

eBiz Insider

the magazine for eCommerce professionals.

Preventing Credit Card Fraud:

How to save money...
and your reputation

—By Donna Talarico

- ◆ Avoiding Fallout from Duplicate Content
- ◆ Facebook: How to Engage Your Fans
- ◆ From Browser Wars to World (wide web) Peace

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COVER: BellaOra Studios, Henrik Jonsson Graphic Design, PAGE 3: Earl & Sedor Photography, netris, PAGE 4: Carate Brianza, PAGE 6: MB Photo, PAGE 9: BellaOra Studios, Henrik Jonsson Graphic Design, LongHa2006, PAGE 10: thesuperph, PAGE 13: Henrik Jonsson, PAGE 14: Kaboliczech

Editor in Chief: Scott Sanfilippo -
scotts@solidcactus.com

Managing Editor: Donna Talarico -
donna.talarico@solidcactus.com

Copy Editors: Eleni Konstas -
eleni.konstas@solidcactus.com
Karen Snyder - karen.snyder@solidcactus.com

Publisher:
Solid Cactus a Web.com Group, Inc. Brand.
www.solidcactus.com

Production Director: Randy Llewellyn -
randy.llewellyn@solidcactus.com

Advertising Director: Lisa Kramer -
lisa.kramer@solidcactus.com

Marketing Director: Gregory Davis -
gregory.davis@solidcactus.com

Sr. Director, Sales: Sean Gove -
sean.gove@solidcactus.com

Vice President, Operations: Miguel Younger -
miguel@solidcactus.com

Conference Coordinator: Scott Sanfilippo -
scotts@solidcactus.com

Online Producer: Kim Good -
kim.good@solidcactus.com

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Spring means blossoming... websites!

By Scott Sanfilippo,
Editor in Chief, Co-founder, Solid Cactus

Ah, spring! That time of year when an eCommerce store owner's thoughts turn to a store redesign. It is, after all, only six months until the start of the holiday shopping season and you want your website to be ready.

Typically, a store should be redesigned every 18 months. However, frequent site updates such as new features, refreshed graphical elements, and seasonal areas, should be updated continually. A store that doesn't get refreshed, doesn't get business.

If you're considering a new look for your store or are considering adding some new functionality to increase conversions, we're here to help. Our award-winning design team is known for creating stores that sell, without the added clutter or distractions I see in so many stores today. An easy-to-view and easy-to-navigate store is important and we've been building them since 2001, so give us a call when you're ready to take your store to the next level.

If a redesign isn't in the budget, perhaps some simple yet cost-effective changes are. We offer a professional site review service where experts from each department – store programming, design, Internet marketing and customer

service – “deconstruct” your site and present a comprehensive report with our recommendations. You may already have a killer design, but there's always room for improvement. Putting a second (or third, or fourth...) set of expert eyes on it may uncover areas that can lead to increased conversions.

Spring also signals our first eCommerce Boot Camp of the year and it's just a few weeks away. Dozens of eCommerce store owners from around the country are converging on Solid Cactus' headquarters in Shavertown, Pennsylvania for three days, April 28th – 30th. If you haven't made your reservation yet, check out our website at <http://bootcamp.solidcactus.com> for availability. (As of press time, there are a few seats left.)

This time around, we're pleased to present several new sessions including a first-ever pay-per-click deconstruction session, one on basic RTML, several on Internet marketing and, of course, our ever-popular live site deconstruction session.

During Boot Camp, we'll also introduce several new features for the Yahoo! Store platform, which attendees will have the first crack at having installed -- BEFORE they even leave Boot Camp! The rest of you will just have to wait until I officially announce them during a new products webinar in early May.

Finally, we just wrapped up the latest release of our flagship product, Solid Cactus eCommerce, a next-generation shopping cart with advanced marketing features such as built-in email marketing with autoresponders, social media integration, affiliate program management and more. If you're thinking about opening an additional store, why not give our platform a whirl? It only takes a few minutes to open a store using one of our predesigned templates and a 30-day trial is only \$3.95. Check out all our shopping cart has to offer at <http://ecommerce.solidcactus.com>. **eBiz**



Letters to the Editor...

Dear eBiz: I wouldn't ever call myself an expert, but can't help feeling that I look misinformed or uneducated in my blog. How can I write posts that make me sound like an expert?

—Sarah, Sacramento CA

Dear Sarah, Subscribing to eBiz means you're already on the first step to becoming a better blogger – you are becoming self-informed. Even if you think you're not an “expert,” you sell the product so by default, you know more about it than most. Continue to keep tabs on the industry through trade magazines, reading relevant blogs, and following other experts in your field on Twitter. This will keep you informed on new developments relating to products, lines, brands, etc. Anything that's of interest to you might be of interest to your readers, even if you're just sharing your passion.

Dear Editor: I always hear about the benefits of customer testimonials, but how do I get started? Do I wait for customers to supply me with reviews or ask for them? Where do customers go to write them?

—Jill, Juno AK

Dear Jill, Good thinking. Consumers are always looking for the opinions of others. Aside from product reviews, which review items you sell, customer testimonials are reviews of your store. It never hurts to ask for them, either. You can ask for feedback using autoresponders, through a thank you page, or a contact form. And, of course, by providing great products and services, thank-you e-mails will start to come in by themselves. Once you have many positive customer experiences to share, showcase them for all to see by implementing a rotating testimonial feature on your shell or homepage complete with a read more link to bring users to the rest of your glowing reviews.

