

Seven deadly SEO sins

 By [Douglas Gauld](#)

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Much like transgressions against the seven deadly biblical sins are, say, frowned upon by custodians of heavenly portals, so too the seven deadly SEO sins can doom you to a lifetime of anguish as you languish on Page 10 of the SERPS - and watch as your marketing ROI goes up in flames.

Choosing the right SEO professional is key to ensuring the success of your marketing campaigns; below we look at the seven deadly SEO sins the agency or professionals you've hired will do well to avoid.

1. Focusing on the low-hanging (forbidden) fruit

In SEO, it's tempting to focus your efforts on ranking pages with "easy" keywords, even if those pages don't contribute to top-line growth as much as others.

Example of easy keywords are those that focus on brand or are so far off "topic" they have low search volumes, making it easy to be competitive or get ranking for – the more relevant the keyword and more search volume it has, the harder the SEO job.

The challenge should be embraced and not shied away from.

Avoid plucking low-hanging fruit just because it makes your job a little less tedious. While it is often easier to focus on the basic keywords, these keywords are "easy" for a reason and probably have low conversion rates.

Focus on the keywords that contribute to the profitability of the business, these more likely have decent search volumes and conversion rates and should be the main focus of your SEO activities.

Make sure that your SEO professional is not just looking for the quick and easy path to "so called" success.

2. Thinking you have arrived

As soon as you think that you have arrived you become irrelevant.

The science of SEO is constantly evolving and true SEO professionals know this – therefore it is imperative that they keep on learning new techniques. Tactics that worked in 2010 are no longer relevant and can in fact harm your marketing efforts.



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Continuous learning is the hallmark of successful SEO professionals in 2016, these guys are always reading, learning and attending industry conferences. Staying ahead of the curve is what you want from your SEO professional.

3. Short-term focus

SEO needs to be thought of as an investment and therefore requires a long term view.

Focusing too much on short term results can result in SEO professionals focusing on shady tactics in order to generate quick easy gains. Any SEO professional who promises fast results should be avoided like the plague – there is no such thing as fast organic rankings anymore.

Focusing on the long term and staying the course will pay off in terms of ROI and marketing results.

4. Ignoring the data

Without data you are an amateur with an opinion – SEO professionals need to always focus on the information at hand. Ignoring data relating to traffic, keywords and conversions will have a negative effect on your online marketing actions.

A true SEO professional is always testing and analysing data.

5. Being poorly informed

Unfortunately there are many people offering SEO services that don't have the required knowledge or skill set to be successful. Much like certain public officials in South Africa (and around the world), these tainted individuals don't know what they don't know. Search Engine Optimisation is a knowledge-based industry and you will get better results from a professional who knows their craft.

6. Lack of originality

Original and quality content is what drives organic traffic in 2016, copying your competitor's website design and content can have a disastrous effect on your SEO and can result in penalties.

Focusing on the user and delivering what they are searching for in 2016 will help deliver more traffic, conversions and improve the ROI of your marketing.

7. Not managing your online reputation

Taking part in dodgy SEO practices such as backlink spam and implementing SEO like it is 2006 will result in Google taking notice and writing down your name in their little black book.

Buying links is a good example of this – 10 years ago buying links was one of the strategies most SEO professionals would use. Now this tactic will result in your website be flagged for link spam. Other factors can also impact on your online reputation and being ignorant of these factors or blatantly ignoring them can hurt your organic traffic and your marketing ROI.

Although the lure of easy wins and fast money may tempt you to cross over to the dark side of SEO, real success in the search landscape is earned by understanding what the user is searching for and delivering in answer to their behaviour.

SEO is constantly evolving and what is good (or best) practice today may not be so tomorrow. This makes the choice of who you get to manage your SEO even more crucial to your overall marketing strategy.

ABOUT DOUGLAS GAULD

A scholar, problem solver and professional troublemaker, Doug is passionate about campaign optimisation. "There are always (at least some) problem areas where campaigns can be improved," he says. "Pointing those out (and helping to solve them) gets me out of bed... that, and really strong coffee." Douglas Gauld is head of SEO at incuBeta Holdings Johannesburg.

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