

# 9 COMMON SEO MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

# Introduction

You might sell the best sportscars in the world. But if no one's walking past your dealership, you won't make a single sale. Which is why prime real estate on busy streets attracts such a high price.

Online, it's no different. Except that for every main road (or first page of the Google results) there are literally thousands of dark back alleys where even the best businesses can get lost.

Now, attracting high-quality organic search traffic by ranking well on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) is likely to be the single most important source of growth for your company.

But with Google's algorithm proving ever elusive, many businesses are simply running in the wrong direction. Making classic mistakes that are negatively affecting their rankings, and condemning them to the depths of the internet.

In this guide, we're going to take you through nine of the most common SEO mistakes in 2022. So that you can cruise past the competition and secure those page one rankings that will fuel your business growth.

## Before we start

### Important!

When we talk about your competitors, it's essential that you look deeper than businesses selling similar products or services to you. Instead, think about those who are competing for similar search terms and search real estate, whether or not they operate in the same industry or have the same business model.

## **MISTAKE #1**

# **Keyword or Topic Cannibalization**

### **What is it?**

Keyword cannibalization is when multiple pages on your website are targeting the same keyword or topic.

Rather than adding weight to your search authority, these pages will compete with each other in the rankings, bombarding Google with confusing signals. Typically, the algorithm will then struggle to decide which page to rank higher, leading to dramatic fluctuations in performance.

### **Why does it matter?**

Keyword cannibalization is especially a problem when:

- A page that you've intentionally optimized is outranked by another, unintended piece of content
- Google can't decide which page to rank, so both suffer and your competitors jump ahead of you
- Your rankings and pages shown are inconsistent, reducing brand visibility and brand trust
- All of these issues can contribute to a significant loss in the organic traffic you could potentially have enjoyed. Which can in turn equate to a lower conversion rate with prospects ending up in the wrong place on your website.

### **How to Fix it?**

You need precise data to pinpoint issues, and to divide your search intents.

It's possible for multiple pages to target the same topic as long as their purposes are different. For ex., a product information page might target customers in the discovery phase, and a purchase page likely targets buyers ready to make a decision.

Correctly dividing these intents and related keywords might let both pages rank for the same topic. Other solutions include deleting old content, merging alike pages, or combining topical hubs so each website part serves a unique, useful purpose.

## **MISTAKE #2**

# **Overlooking Organic Market Share**

### **What is it?**

Good SEO is all about getting ahead of the competition. By measuring your organic market share (or share of voice and visibility) for your search landscape, you can better assess the proportion of total search traffic that's heading in your direction.

Today, too many businesses are missing out on this crucial metric.

### **Why does it matter?**

Your market share metric reflects the daily, weekly, and seasonal fluctuations that result from the likes of internal changes, shifting algorithms, and moves made by competitors. It is an ever-changing and evolving measure that most companies simply don't have a pulse on.

If you can improve your rankings against your target keywords, you'll also increase your market share and raise your brand awareness.

### **How to fix?**

By using a live platform like Quattr, you can even predict the impact of proposed changes you might make to your site in real time, while simultaneously calculating how this affects your search ranking versus competitors. As always, insights and recommendations mean you can make tangible improvements to your performance and organic growth.

## **MISTAKE #3**

# **Subdomain Conflicts & Cannibalization**

### **What is it?**

Many businesses use subdomains to separate their content, departments, or geographical areas of operation into their own sections of the root domain. They look like this:

Subdomain.example.com  
en.example.com  
de.example.com  
service1.example.com  
blog.example.com

Subdomains became especially popular when a flaw in Google's algorithm allowed companies using them to dominate results pages, cornering the majority of search traffic.

But this has changed. And your URL structure could now be negatively impacting your SEO performance.

### **Why does it matter?**

Today, subdomain overlaps are punished by SERPs. As with keyword cannibalization, subdomains featuring similar content or targeting identical search intents end up competing with one another, and both end up suffering in the rankings.

### **How to fix?**

To be sure this isn't happening for your website, it's important that you have access to real-time data that's pulled regularly enough to identify inconsistencies. You also need to assess every domain, subdomain, folder and directory on your site so you can see both the big picture and the small print, and – ideally – compare this with the performance of your competitors.

Equally, having your site split into subdomains can be a real drain on resources and time. By and large, Google approaches each subdomain as its own domain, which effectively means each one needs its own SEO campaign, as well as to build its own authority and trust. This – quite simply – is often more work than most companies, marketing departments and SEO teams have the capacity for.

## **MISTAKE #4**

# **Missed Keyword & Topical Opportunities**

### **What is it?**

SEO performance is all relative. If your competitors aren't performing how they should be, then you're likely to have an easier time staying near the top of SERPs.

However, the reality is that most businesses understand the importance of organic search traffic, so you're likely to face a constant struggle for higher ranking.

That makes identifying gaps in your content strategy – and opportunities to take advantage of gaps in your competitors' – a crucial step. And one that can easily be missed because, unlike with Quattr, most services don't make recommendations based on direct competitor comparisons. Which means a whole load of extra effort gathering, scraping, and cleaning data from multiple sources before you can even begin your analysis.

### **Why does it matter?**

Taking advantage of missed opportunities is an important step in your continuous work towards achieving and maintaining high search rankings.

To do that, you'll first need to identify what your competitors are doing well. Which pages are ranking highly? What short- and long-tail keywords are they targeting? What featured snippets are they ranking for? What topics or keywords are they covering that you're missing? And how frequently are they publishing new content?

### **How to Fix it?**

Once you've identified the gaps there are a number of approaches to consider. You can:

- Improve existing content or create new pieces that cover topics or keywords you're currently overlooking, focusing on those with higher ROI.
- "Skyscraper", i.e., create better, highly optimized versions of competitor content.
- Improve the quantity and quality of your backlinks.
- Find gaps where search intent isn't being matched – and create articles accordingly.
- Spot trends that are changing over time, and get in there before the competition with fresh, engaging content.

