faster.

No engagement with your audience

Provide ways for your customers to connect with you and you with them. An email list where you send regular, relevant emails to your audience is essential. Use it to learn what your audience really wants and how to provide it to them.

Use social media to encourage people to talk about you with their friends. Focus on the social media channels where your audience is, connect with them there and encourage them to come to your website and business.

A picture is worth 1000 words...

…but only if it's the right picture. Make sure your images and graphics strengthen your message. Keep videos relevant and short.

No terms of use or privacy policy

Not the sexy part of a website, but **lacking** terms of use or a privacy policy on your website could actually get you shut down by the Federal Trade Commission.

Leaving them out also does nothing for building trust with your website visitors, especially if you collect personal information (such as on an email sign up form or a payment/donation form).

What's next?

Congratulations!

You now know what needs to be done to banish the biggest problems from your website.

It's time to do.

Go forward and conquer.

Of course, you may decide you need help on the way…

Or maybe you're rethinking your current website and want to build a new version.

If so, read on…

claesjonasson.design

Hi, I'm Claes Jonasson.

I equip small businesses and nonprofits to grow vibrant platforms online, allowing them to expand their reach and change their world.

Truly, I don't remember a time when I wasn't creating. I might have been born with a pen in hand.

In 2007, after doing design and video for an international nonprofit and before that a major university, I started my own business, producing award-winning media for small business and nonprofits.

Of course I needed a website. So I built one. It looked cool (I am a designer after all), but it didn't convert well. That set me on a journey to improve and building online platforms has now become my main focus.

A pharmacy owner came in desperation. Customers were leaving because his website was losing online prescription orders. It cost him real money, every day! I fixed the prescription ordering problem with a temporary website. Now he wasn't bleeding money and we went on to build a great new website for the pharmacy, tripling his online orders.

A nonprofit running an annual youth event spent lots of money on a new website with online registration and a database for participants. Then they needed to make some changes and couldn't. Finally, the site went offline! I switched them to an industry-leading database, customized just for them, and an all-new website. That was in 2012. In 2016 that website got a fresh, totally mobile friendly look that gets responses from the kids they work with, as well as volunteers and donors.

Websites need to look awesome AND deliver. Yes, you can have both and I work with you to get there.

I'm about seeing big picture, sorting out all the options and helping you find the solution that's going to best support your organization. For the long haul.

It's not just about a website for you. I want to create online presences that make you, my clients, successful, improve your lives and the lives of *your* customers.

To your website greatness,

Contact me today:
claes@claesjonasson.design

claesjonasson**.**design

1205 Jennifer Drive
Little Rock, AR 72212

ClaesJonasson.Design

claes@claesjonasson.com
501-235-8185