



Website Redesign Tips

10 SEO MISTAKES TO AVOID



Table of Contents

Welcome	page 1
1. Not thinking about SEO from the start	page 2
2. Not doing an audit of your existing site	page 3
3. Failing to identify (and include) commonly searched keywords	page 4
4. Not setting up 301 redirects	page 5
5. Failing to consider your URL structure	page 6
6. Leaving shady backlinks in place	page 7
7. Not using responsive design	page 8
8. Forgetting to unblock search engines from crawling your site	page 9
9. Forgetting to add analytics tracking to your site	page 10
10. Failing to think like a human	page 11



Welcome

Redesigning your website isn't just an exercise in aesthetics. Sure, the purely visual elements of your newly designed website will likely get the most attention, but remember: a great website redesign also requires that you consider (and improve) what's under the hood.

A flashy exterior doesn't help much if the actual machine fails to function. If people can't find your website via search, and if they can't intuitively navigate through your site's pages and easily understand what information those pages contain, it doesn't really matter how beautiful it looks.



When it comes to your website redesign, form and function need to be a package deal. So while you should absolutely add those new beautiful CTA buttons, and add that big beautiful hero image on your homepage, don't forget about what's happening behind the scenes.

In this guide, we'll cover one particular portion of the less glamorous side of website redesigns: search engine optimization. While the way we think about SEO is always evolving — with the focus now shifting toward optimizing content for the searchers themselves, as opposed to the search engines — it's still something you can't afford to overlook. So without further ado, here are 10 SEO mistakes to avoid during your next website redesign.

Not thinking about SEO from the start

The glitz, the glam, the glorious design elements that make your website look like a million bucks ... When contemplating a website redesign, it's easy to focus only on those features that are appealing to the eye. But to ensure your new site will truly resonate with your target audience (and to save yourself from some major headaches down the road) you need SEO to be ingrained in your redesign strategy from the very beginning.



Think of it this way: you could spend all the money in the world on building a new, beautiful hotel with all the bells and whistles. But if no one knows how to find your hotel, you'll never do any business.

Don't build a hotel that no one can find! When planning out your redesign strategy, make sure to take discoverability and accessibility into account. (Not sure what that looks like from a practical, hands-on standpoint? Just keep reading!)

Not doing an audit of your existing site

Before you bust out the wrecking ball and start demolishing your soon-to-be-forgotten site, make sure you take the time to examine it to determine what's working and what isn't. Here are some key metrics you will want to consider when auditing your site:

- Number of visits/visitors/unique visitors (monthly average)
- Top performing keywords (in terms of rank, traffic, and lead generation)
- Number and URLs of inbound linking domains
- Total number of total pages indexed
- Total number of pages that receive traffic/Top pages visited
- Most popular resources



★ TIP

Wish you had a master document where you could record all of these important metrics and track the progress of your website redesign?
[Click here to download our free website redesign workbook.](#)

Not setting up 301 redirects

A 301 redirect is a permanent redirect from one URL to another. Whether you're switching domain names, restructuring your URLs (more on that in the next section), or consolidating content as part of your website redesign, setting up 301 redirects is crucial to ensuring any "SEO juice" from your old URLs gets transferred to your new URLs.

Here's an example. Let's say your current site has a "Team" page (at [yoursite.com/team](#)), as well as a "Culture" page (at [yoursite.com/culture](#)). However, as part of your website redesign, you want to consolidate the content from those two pages into a single "About Us" page (at [yoursite.com/about](#)). To transfer the SEO authority of those pages to your new page, you'll want to set up 301 redirects so that [yoursite.com/team](#) and [yoursite.com/culture](#) both send folks to the new URL, [yoursite.com/about](#).

Failure to set up 301 redirects for pages you move or delete can result in a drop in rankings as well as an influx in 404 (a.k.a. "Page Not Found") error messages for your site's visitors.



Failing to consider your URL structure

If your site is littered with lengthy, indecipherable URLs that don't align well with the actual content of your site pages, restructuring your URLs should definitely be a priority during your next website redesign. Wondering where SEO comes into play here? Just like the searchers themselves, search engines prefer URLs that make it easy to understand what your page content is all about.



A general rule to follow when creating your new URLs: use dashes (-) between words instead of underscores (_). Google treats dashes as separators, which means it can return results when you search for a single word that appears in a URL and when you search for a group of words that appears in a URL. In contrast, Google treats underscores as connectors, which means it will only return results when you search for a group of connected words that appears in a URL. The bottom line: using dashes creates more opportunities for your pages to be discovered.