Good questions!

Let us hear from you!

Write to: scotts@solidcactus.com **eBiz**

The Power of the Product Review



When deciding which item to purchase, online consumers have many options to aid the buying decision:

Google, comparison shopping sites, product reviews, and even friends.

Most shoppers are likely to use a combination of those four, but product reviews are one of the most sought after features.

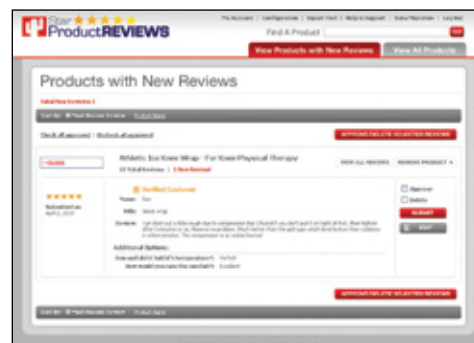
In fact, Marketing Sherpa says 58% of online consumers look for product reviews when looking to make a purchase.

Tools like Solid Cactus' [Star Product Reviews](#) can be implemented on eCommerce stores to help prospective buyers decide whether or not a product is right for them. Not only will these reviews contain valuable information from other satisfied customers, but the content can be indexed by search engines, which can aid in getting ranked well for individual products.

Star Product Reviews Builds Trust

Online shoppers are more likely to buy from companies they trust, and with Star Product Reviews, building consumer

confidence is made easy. Reviews build trust in several ways. First, consumers see that others are shopping at your store. Second, asking for reviews shows you care about customer feedback. Finally, you are giving prospective buyers more product information. As a bonus, Star Product Reviews offers a "was this helpful?" voting feature for each review, which gives users more ways to provide feedback. You can also showcase a reviewer as a verified customer with colored icons and customized text.



Star Product Reviews showing a new 5 star review submitted by a verified buyer waiting to be approved.

Star Product Reviews are SEO-friendly

Star Product Reviews was designed to be easy for search engines to access your content, which is helpful for increasing rankings and traffic. This adds SEO value to your individual item pages, while maximizing the chances for your site to rank for a specific product or keyword term — a vital element that can give you a competitive edge when your customers go to Google for more information. Each

review written about a product can be included in the item page content or on a separate page with a link back to the item, which gives you flexibility to have search engine spiders crawl where you need them to.

Star Product Reviews are Hands-Off & Flexible

Star Product Reviews are easy to manage. Customizable e-mails are sent automatically at time intervals you set to invite previous customers to submit reviews about the products they've purchased. You can even offer past customers an incentive to write reviews, which could increase repeat business and build loyalty.

When new reviews are placed, notifications are sent to as many contacts within your store as needed, making it easy for multiple staff members to manage. Star Product Reviews can be set to automatically approve or deny reviews, as well as filter any profanity or unwanted words that may appear in any incoming reviews, which means you'll spend less time moderating. If you want more control, you can manually approve or deny each and every review. Even after a review is live, you can edit or delete reviews, either one at a time or globally, which makes moderation a cinch. This functionality helps eliminate the risk of competitors or spammers posting unrelated, cookie-cutter, spammy or harmful reviews.

Factor in the ease of tracking each and every review and you've got a great way to get feedback on your products so that you can adjust your inventory to better serve the needs of your customers.

In the end, product reviews are more than a way to provide, inform, and persuade your customers. They can also help with SEO, help you make informed business decisions about your inventory, boost customer confidence, and increase repeat business. **eBiz**



By Mandy Boyle
mandy.boyle@solidcactus.com

Word of Mouth Never Weighed so Much...

What You Say About Yourself

Trust us for all of your online shopping needs. You'll love our products & customer service.



What Your Customers Say About You

★★★★★

"The best prices I've ever found"

★★★★★

"Great products & customer service"

★★★★★

"#1 in my book, I love it"



"Star Product Reviews has proven to be an effective tool to help with conversion and it has helped re-engage our customers. It's a good feature and the price is certainly right."

— Timothy Fosset, www.CrescentHarbor.com

Read more at: reviews.solidcactus.com

For more info, call Solid Cactus at: 888.361.9814

Sharpen your scissors sense: more shoppers looking to cut costs with coupons

A new poll from RetailMeNot.com and Harris Interact reveals 30% of online shoppers will not make a purchase if they cannot find a coupon for that store. This shows that coupons don't just offer value for consumers; but now, they actually define the spending habits of nearly a third of online shoppers.

No matter where people shop – online or off – they are looking to save. Retail consultant firm Inmar reported that in 2009, coupon usage increased for the first time in 17 years. Coupons.com boasted \$1 billion in savings was printed in its printable coupon category alone. Record usage. Record savings. The time is now for every online store owner to embrace coupons.

The Hunt is On

If a shopper wasn't lured to a specific store from a promotional code they received via e-mail marketing or through a social media site, chances are they will search coupon directory sites or even Google phrases such as "promotional code for XYZ store". As the Harris Poll study concludes, if there is not a coupon, there is a good chance the customer will purchase elsewhere or wait until one is available to make a purchase from that store.

In the past, many eCommerce store owners would fear coupon codes meant for loyal customers would leak onto these sites, which would allow just about anyone to

use these loyal customer perks. Today, not being there could be costly. The old way of thinking is quickly being replaced with, "A sale is a sale."

