

SEO Strategy for a Struggling Site on a Limited Budget

by Ross Dunn, CEO, [StepForth Search Engine Placement Inc.](http://www.stepforth.com)

Over the years we have answered many a phone call where a prospective client is frustrated with the poor performance of their website(s). Obviously the business profile for each website is unique, but common to many of conversations is the following scenario that we would like to share with you. For the purpose of this example we will use a site owner by the name of Sam.

The question from Sam (the caller):

"My site is 2 years old and well established online; it is well indexed on the major search engines and has a couple rankings here and there. Unfortunately after so many years of work on the site the rankings and traffic for the website are still not where I need them. I am just not sure if I should commit my limited budget to reworking a website that has been so difficult to promote; it is becoming a bigger money hole than my boat. Should I continue to invest in my current website or try launching another site with slightly different content and a new domain?"

Just to be sure I understand, I state a summarized version of what I heard back to Sam:

So the site isn't performing after years of work and you have become disillusioned enough that you don't want to drop more money into it. As a result, you are close to launching an entirely new one while leaving the other, older site as a backup.

Now that Sam has confirmed that I understand his predicament I weave my answer in the direction of a recommended course of action – but I want to be sure he understands my reasons for the path I recommend:

First of all it is vital to remember that having multiple sites promoting the same service and content can get you in hot water with the major players such as Google, Yahoo and MSN; it is spam, through and through. So, if you are going to go the route of creating a new website you will have to be "all-in" and 301 (permanently redirect) all traffic from your old site's domain to your new one. Yes, that does mean you will have to pull down the old site. This will also mean that, unless you are very careful you will find that many of your old pages indexed by the search engines will be broken links.

The fact is that there are always reasons that a site is not performing well and, in general, dividing your attentions to another site is simply asking for another headache. After all, who says you won't make the same mistakes when designing and promoting the new site if you don't know what was wrong with the older one?

Now I am going to provide you with a proven SEO strategy that costs as little as a \$1000

Fix your main website! There is no reason why your main site cannot recover from the issues it is facing. These are the steps I recommend you take to ensure that you invest your budget for the best results. For all steps I have provided a minimum budget to provide you with an idea where the budget is divided.

Discover the Problem. Cost \$600 to \$1200

We will try to unearth the problem by reviewing your site for the most common offenders:

- a) Spam: does your site currently utilize tactics that may be causing ranking penalties?
- b) Optimization: is your site properly optimized for your target phrase(s)?
- c) Design: is your site using design techniques that may be limiting your ranking potential?
- d) Content: does the site need more textual content or does it need to be stated better?
- e) Structure: could your site be structured in a more effective manner?
- f) Popularity: does Yahoo or Google see a healthy number of relevant backlinks to your site?

Over 90% of the time we find fundamental issues that when corrected will make all the difference in the world for your website. This service would usually cost no more than \$600 to \$800 in consulting time.

There are, however, occasions where we may have found some concerns but nothing that seems to indicate the type of poor results you are experiencing. In this situation we will need a few more hours to conduct the following research which could raise the cost to \$1200:

- g) Competition: how are your competitors attaining rankings? ([Save money, do this yourself](#))
- h) Compile a Plan: recommendations will be made based on the competitor analysis.

The recommendations we provide you will be summarized at the end of the document in three levels. The first will be a list of the most important fixes to apply to your website for the best effect; these will be noted no matter how intense or potentially pricey they are. The second will be a list of the simplest fixes that you can apply immediately, in order of importance. We will also state the likely affect those changes will have in the scheme of things. The third level will be the list of the more technical and possibly costly fixes that you may need to prioritize when money becomes available.

Implement Recommended Changes: Cost \$390+

Now that you have a list of our recommendations it is up to your skills and connections whether you can handle the implementation on your own or you would like a designer/consultant to apply them. If you decide only to apply the simplest fixes yourself you may just get the advantage you need to increase your rankings and turn your site around. Then the more advanced changes, if there are any, can be accounted for when the funds become available.

Note that for as little as \$65 per hour you can usually hire a web design business to apply the changes. In my estimate the majority of changes I have encountered would only take 6 hours of work (\$390) for a competent designer. Of course, that depends entirely on the flexibility and technology of your website.

The Waiting Game

Now that your site has been updated you have to take a deep breath and sit back while the search engines reindex your site and process the updates. This is not necessarily a slow process since monsters like Google have a voracious indexing schedule but it can be. In any event, you will have to wait as long as 6 weeks to see a measurable difference in rankings.

Can You Guarantee #1 Rankings?

I can certainly guarantee the quality of the work provided but I am sorry Sam, since we do not control the search engines we cannot guarantee rankings. The fact is that anyone who guarantees ranking results is not only unethical but misrepresents their abilities and [Google firmly agrees](#).

I can tell you, however, that it is very common for websites that have undergone this process to experience dramatic increases in rankings under targeted keywords as well as a wider array of secondary rankings because the site is so well optimized.

Questions?

If you have an SEO related question please send it over and we will take a crack at it: [email me](#).