

Common Website Mistakes

By Tawnya Sutherland (www.vanetworking.com) (www.mediamage.com)

- [mlzambos] Okay lets get started. Hello and welcome to our Discussion on Common Website Mistakes this evening.
- [Tawnya] Hi trinaren
- [mlzambos] First some basic instructions. If you need to change the refresh rate then type /refresh # where the # is seconds between each refresh do not go below 3. The Default is 5 seconds which is a good rate.
- [mlzambos] If you are on FireFox the chat will be in reverse. You need to switch over to IE to have the new items at the bottom and the older at the top
- [mlzambos] Anyone need me to wait while you change over to IE
- [Laurie] I'm good
- [mlzambos] If you need to see more lines then type /show ### with the number of line you want to see.
- [trinaren] I think I need to switch
- [mlzambos] Okay I will wait a minute
- [mlzambos] When we get to the Q&A section please type ? if you have a question and then I will call on you to ask your question so that it won't get lost in the mix of things. This will be done through the on board Private Messaging System.
- [trinaren] I'm back!
- [mlzambos] I will be Archiving this chat at the end for everyone to see also.
- [trinaren] Thanks
- [mlzambos] Thank you for coming this morning. It is my Pleasure to introduce you to Tawnya Sutherland of Virtual Assistance Networking (<http://www.vanetworking.com>) and Mediamage Business Solutions ([Http://www.mediamage.com](http://www.mediamage.com))
- [mlzambos] Tawnya Sutherland lives on the shores of the Pacific Ocean near Vancouver, Canada and is a single mother of 3 teenage children working from a home-based office as a Virtual Assistant.
- [mlzambos] She is a Certified Internet Marketing Business Strategist and Multimedia Specialist graduating in 2002 from the University of British Columbia with her Multimedia and Internet Marketing certifications.
- [Tawnya] Hi everyone...I was going to make this a bit interactive as I have 20 Mistakes you should avoid and talk about each one with questions? Maybe I should just do the whole chat and then ask questions at end?
- [Tawnya] What would you folks like?
- [mlzambos] In 1982 she obtained her Legal Secretarial Certificate at Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario.
- [mlzambos] An active member of many Virtual Assistant organizations online, Tawnya is founder of The VAN Virtual Assistant Networking Forum, the largest Virtual Assistant member based networking hotspot online.
- [Tawnya] oops...sorry Michelle...you are very thorough on my bio
- [mlzambos] She has been a Virtual Assistant since the earliest days of the industry starting her business Mediamage Business Solutions in 1997.
- [mlzambos] Tawnya has a strong executive and administrative background working as legal, medical and executive secretary for corporate lawyers, the Health Unit, the School Board and other various secretarial positions for over 15 years.
- [mlzambos] She also was owner of two other successful businesses, an arts and crafts retail store and a plumbing service company, prior to her business venture as a VA.



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[mlzambos] oops Sorry. It is the one from you site. Okay Tawnya they are all yours.

[Tawnya] ok...Hi everyone and thanks for coming!

[Tawnya] I'm going to talk about some Common Website mistakes many make and should avoid

[Tawnya] In a world of information overload, your website must grab your visitor's attention: provide them with the information they need clearly and tell them where they are.

[Tawnya] For starters, make sure you tell them where they are when they arrive at your website.

[Tawnya] Do it visually with a logo in your masthead, taglines, bullets or headers.

[Tawnya] Web surfers are scanners or skimmers and not always readers so visual grounding is important.

[Tawnya] For a bare minimum, state what your website is all about in the first paragraph on your website so they can at least read it. You need to ground your visitor and let them know where they are.

[Tawnya] Is there anyone that doesn't know what I mean by grounding?

[mlzambos] I don't

[Deanna] I'm sorry I don't know.+

[Tawnya] Its basically making the person aware of where they are in some format...like "Hey you are at a real estate website and I sell / buy homes"

[Tawnya] Visually letting them know they are in the right place

[Tawnya] So many websites I go to and it takes me 10 minutes to figure out exactly what the site is all about

[Tawnya] Having your reader figure it out right away "grounds" them...makes them feel comfy/safe

[Tawnya] Which is the trusting mood you want your visitor in right?

[Tawnya] Does that make sense?

[artisky] Right

[Tawnya] You want what your website is all about to POP RIGHT OUT at your visitor

[mlzambos] Thanks it does.

[Tawnya] This is the biggest website mistake of all and if you don't remember any of the rest of them, at least take this one home with you

[artisky] Do you do this with Color as well ??

[Tawnya] I have 20 more to go

[Tawnya] yes, and I will explain how colour can ground in a few here

[Tawnya] Infact, the appearance of your web site text can actually increase or decrease your sales.

[Tawnya] The size, font, style, design attributes or color of your text (like artisky said) can easily affect your reader's buying decision.