There are many coupon sites, ranging

Membership to these sites often includes features like clipping and e-mail notifications. Coupons.com even has an option to "save to member card" for many mass retailers. Many coupon sites allow users to report on the success rate of coupon codes and even make comments.

Due to their ever-increasing popularity, it's a good idea to keep current coupons available on these sites. Scan the big coupon sites to see if any codes are presently there. If there are none, or they are expired, get new ones listed. In a way, a host of expired coupons (even if the store owner was not the one to list them) can make a store look stale in the eyes of those perusing listings.

Preventing Abuse & Getting Removed from Coupon Sites

Stating rules such as "one time use only" could be deterrent enough. But...

If a coupon code appears on a coupon site and you wish it to be taken down, there are steps that can be taken. RetailMeNot.com has a few measures to protect merchants: Asking for removal of

specific coupons, signing up for e-mail notifications to see if/when coupons are posted, or opt-out entirely from allowing coupons from being shared.

The capabilities of an individual store's shopping cart software may offer help with coupon management, such as



Coupons at a Glance

In case you are a scanner, here are some key tips to "cut out" from this article:

- Scan coupon sites to determine what codes are already out there for your store
- If you don't already, implement coupon code promotions into social media and e-mail marketing
- Do A/B testing and monitor coupon usage to find out what outlets and offers work best and what audiences are more receptive
- Offer instant savings for mailing list sign-ups
- Use on-site graphics to promote current codes and implement unique store features to turn savings into a game (ex: Scratch & Save)

from community-oriented sites like RetailMeNot.com and CouponCabin.com, where coupons and codes are shared among users to sites like Coupons.com, which distribute coupons on behalf of major brands and other retailers. Most of these sites feature popular deals and allow for searching by various criteria.

single-use coupons (which means a store owner could still send a special offer to select customers) and combinable or non-combinable coupons.

Printable coupons for in-store use may be personalized with the recipient's name and include instructions for retailers to not accept without identification. This helps prevent the fraud many mass retailers and grocers often fear from Internet coupons.

If a customer is abusing the same coupon code repeatedly to the point the store owner no longer wants to honor them, action could be taken with a polite order decline notice reminding the customer of any rules that may be in place, as is the case with many coupons, such as "limited to one use per customer." Abused coupon codes can also be deactivated.

The bottom line is, don't create coupons that would hurt, well, the bottom line

Use Coupon Offers for Marketing, Merchandising and More

Coupons can help a business in many ways. Perhaps an item that wasn't a great seller suddenly had a spike in sales when it became more affordable. Not only would that be a successful promotion, but perhaps an indicator the item was priced too high.

Different versions of coupon codes could be used in different places as a test. Use one code with a social media audience and another with the e-mail list and see which has a better return; then the data can be used for future efforts.

Not every visitor to a store will be of the coupon-conscious crowd, but using on-site promotions such as Scratch and Save for Yahoo! Stores can present savings in an enticing, interactive way. Offering a coupon upon sign-up could also be incentive for current or potential customers to subscribe to an e-mail list.

Simply put, coupons are a smart idea for the eCommerce retailer. They attract customers, build repeat business, and in all, can increase revenue. **eBiz**



By Donna Talarico
donna.talarico@solidcactus.com

Score valuable sales with **Scratch and Save**

From **Solid Cactus**

- Promote with email marketing or social media campaigns as a "mystery discount."
- Engage customers by offering tempting discounts at levels of your choice.
- Increase conversions and order sizes.
- Create a memorable shopping experience.

Scratch & Save
Click and drag the dime over the scratch surface to reveal your coupon code.

BQ2SAVE7
an additional 7% off your order

Use this code when you checkout to **SAVE**.

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New From The Solid Cactus Development Laboratory

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Preventing Credit Card Fraud:

How to save money... and your reputation

Think credit card fraud just affects individual users? Think again. From a loss of merchandise to costly chargeback fees, to the worst ramification of all — losing payment processing privileges — eCommerce merchants can be greatly affected by fraudulent orders.

An influx of orders is good news for any start-up or small eCommerce business, except if that sudden increase is for 15 expensive watches, all with a similar shipping address. That was the case for Miami-based eCommerce store, Jill's Boutique -- a costly case at that.

"When you start an eCommerce business, you have no idea about the scams. I've been selling online since 2001 and I thought I was pretty seasoned," said owner Jill Gold.

Gold began selling watches, jewelry, and other accessories on eBay and last year, branched off with her own website, JillsBoutique.com. She recently experienced an unfortunate amount of fraudulent orders, enough to get her terminated from her payment processor and rack up hundreds of dollars of fees from "customers'" credit card companies and her own bank. The amount of merchandise fraudulently purchased was in the neighborhood of \$6500.

Credit Card Fraud is Costly

When an eCommerce store falls victim to credit card fraud, there are direct and indirect costs involved. First, there are chargeback fees. A chargeback is when a cardholder disputes a purchase with their financial institution. Should the chargeback case go in the favor of the customer, the funds (original purchase price) are returned to their bank account and the merchant is charged a fee, usually around \$30 per transaction. Second, if a merchant experiences a high chargeback volume, they could be penalized with increased processing fees, or worse, face termination by their processor. Blacklisted merchants may find it

hard to find a new processor or at least one with competitive rates.

