

## **Marketing Minute ~ What Do You Do If Someone Copies Your Website?**

During the past two decades, the Web has grown from an interesting academic oddity to one of the most powerful platforms for commerce in any era. Through it all, marketers have been playing with the design of the basic website to come up with the ultimate digital sales read. Many have come up with some very creative ways of wooing the ever-elusive and increasingly multi-tasked Web cruiser.

Some of those Web cruisers are not just looking for your products or services, they are also looking for creative design and copy ideas that they can then turn around and adapt for their own uses. When you find that parts of your website have been maliciously stolen by a competitor or a scammer, whether it be an article, images or even the entire design, it's important to have the offending site remove the copied portions as soon as possible to make sure you get credit for your hard work and to maintain the credibility of your brand.

Even though you'll be upset and angry at what has happened, try to stay calm. There are some companies out there that can give you ideas on how to effectively fight this on your own, one of them being Hostway Corporation. The following ideas came to me from them on how you can handle the situation without the need for an expensive lawyer.

### **Gather Information and Proof**

~ Find a contact email address for the offending website. If you can't find an email address on the site, do a WHOIS search for the registrant. <http://www.networksolutions.com/whois/index.jsp>

This will be the owner of the site and should also list their contact information. Also make a note of who is hosting the website.

~ Find past views of your site in your files, this helps prove that your site, with the original content, has been online longer. One way to do this is with the Way Back Machine. <http://www.waybackmachine.org/>

~ Provide a link to the Google Cache showing that the Google Spiders discovered your content earlier than the offending website.

~ Take screenshots of the copied material on the offending website. In the case of an entire site being copied, save the source code as well so that it can be compared with yours.

~ Gather as much data evidence as possible—this might include screenshots or copies of:

- The dates comments were made on your blog in response to the original post
- Your MySQL database records if you have them (downloadable at <http://www.mysql.com/>)

~ The original (preferably unedited) images or graphics with the file data

~ Past backups of your website with dates modified

### **Contact the Offending Website**

~ To begin with, send a polite email informing the owner of the theft and request that the stolen content or images be removed with a certain time frame.

~ If you don't hear back or they aren't compliant, send a Cease and Desist order (many outlines can be found online that you can use).

At this point, they should reply to you and take the material down. Keep checking their website in case they remove the copied material but don't contact you to tell you.

However, if the website owner doesn't respond or even accuses you of stealing their content, stop communicating with them and proceed through the next steps.

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## Take it to the Top

Contact the offending website's host to make a complaint, sending the Cease and Desist order along with the evidence. Most hosting companies are very strict on these matters and will usually suspend the site temporarily until matters are cleared up.

File a DMCA complaint with Google and the other search engines, telling them to remove the site from their search indexes as the site involved violates copyright laws.

Many thanks again to Hostway Corporation. Founded in 1998, the company currently serves more than 600,000 customers across the globe and operates over 250,000 square feet of state-of-the-art data centers with a direct presence in 13 countries, 17 worldwide operation centers and more than 700 employees.

Information provided for you by ~

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