



**WAYS
YOUR
WEBSITE**

IS COSTING

YOU NEW

CAMPERS

Hi, my name is Chris Davis. I'm the owner of DVS Camp Websites. We design and develop websites and we work exclusively with camps.

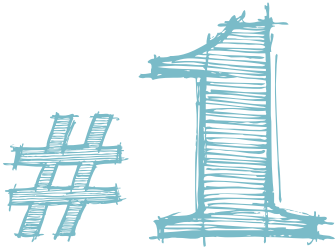
As part of our process, we conduct in-depth interviews with camp directors, staff and most importantly: campers' parents. After years of doing many of these interviews and building many camp websites, we've discovered 5 ways that camp websites turn off and repel new, prospective campers and parents.



Chris Davis

Considering how valuable this information would be to any camp director, I decided to write this report and give it away for free so more camp directors can get their website working better so it will ultimately attract more new campers!

If you'd like to get in touch, I always love talking about camp and camp websites. You can reach me at (800) 444-5164 or chris@dvswebsites.com and our website is: www.DVSCampWebsites.com



Is your camp website missing this important selling point?



After years of conducting interviews with campers' parents, we've discovered which things are most important to parents when they consider a camp for their kids and which things they look for first when they go to a camp website.

One of the things that always appears at the top of both of those lists is actually missing from more camp websites than you would believe. And if it's not missing, it's hidden from sight, or it's done so poorly that it'd be better if it were missing!

Know what it is? YOU. The camp director (or directors).

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One of the most important things to a parent when they're choosing a camp is its directors, and this is also one of the first things they look for on your website. Parents want to know what kind of a person you are. What are your values? What's your philosophy? How do you run your camp? Who is this person that they'll be entrusting their child to?

So what can you do on your website to allow parents to get to know you a little, make a good first impression and hopefully get your camp onto more parents' and campers' short lists?

Here's what we recommend to our clients...



MAKE A DIRECTORS PAGE THAT'S EASY TO GET TO. Put a page on your website called Our Directors, or A Message From Our Directors, or something similar. Make it easy to get to this page--it should take 2 clicks or less to get there from your home page and should be easy to find.



GOOD PHOTOS OR VIDEO. On this page, show a photo (or two) of you in action, doing camp director things. Don't use a canned, posed photo. You can also show a nice photo of you and your spouse and your children. Even better, make a video of you talking directly to the parent on your site, or you can be interviewed in the video.



WHAT TO SAY, WHAT NOT TO SAY. No one wants to read your 3-paragraph bio or resume--a little background is fine. No corporate language, business speak or buzz words. Whether you do a video or use written text, speak in the first person--use "I" and "you" and "your child" a lot. Say what you would say if you were right in front of that parent. And, this is very important: write or say it like you are speaking to one parent, not a mass of parents all at the same time. Make it personable, make it human, make it warm, but most of all, make it YOU. Speak from the heart. Don't be afraid to show your passion.

People trust people who are passionate and committed and thorough and detail-oriented. And, you need a parent's trust before they'll send their kids to your camp.

What are you doing on your website to introduce yourself and your values and your philosophy to new parents? Can you do more? Can you do it better?



If your camp website is not mobile-friendly, you **ARE** losing new campers!



These days, more and more parents and campers are accessing your website on their tablets, phones and other devices. If you don't give them a great experience on all devices, you are definitely losing new campers.

In 2012, Google surveyed 1,088 adult smart phone users. Here are just a few of the compelling findings from that study:

- ➔ **52% of adult smart phone users said** that a bad mobile experience made them less likely to engage with a company.

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➔ **48% said** that if a site didn't work well on their smart phone, it made them feel like the company didn't care about their business.

➔ **67% of mobile users say** that when they visit a mobile-friendly site, they're more likely to buy that site's product or service.

➔ **79% of mobile searchers say** that if they don't like what they find on one mobile site, they will go back to their search results and find another site.

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Source: Google , Sterling Research and SmithGeiger 2012

What are your options for making your camp website mobile-friendly?