Gold found herself in this predicament a few months ago. She was receiving steady orders, but grew wary when she received about 12-15 questionable orders in one day. At first she thought neighbors or co-workers in an office were spreading news of her store by word of mouth, but the red flags mixed with an atypical amount of orders led her to investigate further.

"There were a lot of grammatical errors, punctuation errors, and similar addresses on the same street," she explained. "Twelve orders isn't much if you are Bloomingdale's, but (my store) is relatively new, so it's not normal for me."

Gold then reflected over the few weeks prior and realized she may have already been victim to fraud. She called her payment processing company about the fishy orders and was told not to worry about it. She then called her gateway company and received unfavorable service. She later got through to a different representative and was transferred to someone at the credit card company for the number in question - the orders all originated from one stolen card, but each order had a different name and address. As suspected, the orders were proven fraudulent. The credit card company notified the card holder, who was reimbursed the money.

Gold, on the other hand, had to pay a chargeback fee for each transaction. She lost out on thousands of dollars worth of merchandise, and worse, she was terminated by her payment processor and put on a blacklist.

"Now it looks like I am the one who is fraudulent. It's just about impossible to find someone to process your credit cards

after you've been put on the list. That was a bad way to learn," she said, adding she was approved by a larger payment processor immediately and then later, disapproved. "And then they charged me \$400 for cancellation fees before I even used them."

The thieves were based overseas, but the shipping addresses were local. An investigation of these "exporters" is pending and in the meantime, Gold is getting by. She took her story to the local news and has filed reports with several consumer organizations such as the Better Business Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Bureau of Consumer Protection. She also plans to write her congressional representative.

"If I was a new eCommerce store, I'd be out of business. I kept on keeping on. I was treading water, but I didn't sink. I stayed afloat and think I will be okay," she said. "A new merchant could really be put out of business. My advice is to really have a clear understanding of payment processing and all the reasons there could be chargebacks. It's very important to pick a good processor."

Today, Gold doesn't have many preventative measures in place because she does not want to alienate her customers. While previously she assumed her credit card processor would verify orders and not let suspicious ones slip through, she now knows better and keeps a keen eye on each order.

"I look at the dollar amount, where it's being shipped to, and the information given," she said, explaining that if things do not match up, she may contact the customer to verify.

A 2009 study from Javelin Strategy & Research reveals the number of U.S. identity fraud victims increased 22 percent in 2008 to 9.9 million adults. However, the total

annual fraud amount jumped just 7 percent to \$48 billion. The report explains this is because “consumers and businesses are detecting and resolving fraud more quickly.”

There are many measures an individual consumer can make to avoid credit card fraud and identity theft. But what steps can eCommerce merchants take to ensure they do not fall victim to fraudulent transactions, as Gold did?

How to Spot Credit Card Fraud

There are several key signs to help spot credit card fraud. Keep in mind there are always going to be regular, even loyal, customers with some of these signs, too. So, do not assume every order with any of these issues is fraudulent; instead, use these as a sign of caution and investigate orders further.

- Shipping and billing address do not match
- Area code and zip code do not match
- IP address is the same on multiple orders
- IP address overseas; order information local
- Nonsensical e-mail address
- Unusual order size or total
- Overseas orders

How to Prevent Fraud

Now that we’ve listed some indications an order may be fraudulent, let’s dig a little deeper and discuss some ways to ways to cut back on fraud.

Limit overseas orders

The nature of eCommerce gives companies the chance to promote their products and services globally. While accepting foreign orders could often be seen as opening floodgates for fraud, completely preventing overseas orders could mean less opportunity for growth. Limiting orders only from those countries known for fraudulent orders may be a smarter idea. ClearCommerce lists the top 12 countries where fraud originates: Ukraine, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Egypt, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Russia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Israel. On the other hand, these 12 countries rank very low: Austria, New Zealand, Taiwan, Norway, Spain, Japan, Switzerland, South Africa, Hong Kong, the

Preventing Credit Card Fraud continued on page 13

From Browser Wars to World (wide web) Peace

'Browser wars' was a term developed in the late 1990s when Internet service vendors would create new features that worked exclusively for their own browser. This exclusivity caused cosmetic and functionality issues when used with the other available browsers. Since then, there have been less and less of these issues as new web standards have been developed and web vendors have begun to adhere to these compliancy standards. But even so, they can still occur.

Store owners often have questions on how to solve this problem of compatibility across different browsers. Having an understanding of the different browsers is the first step to optimizing your eCommerce store properly and to come out a winner in the browser wars.

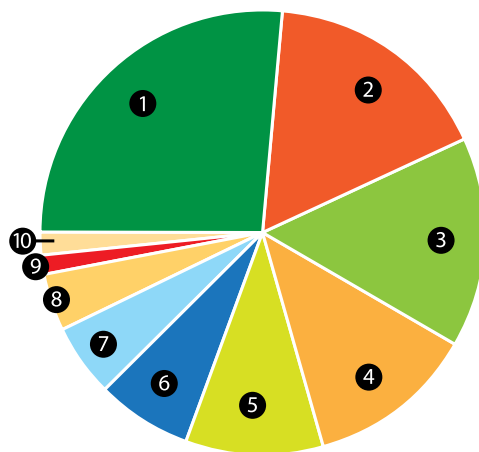
What browsers should I be concerned with?

There are many browsers — and versions of those browsers — available today. There are different reasons why. Not every Internet user rushes to install the latest upgrade. Some people are Mac; some are PC. Some swear by Mozilla. According to W3Counter.com, the most popular today is Internet Explorer 8 (IE). Refer to the pie chart below, for the top ten.

