

Website Redesign - A Perilous Road

Contributed by Gregg Elberg
Monday, 23 April 2007

Website Redesign - A Perilous Road examines some of the countless decisions required to redesign a website. If you make the wrong decisions, or hire the wrong web designer, you may find that years of hard work are lost and as far as the search engines are concerned- you are brand new again, with no page rank and no presence on the World Wide Web.

{mosbotwordcount}

About a year and a half ago I started a new business and launched a new website. Since that time my site has gained a reasonable page rank on Google. A search for several of my keywords will produce my site in the listings on pages two, three and four of Google.

{bot_wrgoogle}Page Rank and organic listings are important only if enough people are contacting you for your product or service. This is your "ROI". This is your rate of return on your investment of time, energy and money. Most businesses have a "big room for improvement". Like most other businesses, I am very interested in achieving higher page rank and ROI.

According to Google.com:

"PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

Important, high-quality sites receive a higher PageRank, which Google remembers each time it conducts a search. Of course, important pages mean nothing to you if they don't match your query. So, Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text-matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search. Google goes far beyond the number of times a term appears on a page and examines all aspects of the page's content (and the content of the pages linking to it) to determine if it's a good match for your query."

It is logical that if you redesign your site in such a way as it appears to be a brand new site to the Google search engines, you start de novo with no page rank and no other pages "voting" for you. No matter how much you have achieved in terms of Page Rank, or if you have achieved number one, page one status for a keyword in terms of being found on a search of the web, you may have created a "don't get out of jail, don't collect \$200, don't pass go" type of situation for yourself, at least in the internet short run.

These points were brought home to me loud and clear by a member of an internet affinity group who recently wrote:

"Hello,

I had my site remodeled last year by a pro. I paid top dollars for SEO.

Once my site was published, my ranking and clicks took a nose dive. I have done every thing to get the ranking up but have had no luck. Can someone please tell me what went wrong?"

Imagine a mirror that is really one way glass. In the movies, there is a common scene where the criminal suspect is being interviewed by the police in a room with a mirror that reflects his image. On the other side of the mirror, invisible to the suspect may be the victim or other policemen looking in at the proceedings. A website is like a one way glass mirror.

When you click on a website, you see what the designers want you to see. The public's mirror: Images, text, marketing, things that move or flash, contact information, site maps, search for content engines, links to other sites, examples of products or services. What you cannot see are many if not most of the things the search engines see. Many of these things are technical and well beyond the scope of this article, and this author's expertise. But a little knowledge is dangerous. What went wrong?

It appears that the search engines, when looking at the "other side of the one way mirror" may have concluded that this was a brand new site. Perhaps the files that were a part of the web site were renamed. Perhaps the domain name of the site was changed. Perhaps animation, called flash, or pull down menus prevented the search engines from "seeing" the website because of their design. Perhaps in the design of the new site, the former inbound links no longer are counted by the search engines. Perhaps the designer did not use any metatags. According to Danny Sullivan of Search Engine Watch, "Metatags are not a magic solution."

"What are meta tags? They are information inserted into the "head" area of your web pages. Other than the title tag, information in the head area of your web pages is not seen by those viewing your pages in browsers. Instead, meta information in this area is used to communicate information that a human visitor may not be concerned with. Meta tags, for example, can tell a browser what "character set" to use or whether a web page has self-rated itself in terms of adult content". There is controversy regarding the importance of metatags. One way to decide for yourself is to go to the sites of your top competitors; open their site, and click view at the top of your browser, scroll down to page source and click on it. See what your competitors are doing and decide for yourself.

The bottom line: Website redesign is a very difficult and technical area, subject to controversy and honest differences of opinion. You clearly want a website that attracts the public to your product or services, and attracts the search engines to find you. Google has a new program in beta where you can test several versions of a site to determine what the public likes best. What the search engines value is quite another matter. Choosing the best expert for this project is essential. I recommend that you look for experienced professionals with proven results with a business that is reliable and stable. Give a lot of thought to your content and to your call to action. And give a lot of attention to the requirement that your expert designer redesign your site technically as a reflection of your previous site unless you want to start de novo as if your website is brand new to the World Wide Web.

Copyright © 2007 Gregg Financial Services

www.greggfinancialservices.com

Mr. Elberg is a licensed attorney and licensed real estate broker. Gregg Financial Services is a full service brokerage for commercial finance companies and banks that fund B2B businesses. Mr. Elberg arranges funding from \$25,000 to \$50 million per month at competitive pricing. For more information about GFS, please visit our website:
www.greggfinancialservices.com