## **MISTAKE #5**

# **Paid & Organic Market Share Overlaps**

### **What is it?**

Essentially, this is where your PPC and organic search marketing strategies – which may be managed separately within your business – conflict with one another, rather than working in harmony.

If both campaigns target the same keywords, potential customers can end up clicking on paid ads when they would otherwise have used a highly ranked organic search link. Skewing your statistics, and costing you money.

### **Why does it matter?**

If paid ads are cannibalizing clicks from your SEO campaigns, your PPC statistics will look better than they really are. And you'll be wasting your ad spend.

### **How to Fix it?**

By performing an analysis to take into account PPC clicks which would otherwise have been captured by organic results, you can calculate the true CPC (cost per click) of your marketing campaigns. Which is likely to be higher than you expected.

And with that information, you can adjust both campaigns accordingly, to ensure you're limiting cannibalization and getting the best ROI across the board. Which is why companies are turning to platforms like Quattr that offer the ability to perform real-time, in-depth analysis.

## **MISTAKE #6**

# **Miscalculating Impact of Short v/s Long-tail Keywords**

### **What is it?**

Typically, long-tail keyword searches indicate a stronger buying intent than short-tail ones. That's because someone who searches for "cloud-based team project management tool" is more likely to know exactly what they're looking for than someone who simply searches for "team management".

Long-tail keywords are less competitive, and therefore easier and cheaper to rank for, so not only will your traffic be of higher quality, but your ROI is also likely to be better.

### **Why does it matter?**

Planning the best keyword strategy is highly dependent on the needs and nature of your business. But generally speaking, long-tail keywords:

- Are less competitive
- Are easier and cheaper to rank for
- Represent customers with greater focus and intent
- Have a higher conversion rate

### **How to Fix it?**

To take advantage of long-tail keywords, you need clear recommendations about what the competition is doing, where the opportunities are, and how you can best connect with your specific target audience's needs.

You can then categorize those topics based on search intent, and target the long-tail keywords that sit within each topic.

## **MISTAKE #7**

# **A Poor Internal Linking Strategy**

### **What is it?**

An internal link is any hyperlink that points to the same domain, i.e., to another page of the same website. It's an essential part of building a website as it helps define the hierarchy and page authority throughout your site.

It can also be one of the easiest ways to improve your SEO performance with easy navigation techniques (assuming you don't have any cannibalized content).

### **Why does it matter?**

Search engine crawlers thrive on well-linked websites, boosting your site's authority. A hierarchy of interlinked content enhances SEO authority and relevance, promoting the most key pages.

Relevant and useful internal links throughout your content also elevate user experience and site engagement, improving brand reputation and conversions.

### **How to Fix it?**

When building your internal links structure, think about:

- The hierarchy of your content – create links between parent and child pages, and also between sibling pages.
- Linking deep within your site, rather than repeatedly hitting top-level URLs like your homepage or contact page.
- Following a natural flow that makes sense for the reader – for example by linking to an article that provides more context on a topic.
- Making sure your most useful pages are linked to from multiple places.
- Avoiding link stuffing, as this reads as spammy.
- Completing the alt text if you're using image links.
- The anchor text you're using – this is critical for helping to establish relevance, so take care to leverage and not abuse it.

## **MISTAKE #8**

# **Ignoring UX**

### **What is it?**

User experience (UX) is a much more important part of a successful SEO strategy than many marketers think. Google emphasizes on UX for SEO gains.

Not only is it important to consider the quality of experience you're offering visitors who do make it through to your website for lifting conversions, but UX is now also taken into account by search engine algorithms themselves through metrics like Google Page Experience scores. So ease of navigation, length of user engagement, speed, security, and mobile responsiveness are all important considerations.

### **Why does it matter?**

Google tracks visitor behavior as part of its ranking considerations, so boosting visitors' engagement within both SERPs and your content now directly contributes to your performance.

### **How to Fix it?**

- Making the appearance of your site in search results friendly, relevant, and engaging.
- Taking advantage of search features (such as knowledge panels, video and image carousels, and rich and featured snippets) when available in SERPs.
- Simplifying your site navigation.
- Using headers, images, bullet points, internal links and CTAs to make content easy to follow and digest.
- Ensuring your content is as useful as possible – consider reducing your total number of pages and making sure each provides clear answers.
- Optimizing your site's load speed so users aren't waiting around.
- Ensuring your website is mobile-friendly and preferably built with a mobile-first approach.

## **MISTAKE #9**

# **Not Investing in Paid Search**

### **What is it?**

If there's one thing that can be said for SEO and PPC, it's that the rules of engagement are constantly changing. You need to stay on top of how you're performing across both so that you can adjust campaigns, make improvements, and appropriately target your future content.

### **Why does it matter?**

If you fail to keep track of your latest performance, you could easily be wasting your resources on ineffective campaigns that are failing to deliver – or worse, negatively affecting your rankings and conversions.

Good SEO performance requires regular injections of fresh, engaging, and value-driven content that connects with your audience and tells Google's algorithm that you're an active, leading voice in your industry.

A PPC campaign is the ideal way to gather a deeper understanding of specific keywords and how they potentially relate to your business. For example, if one keyword phrase generates a higher level of search traffic and a better conversion rate than another, you can use that to guide investment decisions for both your SEO and PPC strategies.

And this information can also help you be sure that you're accurately targeting the correct keywords and search intents against a backdrop of changing consumer habits. So you can be sure that you're constantly working to improve the quality and volume of your organic search traffic.

With your competitors always looking for a way of gaining an advantage, it's crucial you stay on the front foot.



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