Before we move on, it's good to understand some of the differences between the top ten browsers. Microsoft's Internet Explorer has been around for over a decade and is now up to version 8.

Firefox, an open source browser from Mozilla Corporation, has been around since 2004 and is compatible with Windows, Mac, Linux, FreeBSD, Solaris, GNU and other operation systems. Firefox's latest version is 3.6.3.

Web Browser Market Share



1. Internet Explorer 8 (24.67%)
2. Firefox 3.6 (15.66%)
3. Internet Explorer 7 (14.03%)
4. Firefox 3.5 (11.46%)
5. Internet Explorer 6 (9.19%)
6. Chrome 4 (6.46%)
7. Safari 4 (5.09%)
8. Firefox 3 (3.80%)
9. Opera 10 (1.42%)
10. Firefox (1.31%)

Stats as of March 2010, source w3counter.com

What Internet Explorer is to Microsoft, Safari is to Apple. The Apple Corporation released Safari in 2003. Version 4 is the latest available and can run on both Macintosh and Windows operating systems, as well as early versions of Windows XP. Safari is also the browser used on Apple's iPhone. In September 2008, Google released its own web browser, Chrome in beta. Now in version 4, the browser works on Microsoft, Macintosh, and Linux systems.

Opera, developed by Opera Software Company, can also run on a wide range of operating systems such as Windows, Mac, Linux, FreeBSD, Solaris, and on many mobile phones and devices.

What does the browser have to do with how my site looks?

All browsers use a 'layout engine' software to display the content of a website, including text, images, and CSS, or cascading style sheets. There's not a uniform layout engine used for all the browsers available; instead, each browser has its own. This software has 'Internet standards', or rules that instruct the code to display a certain way.

CSS is the programming language responsible for the cosmetics of a site. This code ranges from the position of images (static and background) to how the font displays on the site. For example, CSS tells your site whether to show blue headers or size 14 paragraph font. When CSS was first implemented in browsers, it was used on a need basis. But, as more browsers were created and new versions released, developers found that one site never looked the same in all browsers. For that reason, the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) was created to form a universal set of rules that all browsers should follow. Developers worked to improve their browsers to comply with these rules.

The original way of displaying CSS before the W3C rules is called Quirks Mode. The new way that follows standards compliance is called Strict Mode. Starting at the time of the release of Internet Explorer 6, web developers were given a choice of which mode a site would appear in by using doctypes.

Quirks Mode is triggered by using the 'transitional' doctype or by not declaring a doctype at all. Browsers as old as Internet Explorer 5 and Netscape 4 didn't have the option of using the 'strict' doctype.

Strict Mode is triggered by using the 'strict' doctype, or when a new doctype is declared that is not recognized.

One CSS difference in Quirks Mode is that an element's width excludes padding and borders, while in Strict Mode you have to subtract the border and padding from the total width. For example, a 'div' tag in HTML has a one pixel border, ten pixels padding on the left and right, and the width of the element is supposed to be 130 pixels. In Quirks Mode the width of the element would be defined as 130px, while in Strict Mode the width would be 108px.

Another CSS difference is a space that shows below images in Strict Mode. Images in this mode are considered 'inline' elements automatically, therefore preserving a line height below the image. In Quirks Modes, the image is considered a 'block' element and the line height of the image is not present.

Compatibility issues don't just extend to the CSS language. Both HTML and Javascript can be affected by the differences between browsers. Some operators within Javascript are only recognized in certain browsers. For example, to target an HTML element in Javascript, older Internet Explorer browsers use the 'document.all' method, while Netscape browsers use the 'document.layers' method. One method wouldn't be recognized in the other browser. In HTML, some tags, such as "abbr" (used to show full titles for abbreviations), won't work in older browsers. More differences between browsers and languages can be seen at www.QuirksMode.org.

How can I test my site for browser compatibility?

It's easy. Download the top ten Internet browsers listed above; they are free. However, since a single computer only allows one version of a browser at a time and one operating system at a time, viewing your site on multiple computers is necessary. If you have a desktop and a laptop, or multiple computers in your office, you can easily run tests on multiple machines. One good aspect of Internet Explorer 8 is it has a built-in compatibility mode which allows you to view a website site in both Internet Explorer 7 and 8.

Having a Macintosh operating system is also handy. While its Safari browser can be used on Windows, the Macintosh system

tends to bold fonts more than a Windows Safari browser would. These bold fonts may cause text to line break earlier on the site. For example, the links in the header of your site may appear all on one line in Windows, but break to a second line for a Macintosh. Browsers are made to be compatible with different operating systems, but some operating systems render site elements differently in the same browser.

How do I find out which browsers and operating systems my visitors are using?