- 1 DO NOTHING.** Many camps are taking this option, but you shouldn't. Stand out from your competitors and give new parents and campers a great mobile experience so you can get more new campers!
- 2 THE "ZOOM" ADJUSTMENT.** There's a simple adjustment that can be made to the code of your website that could improve the way it looks on mobile devices a little bit. You can have a web developer adjust the zoom of your site so that when it's called up on a mobile device, the whole website is automatically shrunk to the width of the device that is requesting it. But, the problem is just that – that your website has been substantially shrunk. This means that users will not be able to read any of the text, or click on any of the links on your website without having to first enlarge each area of the web page where they want to do any of these things. This causes great frustration for users and *they'll probably leave your site after a few seconds* of having to do this.
- 3 BUILD A MOBILE APP OR SEPARATE MOBILE SITE.** Some companies choose to build a completely separate mobile website and/or various different apps. But, mobile websites don't work the same on all mobile devices, so if you choose this option, you'll likely need to hire a mobile web company to build you

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a mobile website, an iPhone app, an Android app, an iPad app, *and maybe all of the above*. This turns out to be a very costly (\$20k - \$80k) proposition that can take 6 – 8 months to complete, not to mention the fact that when you want to make any change to your camp website, you now have to make it in 3 or 4 or 5 different places since they are all different apps and sites.

4

CHEAPO MOBILE SOLUTION. Some camps these days are going the route of finding a mass website-“mobilizer” that can make your website mobile-friendly for extremely cheap (or even free). This is one of those situations where you really do get what you pay for. Using a cheapo or free “mobilizer” solution, you will get a stock, standard mobile page with some non-descript buttons and a few photos here or there – nothing that represents the true design of your camp’s website, nothing that represents the true feel of your camp or what’s different and unique about it. Nothing to make new campers and parents engaged and interested. Because of how important your website is, because it’s the place most new, prospective campers and parents will get their very first impression of your camp and because so many people are using mobile devices to access websites these days, we don’t recommend this option .

5

ADD RESPONSIVE WEB CODING TO YOUR SITE.

Recently, a cutting-edge technology was developed called Responsive Web Code, which modifies your existing website so it can automatically detect exactly which device (iPhone, Android, iPad, desktop computer, notebook computer, etc.) and exactly what screen size is requesting your website and then, in real time, it rearranges the elements and the layout of your website so that it is presented in the most ideal way on that device, thereby providing an *ideal user experience for every user on every device, every time.*

And with Responsive Web Code, you don't need a separate app for every device, so whenever you make changes to your website, those changes will be reflected perfectly on all devices. So, you only have to make your changes, edits and updates once, in one place!

Take a look at the screenshots on the next page – they show the power of responsive web coding...

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Notice that all the elements of the website (left image) are present on the mobile device (right image) and the beauty and simplicity of its design is carried over and can be fully appreciated on the mobile device. Most of the elements on the website have been resized and re-arranged on the mobile device—*this makes reading and clicking easy for the user.* And, all of this happens in real-time.

Responsive Web Code retains the design and all functionality of your existing website on every Internet device. It's a single solution that works on *all* mobile devices. It's much less expensive than building a separate mobile website or app, and it can usually be done in a few weeks time. *For these reasons, we recommend it to all of our clients.*

#3

The first thing parents and campers look for on your camp website...



In the movie Jerry McGuire, Cuba Gooding Jr.'s character Rod Tidwell wanted Jerry to show him the money! When new families come to your camp website, they want you to show them the photos!

Over the years, my company has interviewed lots of parents of campers and the vast majority of them tell us that the very first thing they look for on any camp website is the photos. They want to see if the kids at your camp really look happy. They want to see your facilities. They want to see kids interacting with counselors. They want to see your activities and sports, in action.

So, here are 3 important things you can do to make a good first impression with new families on your website with your photos:

1

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR WEBSITE VISITORS TO FIND LOTS OF PHOTOS. You might not believe it, but on a lot of the camp websites I visit I cannot even find a photo gallery. Either there is no photo gallery on the website (which is not good), or I just haven't been able to find it, even though I was specifically looking for it.

First, you need to have a photo gallery on your camp website! This is what new parents are looking for first on your website and if they don't find one, you've just made it more difficult for them to put your camp on their short list. So, get a photo gallery installed on your camp website. Ask your current web design and development company to help you with this, or my company would be happy to help if you have no one else.

Second, make it easy for people to find your photo gallery. We always suggest to our clients that they put a big, visible button on the home page that links to their photo gallery. And there should be a big, visible button for it on every interior page also, or at least make it a prominent link in the header. And, name it something that is clear, like Photo Gallery, or View Our Photos.

