

Cultural Sensitivity And Social Media: The Dynamic Duo Of Global Marketing

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When company stakeholders think about SEO, their minds usually jump to content creation, target keywords, rankings and so forth. Without a doubt, these are critical elements of a robust SEO strategy.

But there's one factor I've seen people miss time and time again when it comes to SEO: website security.

The reduced visibility and user trust spurred by a hacked website could cause a business to tank.

A company can have great first-page rankings, driving a substantial amount of organic search traffic. But a hacked website can rapidly jeopardize those rankings and in turn, reduce the organic search traffic a company receives. Moreover, a hacked website can harm a company's visibility beyond organic search results. Search engines can penalize hacked websites—in the

aftermath of a hack, I've had prospective clients call me in a panic about their companies no longer being visible on Google Maps.

Moreover, hacked websites can break user trust, especially if it becomes public knowledge. Even if people do manage to find your website despite your decreased visibility in search results, they might be hesitant to give you their business. Consider a 2022 international study of more than 3,000 consumers across the United Kingdom, United States and India. Of those consumers, 33% indicated they had "severed ties with a company known to have experienced a breach."

Why Website Security Often Falls By The Wayside

Often, from what I've observed, business owners don't intentionally let website security fall by the wayside. It's just something that occurs throughout business growth.

Consider an e-commerce business that has one of its products go viral. With the abundance of sales that suddenly start flowing in, the owner's priority becomes finding people who can move orders along. That owner doesn't necessarily look for the most qualified developers and other experts to manage that growth—having someone there, even if that person isn't the most experienced, is the goal. Sometimes, however, a business owner builds a team that is very heavy on development. Those employees are focused on DevOps rather than system administration and other critical security tasks. Even if the company does hire an SEO firm or consultant at some point, that firm or consultant doesn't always provide website security services. They manage the technical SEO and SEO content strategies to drive ROI but don't address the security element.

In any of these situations, the result is usually the same. Website security gets neglected. While some hacks immediately become apparent, others can go unnoticed for quite some time. By the time stakeholders realize what's going on, the damage has been done.

Why A Proactive Approach To Website Security Is Key

Business owners should take a proactive approach to website security, weaving it into their SEO strategies.

On a foundational level, a business needs experts who can analyze and fine-tune the website code, update the website, keep track of Google updates and take other critical steps to keep the website secure. There are several options businesses have as far as securing this expertise.

First, you can seek SEO agencies that have either in-house development teams or that consult with external development teams. Firms that have technical SEO experts, content SEO specialists and developers working alongside each other can create holistic strategies for their clients, minimizing the chances that there will be communication silos and gaps in the implementation. However, contracting a full-service SEO agency can be costly.

Or, you can take it upon yourself to contract consultants and firms with these varying focus areas. For instance, you could hire an agency that focuses on SEO-optimized content, a consultant who offers technical SEO services and a solo web developer. This route can be more

cost-effective than opting for a full-service SEO agency, but it can be challenging to coordinate the different stakeholders and ensure they are on the same page.

Alternatively, if you have the budget, you can hire a developer or a team of developers in-house. The advantage of this path is that the developer or team will only be focused on your company rather than juggling different clients and can generally have greater availability in the event of a security emergency. But this option is expensive—and you'll still have to think through whether or not you'll want to hire for technical and content SEO expertise in-house or contract it out.

Regardless of which of these routes you pursue as a business owner, it's vital that you work with other stakeholders to put the right resources and processes in place so that your SEO strategy can be effective. If you get the right people on board and give them what they need to do their jobs, you'll be more likely to achieve SEO success—anchored by a secure website.

Tags: Cultural, Social Media, Global