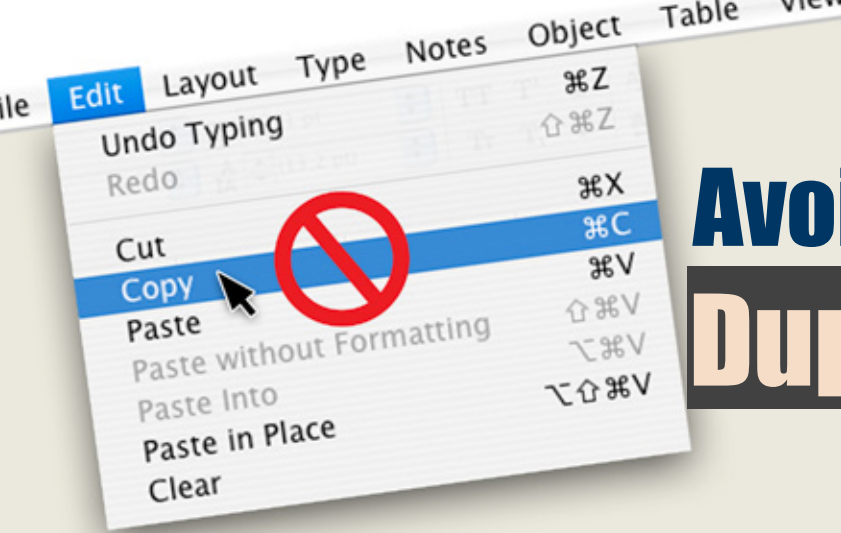
In order to find out which browsers are most commonly used to view your site, you'll want to want to run an analytics service such as Google Analytics or a free script from W3Counter.com. It's possible site visitors are not using one of the top browsers or the percentage of visitors doing so is very small. It might not be necessary to make your site compatible with every browser site visitors use, if say, only five out of 100,000 visitors have used it. You can also see what operating system your visitors are using.

The W3C top browsers won't always match up with the top ten for a specific website since each site attracts a certain type of person. For example, if you own an antique site, your visitors are likely to be of an older age group who may not be as current with the technology - they may very well have an outdated machine with an outdated browser. This may boost the percentage of Internet Explorer 6 users. In the same respect, your site could attract a younger crowd who tend to use the latest versions of browsers for their specific OS. You may find you have a larger audience of Mac users.

Browser compatibility is an important issue when it comes to your website. Every Internet user has a preferred web browser they use to surf the web. If a user runs into a problem with the look or functionality of your site, they are more likely to leave than to download a browser that works better. By making your site compatible across the most widely used browsers, you'll reduce your bounce rate and possibly attract new users. **eBiz**



By Adam Klinges
adam.klinges@solidcactus.com



Avoiding Fallout from Duplicate Content

The SEO industry collectively shudders when the term “duplicate content” is uttered. Website owners need to absolutely be aware of what duplicate content is, who it affects, and its varying degrees of severity.

So, What Exactly Is Duplicate Content?

Duplicate content is simply the act of copying content from another website and placing it on your own. These days, website owners who take content from a copyrighted website without the website owner’s specific permission can face legal ramifications - after all, that is stealing another person’s hard work and dedication to improving their website.

Not only can a site owner face legal troubles, but duplicate content is also a major SEO don’t. Search engines crawl the web looking for the most valuable websites to display in their search results. When a search engine finds that multiple sites have the same content, they’ll typically detect and index the originator of the content, the site where the content first appeared. The other sites who copied the content can face search engine penalization issues and search engines may simply not index many pages from their site, leaving few opportunities for the site to rank well.

What If I Don’t Have Time To Write Unique Content?

For a busy website owner, the idea of writing unique copy may be daunting. It may be tempting to use the product descriptions the manufacturer supplied and gave permission to use, but don’t cave! There are tons of other eCommerce websites who may be using the exact same descriptions and, for that reason, it’s important to differentiate copy. Unique copy sets the site apart and

allows search engine spiders to index as many pages as possible.

Are All Duplicate Content Situations Treated Equal?

In an ideal world, all of a website’s content, from product descriptions to category descriptions, and homepage content, would be completely unique and reflect the store’s personality and value proposition. It’s highly recommended to create completely unique, SEO-friendly homepage content and section page content. Product descriptions should be as original as possible, however tweaking the description to include at least three unique sentences can be a help.

Additionally, duplicating content within a specific website is much less severe than using another website’s content. So, while it is still best to make content as unique as possible, using the same original product description for three products on the same site isn’t likely to cause search engine penalization issues.

How Can I Rectify A Duplicate Content Situation?

Instead of succumbing to duplicate content issues, start brainstorming ways to work around it. Take a t-shirt shop as an example. Perhaps the store features a handful of t-shirt styles which are available in five colors. The store decided to include the same description for all the colors of each shirt, creating five pages containing the exact same content. To correct this, the store could create one product page and incorporate drop-down boxes for customers to select the specific t-shirt colors and sizes they’d like.

Canonical tags can also be placed in a site’s code and work to tell a search engine which

variation of a page to to crawl and index. However, keep in mind that it’s ultimately up to a search engine whether to follow these instructions, and with search engine algorithms continually changing, this may not always be the safest route.

Investing in an experienced SEO copywriter to author unique product descriptions, section page copy, and homepage content could prove to be a wise idea and can go a very long way in ensuring a site is optimized well right from the start and does not suffer from duplicate content problems.

What If My Content Is Stolen?!

If a website contains copyrighted content and another website owner places it on their website without permission, legal action can be pursued. However, the investment in doing so is usually quite high. Plus, stealing another website’s content is an all too common problem, so repeated legal costs could really add up.

Fortunately for those who create unique content, duplicate content issues mostly adversely affect the website that copied the content, rather than the originator. Yet, seeing another website easily take the content someone spent hours writing isn’t exactly a walk in the park. Work to protect that content by ensuring the site is protected through copyright laws, hopefully deterring any other website owners who may be contemplating stealing content.