[Tawnya] So make your website an inviting door to your business by avoiding these common design mistakes:

[Tawnya] (Always keeping in mind our most important thing...Grounding your visitor)

[Tawnya] 1. Excessively large graphics that make download time slow.

[Tawnya] This is just a given and most know this. Large graphics can slow down visitors like mlzambos

[Tawnya] or people on dialup...there still are some

[mlzambos] More then you think too.

[Tawnya] If you want I will talk about 5 and we can do questions and then do another 5 and questions? I have 20 common mistakes



- [Tawnya] exactly Michelle, there are still tons of slow connections or accessing from cell phones, pdas, you name it
- [Tawnya] 2. Too many animations that confuse and overwhelm a user.
- [Tawnya] These would be flash graphics, animated gifs, etc. Too many flashy things just distract a visitor from actually reading your content so try to avoid these if possible
- [mlzambos] Sounds good. T. Do them in order of importance if you can. Remember everyone if you need to leave early we do Archive these.
- [Tawnya] 3. The Blink Tag. It's annoying! Don't use it!
- [Tawnya] 4. Plug-ins like FLASH that require a download by the user. Don't make the user have to download some program to view your website
- [Tawnya] 5. "Under Construction" signs.
- [Tawnya] Your website should always be under construction and having new content added to it regularly
- [Tawnya] but don't put the sign out telling everyone...since it makes you look like you are disorganized and can never complete something. As VAs we don't need this first impression.
- [Tawnya] Ok, there is 5 common website mistakes, if noone has questions, I will go onto the next 5
- [Deanna] sorry what is that a blink tag
- [amichalski] ?
- [Tawnya] A blink tag is an HTML code that will make specific text blink off and on in your content
- [mlzambos]>[amichalski] go ahead
- [artisky] You mean like when someone does Winner Winner
- [artisky] but flashing
- [Tawnya] I forget the code for it...but its a style of some sort that you sometimes see people using
- [Tawnya] yes
- [amichalski] Should I avoid making PDFs available since they might require someone to download Adobe REader?
- [amichalski] Or is that basic enough it shouldn't be a problem?
- [Tawnya] PDFs are great for downloads, since they are universal.
- [artisky] Can I just ask why is Adobe used instead of Word??
- [Tawnya] I just don't recommend making your whole website in FLASH, since one can't even view it until they download the flash software
- [mlzambos] AnaLisa I would think that PDF's are okay just let people know that they have to have it to read it. Just don't do your entire site in PDF.
- [Tawnya] Adobe Acrobat is universal and can be viewed on all PCs and Macs
- [Tawnya] Word is not universal since many don't have this program and couldn't view it. Adobe Acrobat is free and downloadable program
- [mlzambos] Flash is a bigger issue then PDF.
- [Tawnya] Plus with word you have different versions that aren't compatible with older versions or Macs
- [artisky] OK ...got it...Universal is the key
- [Tawnya] so lets go onto the next one... 6. Bad Color Choice.
- [Tawnya] You want to choose colors that fit your audience
- [Tawnya] I have a great article on my website sometime for more info on colour
- [Tawnya] You want to make sure your website is easy to read.
- [artisky] but there are so many personalities as far as audience



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[Tawnya] Nothing hard to read that white text on a dark background.

[Tawnya] Keep backgrounds light if not an offwhite so that people can print your website too.
Use a darker colour for text.

[Tawnya] yes and your audience is something you need to know before you build your website

[Tawnya] since colour can also create a mood

[Tawnya] . Blues are calming, oranges are trusting, red create excitement, etc.

[Tawnya] yellows are educational which might be great for a school website wherease green means money which would be better for a financial website

[Tawnya] I have a great chart here:

[artisky] So that makes me ask What is the best Website Builder to use??

[Tawnya]

[Tawnya] Any website builder as long as you don't make any of the common website mistakes
I'm talking about tonight

[virtualnan] sorry to interrupt, but this is my first time in this chat. Do I need to keep pressing that button to see whats being said?

[Tawnya] One will testify Dreamweaver is best, another Frontpage and the next person to come along with say writing code in Notepad is the only way to go...which HTML editor to use is a matter of preference

[Tawnya] 7. You want to also choose fonts wisely.

[Tawnya] virtualnan, you should be able to just sit and watch what I type and not have to push any buttons

[mlzambos]>[virtualnan] change your refrech rate by typing /refresh 3 in the box where you type you message in.

[Tawnya] Make sure you use the proper fonts for your target market.

[Tawnya] . I wouldn't use a small size 1 font if your target market is seniors.

[Tawnya] THEY ARE BLIND!

[mlzambos]>[Tawnya] I will get her taken care of. You keep up the great work.

[Tawnya] Infact, never use a size 1 font as it is way to small to even read.

