

“Cheaper” Usually Costs More: Re-framing Price

When someone says, “I can get it cheaper,” they’re not really talking about price. They’re talking about risk. If they believe every option is equal, the lowest price looks safest. Your job isn’t to argue or discount—it’s to show what cutting corners actually costs.

The Real Problem: Buying Cheap Means Buying Twice

We’ve all done it. I used to buy \$20–\$25 shirts on sale. Looked fine in the store. After one wash: wrinkles, weird fit, never wore them. Then I tried an \$80 shirt from Jos. A. Bank—no ironing, looked sharp, wore it constantly. The cost per use on the \$80 shirt was tiny compared to the “cheap” one I wore once.

Same lesson with tools: I bought a bargain hammer; it folded pulling a nail. I replaced it with two quality hammers I’ll have forever. If you buy cheap, you buy twice.

Price vs. Risk: the Hidden Costs of “Cheap”

- **Replacement cost:** You end up re-doing the project or re-buying the tool.
- **Time cost:** Extra hours on fixes, returns, support, migrations.
- **Opportunity cost:** Lost leads, slow pages, weak SEO—money you never see.
- **Reputation cost:** Poor UX or downtime trains customers to leave.

“Cheaper” is often a down payment on future pain. The saying that you get what you pay for is often very true, but most of us feel we need to try the cheaper way because sometimes it works. That’s true, but what about all the times it doesn’t? What does that cost? Rich people know to buy quality – quality over price.

Apply It to Web Design

A “cheap” website isn’t cheap if you pay for it twice. Watch for these silent expenses:

- **Template debt:** Bloated themes and random plugins slow you down—and down the road you’ll pay to rip them out.
- **SEO debt:** Weak information architecture, duplicate content, no schema, rankings never arrive, ads do the heavy lifting.
- **Security/hosting corners:** Breaches and outages cost more than reliable hosting ever will.
- **Conversion friction:** Confusing layouts, no proof, weak forms—traffic comes, revenue doesn’t.

Quality design pays for itself by avoiding rework and compounding results over time. With my company, Webstix, we have a solid checklist of 150 or so items we check. It’s stuff we

know Google wants. Yes, it takes longer, but we don't have to deal with clients coming back later asking we didn't do A, B, C, or D. It's also the right thing to do. Do things right. Make website quality.

Apply It to Keyword Research & Data

Good decisions require good data. Free or flimsy data looks “cheap,” but the cost shows up later:

- **Targeting the wrong terms:** You build content no one searches for—or with the wrong intent.
- **Missing buyer intent:** You chase volume instead of the keywords that actually convert.
- **Bad difficulty estimates:** You waste months on impossible targets or ignore easy wins.

Professional-grade data and tools often look expensive—until you compare them to the price of six months of work on the wrong plan. If you're serious about SEO, invest in accurate keyword data and a workflow that finds *viable* opportunities. (Yes, this is exactly why I'm building RankCheck Pro.)

How to Re-frame the Conversation: Without Discounting

1. **Agree on outcomes first:** “If we hit *these* results, is that success?” Align on the goal.
2. **Map the risks of “cheap:”** Walk through speed, SEO, security, and rework costs in plain language.
3. **Show proof, not hype:** Short case studies, before/after, specific testimonials with numbers and timelines.
4. **Make the math obvious:** Cost-per-use and total cost of ownership beat sticker price arguments.
5. **Offer process clarity:** 3–5 steps, who does what, and milestones. Clarity lowers perceived risk.

Simple Math Clients Understand

Cost per use: Total cost ÷ number of real uses. The “expensive” shirt you wear 50 times is cheaper than the \$25 shirt you wear once. Same with websites and tools: a well-built site that generates leads daily costs less per lead than a bargain build that never converts.

Vote for the Businesses You Want to Survive

If a company makes something great, we want them around. That requires profit. Paying a fair price helps keep the restaurant you love open—and keeps the expert developers, designers, and support team on your project tomorrow, not just today. Where you spend your money is like a vote for that business.

Bottom Line: It's Not About Price

Price isn't the problem. Risk is. Show how "cheap" becomes costly, prove your process, and make the math simple. When risk goes down and belief goes up, price stops being the headline.

Original article: <https://www.tonyherman.com/going-cheap-costs-more/>

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