The moral of the story? Always be unique.

eBiz



By Alicia Magda
alicia.magda@solidcactus.com

UK, France, and Australia. Some eCommerce shopping cart platforms allow merchants to limit ship-to countries, which is much easier than manual rejection.



Check IP Addresses & Contact Information

A good way to see if an order is really originating from the United States is to compare the IP address of the customer to see if it matches the location to the shipping or billing address used when placing the order. (There are several online services available for this purpose, such as GeoBytes and IP2Location.) If things seem way off, the order could be fraudulent. This is what happened with Gold. She assumed orders were from Miami; if she had checked the IP address, she'd have known they originated in Venezuela.

Also, shipping and billing addresses should match. In fact, many shopping carts can be configured to only accept orders if they match. The problem here lies in the fact that many people ship gifts or have items delivered to their workplace to ensure delivery, rather than have their purchase sit on a porch all day exposed to the elements. If a merchant does allow for different shipping and billing address and something else seems suspicious about the order, use the phone number to verify the validity of the order. The purchaser will most likely appreciate the extra mile taken to ensure the gift and/or delivery arrives at the correct location.

Making sure the phone number area code matches the zip code is another method of checking accuracy, however the amount of people using mobile phones that do not have a local exchange or area code could skew that tactic.

Build trust with trust seals

Just like security company signs in a front yard or video cameras in plain sight at retail stores do, trust seals and security badges

can help deter online fraud. Be sure secure shopping icons are evident, but no need to clutter the header area with all these seals - that is overkill and can diminish branding. Instead, make these icons tastefully prominent in the shell (usually in the footer or beneath the left-hand navigation) and on the check-out pages.

Spell it out —

Create an anti-fraud policy

Every eCommerce store should have a detailed customer service page, preferably in an easy-to-read FAQ format. Either on this page, or on a page of its own, spell out an anti-fraud policy and list any steps or measures taken to enforce this. This page could list triggers for fraudulent orders or highlight countries for which the store will not provide shipping. Highlighting this information ahead of time sets expectations that an order may not be processed or that a phone call may be made to verify an order if it exceeds a certain quantity or dollar value. You can take this a step further and link to this page from high-ticket items and from the check-out so that users can always clearly understand any additional steps needed.

Communicate with customers

In eCommerce, less is more. We don't want to put barriers between the customer and the check-out process. However, if there are fraud prevention measures in place that may extend the check-out process, communicate those important details to customers where it matters. Pop-up text boxes with a call to action link such as "why do we need this?" or "what does this mean?" are extremely effective for this purpose. When users click, a pop-up is displayed with the appropriate information, without the need to leave the page. These anti-fraud measures were put into place for the protection of customer (and merchant), and if communicated clearly, the customer will most likely proceed with the order and in fact, feel more at ease. These simple pop-ups could also link to the store's anti-fraud policy page suggested above.

When in doubt, check it out

If something seems suspicious, investigate it. A quick phone call could instantly clear up any questionable situation. More often than not, a customer will feel more confident in an online merchant that calls

to verify an order rather than consider it an inconvenience.

Offer multiple customer service contact methods

For every few fraudulent orders unable to be processed because of the proper precautionary steps in place, there may be an honest-to-goodness order unable to make it through. Rather than risk losing that sale, give customers with special circumstances another way to order, perhaps by calling the order in. There are sometimes scenarios which can be treated on a case-by-case basis. For instance, there could be a true-blue order coming from one of those flagged countries or a first-time customer really may want to order 5,000 widgets at \$50 a pop. When that happens, verifying identity can be done offline, such as by faxing the proper documents. It's better to err on the side of caution. Special cases like this aren't the norm, but when they do occur, remember they are still customers and should be serviced properly.

On a side note, outside of a consumer reporting fraudulent charges to their bank or credit card company, chargebacks can also occur for an eCommerce store when an item is unable to be returned or there is poor customer service. Having a friendly return policy and handling customer service requests promptly will save time and money dealing with chargeback fees.

Get professional help

For the high volume merchant, it can be time consuming to manually approve every order. In those situations, turning to fraud protection services that automatically verify orders may be the smart choice. There are many available and their services, pricing, and products vary.

Sadly, there are scam artists out there. There are people who have learned the loopholes with online ordering. Online merchants need to understand the seriousness of credit card fraud, how to spot it, and how to take proactive measure to make sure their store and business does not fall victim.

eBiz



By Donna Talarico
donna.talarico@solidcactus.com

facebook:

How to Engage Your Fans



For the business owner who doesn't have the time to dabble in social media, [Facebook](#) has always been a solid set-it-and-forget-it solution. It's easy to create a Page for a business and populate it with a few photos, some contact information, and other general info and then leave it. The Page is an effective passive strategy – it's there waiting to be found and performs the job you want it to – you might even get a few visits to your site from Facebook each month.

But there's something you should know. Set-it-and-forget-it is not going to make for instant popularity. If you have loftier goals for using social media, that level of performance can be disappointing. Popular Facebook pages – the kind with hundreds of thousands of fans – tend to be built around companies, products, and public figures with a high degree of offline popularity or experience large, time-sensitive booms in Fan population (like the recent spate of "I bet this [random object] can get more fans than [random celebrity]" pages or the "Tautology Club" group based on a joke in the webcomic xkcd). For Pages that don't have that level of global popularity to rely on, building a Facebook following that you can activate or convert takes more work and a focus on creating engagement with your fans.