Leaving shady backlinks in place

We all know that getting backlinks (a.k.a. inbound links) from trusted websites is a great way to give your website's search rankings a boost. However, there's also a dark side to backlinks.

If Google suspects that there are spammy, low-quality sites linking to your site, your rankings could suffer. This is known as "negative SEO". (In some cases, spammers will purposely direct lots of low-quality links to your site in order to cause negative SEO.)



A website redesign presents the perfect opportunity for you to analyze your backlinks and remove the shady ones. If you use Google Webmaster Tools, you'll see a "manual penalty" appear if Google detects one of these low-quality links. You'll then have the option to make such links "no follows" so Google stops paying attention to them.

★ TIP

Pay attention to security. In addition to auditing and removing any spurious links to your site, also be sure your new site is protected by SSL (Secure Sockets Layer). This security measure creates a secure highway between a visitor's browser and a website's web server, preventing third parties from accessing the data. According to Google, SSL is a ranking factor in search results. Not only will SSL contribute to search rankings, it also can prevent disreputable back-linking organizations from implanting hidden links on your site.

Not implementing responsive design

As Google's preferred configuration for mobile-optimized websites, responsive design is your best option for delivering a great search and browsing experience to mobile users.

With responsive design, all of your website's URLs are the same across all devices, and they all serve up the same HTML code. This isn't the case with other mobile configurations, like setting up a separate, mobile-only site (which requires a different set of URLs) or implementing dynamic serving (which uses the same URLs but serves up different HTML).

With responsive design, the only thing that changes across devices is the styling (which is controlled by CSS). This configuration makes it easier for Google to crawl your pages and retrieve your content. To quote Google:

“This improvement in crawling efficiency can indirectly help Google index more of the site's contents and keep it appropriately fresh.”



#SEO Redesign
MISTAKE NUMBER

8

Forgetting to unblock search engines from crawling your site



So there you are, ready to push the big green “LAUNCH” button on your newly designed website. The big moment comes and goes, and after hours of combing through the site, admiring its beauty, you stumble across something peculiar: your new, beautiful website isn’t showing up in Google’s search results!

Chances are that when your site was under construction, you had blocked the search engines from peaking under the hood until your site was 100% complete. When launching your website after a redesign, it’s important to double check that the search engines know where to find you.

Forgetting to add analytics tracking to your site

How are you going to benchmark your redesigned website against your old website if you aren't using analytics software? Answer: you aren't!

As soon as your new website is released into the wild, wild web, you should be collecting data on its performance. Did your content audit and keyword research pay off? Is that new URL structure making it easier for visitors to navigate through your pages? You'll never know if you aren't monitoring key metrics with analytics software.



★ TIP

Track the right data. It wasn't too long ago when the key website metrics to watch were unique visits, pages visited, and time on site. While those are still important, more meaningful data that you should monitor at least monthly, if not weekly, includes:

- **Visits-to-contacts rate:** Of the people visiting your website, how many of them give you their contact information or contact you directly?
- **Contacts-to-customers rate:** Are the contacts generated online good contacts that are converting to customers?
- **Bounce rate:** Which pages, particularly landing pages, are exit pages for visitors?
- **Traffic sources:** Are you building organic traffic or dependent on advertising?

Failing to think like a human



With the most recent Hummingbird update, Google gained the ability to recognize full-sentence queries (in contrast to simply picking out the individual words that make up a query). As a result, search has become much more conversational.

Google doesn't want to deliver you "results" anymore, they want to deliver answers. And the best answers don't come from content farms, they come from websites that are crafted with their visitors -- human beings -- in mind.

★ TIP

Start by asking questions. Not sure what questions your potential customers are searching? Start by talking to your colleagues. If you are a medical supply provider, ask your sales team what questions they get asked most often and what keeps customers up at night—then create content to address those areas. If you are a doctor's office, talk to your nurses and front desk and ask them what are the most frequent patient questions. A senior living community? Talk to the adult children who come to visit your current residents for insights.

ABOUT US

Clementine Healthcare Marketing is a content and digital marketing agency specializing in the healthcare sector. We help healthcare companies increase business by attracting the right prospects, answering their needs, and converting them to customers.

GET A FREE CONTENT ASSESSMENT

Not sure if your content is hitting the mark? Contact us and we will provide a free 30-minute analysis of your customer persona, buying path, print and digital content, and conversion rates.



2630 W Belleview Avenue, Suite 290, Littleton, CO 80123 🍊 303-261-8264 🍊 clementinehealth.com



issuu.com/clementinehealth



[@clemhealth](https://twitter.com/clemhealth)



[/clementinehealth](https://facebook.com/clementinehealth)



[/clemhealth](https://pinterest.com/clemhealth)