[Tawnya] Also consider the style of font you use for your target audience too.

[Tawnya] A comic sans font may work well if you are targeting children but may look a bit amateurish if you want a more corporate market.

[artisky] isn't size 12 a universal size

[Tawnya] I typically use default size in HTML, its a good one to read

[virtualnan] thanx

[Tawnya] The next common website mistake is: 8. Grammatical Errors.

[Tawnya] The website speaks for your services – no one will hire you if you cannot spell! We are Virtual Assistants remember?

[Tawnya] 9. Text that is too small or too large. Never use caps in a full heading either. Caps on the net mean:

[mlzambos]>[artisky] I am so glad that you want to get involved and ask questions can you please hang on to them until Tawyna gets to the break to ask them so that we can keep the chat moving smoothly

[Tawnya] I AM SCREAMING AT YOU!

[Tawnya] Never scream at your prospects

[Tawnya] 10. Horizontal scrollbars along the bottom of your website to view the right-hand side of your webpage.

[Tawnya] Users automatically know to scroll down on a website but scroll across too? This is inefficient from a usability standpoint.

[Tawnya] It is normal to see the scroll bars down the right hand side but not along the bottom so always test your website design in different browsers

[Tawnya] So that is the halfway mark, any questions?

[mlzambos]>[artisky] We will get all of your questions answered I promise and thanks for holding on to them.

[Tawnya] ok...11. Choosing a domain name that is too long or can't be remembered easily.

[mlzambos] Thank you Tawnya If you have a quesiton please type a ? and I will call on you in the order received so that we can get all of them answered.

[virtualnan] So far, I dont think I've done any of these

[Tawnya] Can you imagine if I had chose a long domain name like
instead of

[Tawnya] my email wouldn't have even fit on my business card

[Tawnya] so remember stuff like this when choosing your domain name...keep it short and memorable

[Tawnya] Stay away from 12. Audio clips that play automatically.

[Tawnya] . I recommend no sounds as they increase download time but if you absolutely must have music playing in the background, give the user the option to shut it off.

[Tawnya] 13. Broken images.

[Tawnya] When your image is broken (doesn't show up) there is nothing worse than seeing a blank box

[Tawnya] It is very unprofessional

[Tawnya] Another common website mistake is broken links.

[Tawnya] Enough said on that one.

[Tawnya] 15. Too little blank space between sections.

[Tawnya] Give your reader some "white space" to rest their eyes!

[Tawnya] Put some horizontal and vertical spacing on your images so the text doesn't run right up to them

[Tawnya] visually it is more appealing

[Tawnya] 16. Overuse of UPPERCASE. This is a repeat but man oh man...I see people use it all the time

[Tawnya] This screams "yelling" at your user and is against netiquette (net etiquette).

[Tawnya] Another thing I always avoid is underlining anything...

[Tawnya] Reason is, people will think it is a link and try clicking on it...how irritating to the user when they find out it doesn't go anywhere because it is just underlined

[Tawnya] so don't underline to emphasize text...instead use bold or colour to make it stand out

[Tawnya] Don't italicize any text either because it just doesn't read well

[Tawnya] again, use colour or bold the text if you want it to stand out

[Tawnya] 17. Having your website on a host that never seems to stay online

[Tawnya] Make sure your host is reliable because if your website goes down, you could lose all search engine rankings to date if it is down at the time a search engine bot visits

[Tawnya] speaking of which, I did a nasty thing and let my better halves domain expire to his website

[Tawnya] His website was down for a week while we waited for it to transfer the DNS and get back online.

[Tawnya] Lucky for him I'm an Search Engine Optimizer and will get his site back up in the ranks else he would have wasted \$1000s of dollars having his site down for that length of time

[Tawnya] so make sure you have reliable hosting and you don't let your domain name expire

[Tawnya] 18. Too many advertising banners!

[Tawnya] Another common website mistake

[Tawnya] Its ok to have banners, don't get me wrong but also remember with every banner you have on your website means you may lose that visitor to the banner too,....something to consider

[Tawnya] 19. Slow servers or oversized pages because of un-optimized, large, graphics. Either one will send your user elsewhere. Patience for websites to download is scarce nowadays.

[Tawnya] and last here is...20. No text navigation option

[Tawnya] Many of us just use graphic buttons

[Tawnya] What about the user who has shut graphics off because they are on a dialup or pda?

[Tawnya] They won't be able to navigate your website

[Tawnya] Always provide text navigation at the bottom of your website or a sitemap to help users find their way should they get lost at your website.

[Tawnya] and last but not least...

[Tawnya] remember the KISS principle:

[Tawnya] Keep It Simple Stupid!

[Tawnya] These are just basics but many still do them

[amichalski] ?

[Tawnya] So try to avoid these 20 Common Website Mistakes and you should easily be able to keep your visitor on your website and interested.