2 PICK GOOD PHOTOS (AND LEAVE THE NOT-SO-GOOD ONES OUT). This sounds like common sense, but in our experience, it's not common practice. We see many websites that display photos of kids that look half-happy or bored, photos of counselors that could be interpreted as being indifferent or detached, photos of mostly girls when a camp is co-ed, etc.

Take some time to think about which photos are the best ones to represent the experience of your camp. Ask a few of your parents: "What kinds of photos do you look for when you visit a camp website?" "What kinds of photos make you feel good about a camp?" "What kinds make you feel bad or uncomfortable about a camp?"

3 SHOWCASE YOUR PHOTOS IN AN IMPACTFUL WAY THAT WILL EMOTIONALLY ENGAGE NEW FAMILIES. Some camps do a good job of making it easy for people to find their photos on their website and they do a good job of selecting photos that engage new families and accurately represent the positive experience of their camp, but then they drop the ball when it comes to how those photos are displayed.

Unfortunately, most of the camp websites we've seen have photo galleries that look outdated, are confusing and annoying to use and perhaps worst of all: display

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the photos in such a small size that even the best photos are hard-to-see, provoke no emotional reaction from parents and do not engage them or appeal to them very much at all.

On every camp website we build, we include our unique Full-Screen Photo Gallery which makes your photos the entire size of your visitors' browser, making them larger than life and fully engaging new parents' and campers' emotions! Click here to see it in action on one of our client's website:

<http://www.campwalt.com/gallery/index.php>



#4

Your website's design is VERY important to your camp.



Stanford University conducted a study entitled: *How Do People Evaluate a Website's Credibility?* This study invited 2,684 average people to rate the credibility of a total of 100 websites. **The study found that participants used visual cues, such as the site's overall design or look, to assess a site's credibility more than any other website feature.**

So, this means that if your camp website's design looks outdated, unprofessional or unappealing then a large percentage of new, prospective parents and campers who come to your website for the first time are assigning you

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and your camp less credibility than other camps that have a better-looking design on their website. And, what is credibility? It's trust! People are deciding in a split second of seeing your website's design whether they can trust you and your staff and your camp with their children, and better website designs foster more trust and ugly, outdated, unprofessional-looking designs make people feel less trust for you and your camp. It's a tenet of human psychology that we look for shortcuts to make tough decisions. And, one of the shortcuts we use is the way a company's marketing and website looks.

The bottom line is: the better your website's design, the more people will trust you initially and feel attracted to you and your camp.

With more camp competition these days and the ability of parents and campers to easily find the next camp in Google, you must make a great first impression and you must capture every single new camper lead you can.

Getting a better design for your website will help you lose fewer new camper leads.

#5

Exactly how much does Google like your camp website?



If Google doesn't like your camp website, then you're literally blocking new families interested in your camp from getting to your website. Like it or not, Google is a formidable gatekeeper that stands between you and many of your potential customers. And, if your website doesn't play by Google's rules, you will be punished with less traffic and fewer new, qualified leads.

But, this problem need not stand in your way—you just need to make sure your website properly Search Engine Optimized (SEO).

So, what should you do about SEO?

Ideally, if you can afford to, you should hire an expert because doing SEO properly requires a high level of skill, years of experience and expertise. Unfortunately, there are lots of people out there claiming to be SEO experts who definitely are not.

So, we have a few questions that you can ask anyone who is claiming to be an SEO expert to see if they really are:

- These days, is Google taking into account social media activities and engagement? Why?
- I heard somewhere that the length of time I have my domain registered for can influence my rankings in Google – is that true? And, how many years should I register it for?
- Does Google like websites with fewer or more pages better? Why?
- What are the components of a properly SEO-optimized web page?
- Should the main title headlines on each of our interior web pages be text or images? Why?
- Do meta description tags matter? I heard they have nothing to do with ranking in Google. Why?

When you ask these questions, see if you get a thoughtful, intelligent answer that seems to make sense. If not, proceed with caution.

Thinking about re-doing your camp website?

Designing and developing camp websites is the only thing we do. Check out our website, portfolio and the unique interactive features we build into camp websites to ***help you get more new campers...***

Click Here:

www.DVSCampWebsites.com