'Engagement' may be the new social media buzzword of 2010 – just like 'conversation' was last year – but its buzzworthiness is well-earned and its prominence signals a sea of change in the way some people look at how social media can be used to market a business or brand. Instead of a direct marketing channel, social media has become a key tool in customer relations – from answering product questions to providing concierge services. If you have a Facebook Page, how are you using it to engage your fans? If you're not, think about how your business can benefit from a

stronger relationship with your most loyal customers.

Luckily, there are some simple things that you can do to increase engagement with your customers on Facebook:

Update regularly.

The best way to stay fresh in your fans' consciousness is to make sure the page gets updated regularly. Link your blog or your Twitter feed to the page if you need to, but set a goal of posting something to your Page at least a few times each week. For better results, try to keep track of what time your fans are most active (at least the ones with public timelines) and aim to schedule your own updates for those times. Conventional wisdom is that Facebook has the most activity on weekends; you can use a social media management app like Hootsuite to schedule posts when you're out of the office.

Monitor activity.

Although Facebook has recently started sending weekly e-mail updates to Page admins, tracking activity on a Facebook Page is still not as easy as it should be. No notifications get sent when new comments or wall posts appear on the Page, so that means tracking them manually. And you do have to track them, because responding to those comments in a timely manner is an important part of keeping fans engaged. The simple act of replying to questions and comments can earn added loyalty and positive word of mouth from a user.

Promote yourself.

Filling your page's timeline with spam is bad, but it's okay to encourage fans to visit your website or to read your blog or buy a hot new product. In fact, feel free to do this about 10-15% of the time, as long as it comes across as organic and authentic.

This kind of promotion works both ways – name-drop the Facebook Page in your e-mail advertising or place a link to the Page on your store's thank you page. In addition to linking from your homepage or blog passively, these links will get served to your audience when they're already at a point of high engagement.

Incentivize.

People love getting free stuff. To increase engagement, hold a contest among your fans – one that's easy to participate in. Circulate a Facebook-only coupon to reward that audience (and let it slip to the rest of your customers that they missed out by not being a fan after the fact).

Solicit.

Sometimes the key to better engagement is asking for it. Let your fans know you're ready to interact with them. Ask for feedback on specific items.

With 400 million active users and growing, Facebook can be a daunting landscape. Your business is unlikely to have the same fan count as Coca-Cola or the Pope, but numbers aren't what makes a social media effort effective. The real metric you should be monitoring is engagement, however you choose to define it (number of interactions, clickthrough on shared links, conversion rate of links to sale pages, number of mentions, percent of positive sentiment in comments about your brand – any can be a valid measuring stick depending on your goals and strategy). Strive to improve that month over month, and you will begin to see the dividends. **eBiz**



By Jeff Stolarczyk
jeff.stolarczyk@solidcactus.com

Missed opportunities in Social Media History

HEY THERE!
JULIUS IS USING TWITTER.

MARCH 15, 44 B.C.

JULIUS: HANGING WITH MY
FRIENDS @ ROMAN SENATE.

MARCH 15, 44 B.C. 17:25

POMPEIA: @JULIUS, THE SENATE
ARE NOT YOUR FRIENDS

MARCH 15, 44 B.C. 17:30

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Tech Corner

Remembering the Bubble Burst

Ten years ago, on March 10, 2000 the NASDAQ index hit its all-time high of 5,133 - but it didn't last long. Companies such as Amazon, eBay, and Google survived the dot-com burst and are thriving. However, not every company was strong enough. In honor of this bubble bursting anniversary, let's take a look at some of the less fortunate companies and see where they are now.

Webvan.com - This dot-com was the online grocer phenomenon from the San Francisco area. In a short span of 18 months, it had raised an impressive initial public offering (IPO) of \$375 million, expanded to eight different cities, and had a net worth of \$1.2 billion at its peak. However, due to the slim margin with groceries, it failed to generate enough revenue to offset its operating costs. Webvan.com grew too big, too fast and too soon. Since, it has become a member of Amazon.com selling non-perishable goods online.

Pets.com - The sock puppet mascot still gives me nightmares. From Super Bowl commercials to the Macy's Thanksgiving parade, the advertisements were clever, but they lacked the ability to compel consumers to buy and were expensive to produce. The biggest lesson we can learn from this flop is that no matter how clever your advertisements are, if you have to undercut your shipping costs to attract customers, you're not going to be profitable. Today, pets.com is powered by PetSmart serving as a community portal for pet owners.

Flooz.com - An idea backed by Whoopi Goldberg, Flooz was supposed to be an online currency that would replace credit cards. The concept was that shoppers would buy Flooz and then use it to purchase goods from other online merchants. These online 'gift cards' won support from giants like Barnes & Noble and Tower Records, however, the idea of purchasing this arbitrary currency never caught on with the masses. Today, the domain is parked and the idea is shelved as one of history's perfect examples of 'what the heck were they thinking' business models.

Despite its rough beginning, today, eCommerce is still on the rise. Everyone in the industry should extend thanks to the early companies who made it and those that almost did because, without them, we might not be able to enjoy our online success today. **eBiz**



By Jeffrey Li
jeff.li@solidcactus.com



COMING SOON

The Solid Cactus Development Laboratory has gone **MAD!!!** Our new Yahoo! Store features release is set for Wednesday May 5th.

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