[mlzambos] Thank you Tawnya If you have a question please type a ? and I will call on you in the order received so that we can get all of them answered

[Tawnya] Once interested, next step is buy...which is turning your clicks into cash now. My motto. Turning Clicks into Cash

[mlzambos]>[Analisa] Go ahead with you ?

[Tawnya] So any questions, just ask and I will do my best to answer

[Tawnya] good cause my fingers are tired

[mlzambos] Go ahead AnaLisa with your ?

[amichalski] I am on dial-up also, so it's hard for me to judge what's truly slow. Is there a file size standard I can use, rather than loading speed, to gauge whether my pages are too big?

[Tawnya] hehehe

[Tawnya] try to keep images between 6-12K

[Deanna] Good night everyone I need to go - this was my first visit to the chat room and I found it very informative and can't wait to look at my website with this list in hand. Thank you Tawnya and Michelle for setting it up

[mlzambos] Analisa I use the rule of thumb for Dial-up of more than 2 minutes to load and they are gone.

[Tawnya] and let me think here about file size...maximum would be

[Tawnya] 50K

[Tawnya] Anything bigger is not out of the question, I do have a couple that are almost 100K but they do take time to download

[Tawnya] yes...basically you only have 2 seconds to grab a visitors attention

[amichalski] Great--that's exactly what I needed to know. Thanks!

[Tawnya] if your website hasn't downloaded by then, they most likely will head out.

[Tawnya] and that 50K includes images too don't forget

[Tawnya] I like the pages around 20K-25K is perfect

[mlzambos] Being on dial-up now after being on DSL for 3 years. I will give a site about 1-2 minutes to start giving me good content it doesn't have to be the whole page but something to keep me there.

[Tawnya] again, most important thing above all else is to make your user aware of where they are when they arrive at your website...don't make them figure it out

[Tawnya] so you may want to put text in the first paragraph explaining what your website is about so they can read it while your large header graphic is downloading

[artisky] Good night everyone I need to go..Thank You!

[mlzambos] If not then I am gone and on to the next. Understand I have graphics degraded and don't load them if I don't have to. I want the option to look at them if needed.

[PattyD] ?

[Tawnya] and there are many on dialup. Wireless is quite slow too and amazingly many have this as well

[mlzambos] Good Night Patricia. Did we get all of your ? answered?

[mlzambos] Go ahead Patty.

[PattyD] I came in towards the tail-end of this and apologize. Is it ok to change the font size on a page a couple of times or should it stay consistent?

[Tawnya] Your content font should stay the same...however you could change the size in the headers

[Tawnya] saying that though, you may want something like a quote to stand out so changing the font size may be the route to go too

[Tawnya] it all depends on the purpose/reasoning behind changing the font size Patty

[Tawnya] Having every other paragraph a different font size would give the website a crazy kinda hectic feel you know?

[PattyD] I've been trying to stay consistent with tahoma 10 or 12, but wasn't sure if I should change that a little.

[Tawnya] But if you were a psychiatrist website, you may want your visitors in this mood when they arrive at your website

[Tawnya] those are standard fonts

[PattyD]

[Tawnya] font size, style and colour will create a mood

[Tawnya] I said earlier that Comic Sans is great for a joke site, kids site but would not be professional for a corporate or VA website

[Tawnya] When you look at your website, what mood does it put you in? Then ask yourself if this is the mood of your target audience

[PattyD] Thank you. That helps a lot.

[mlzambos] Any other questions?

[mlzambos] I think all of my East Coasters are sleeping here.

[Tawnya] hehe

[Tawnya] My daughter just messaged me, she bought her first car

[Tawnya] Paid cash too...I am so proud of her

[Tawnya] 1998 acura integra

[mlzambos] Oh Joy. I am not looking forward to that day. Way to go

[Tawnya] Her dad is totally against it...since she picked a car that may have problems and wouldn't listen to him LOL

[Tawnya] You know us women, we choose first on colour, second on performance



[mlzambos] Okay well it looks like there are no more questions so Tawnya Thank you again for doing this.

[Tawnya] not a problem Michelle

[Tawnya] send to me the transcript and I will put it up with the other one you sent me that I still haven't put up

[Tawnya]

[mlzambos] I will post a copy of tonights chat link with the Q&A on the forum tomorrow.

[mlzambos] Will do.

[PattyD] Thank you Tawnya. I look forward to re-reading this chat.

[amichalski] This has been very helpful!

[PattyD] Thank you Michelle. You're doing a great job.

[mlzambos] Thank you everyone for coming. If anyone wants to stick around and chat I can do that for a little bit.

[Tawnya] Yes, you have this so organized Michelle...its great!

[mlzambos] Thank you Everyone. Remember we have Naomi here next Monday and will be doing our EZine chat at 8:00PM EST.

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