

Marketing Your Website

For the best chance for success, marketing your business and marketing your web site should go hand-in-hand. Because of this, we've included in this section the tools to help you succeed. These can work for offline promotion as well as online.

What's With Those Search Engines?

If you're looking for something on the Internet and don't know a specific web site address, what do you do? You type in a search term at a Search Engine such as Google, MSN, Lycos, etc., right?

Great, because Search Engine optimization and submission is included with all of our websites. All you need to do is make a list of words that you would use to search for your product or service on the Internet and give it to us.

Now For A Dose Of Perspective!

Without perspective you will likely suffer from a crippling website disease called OWSE (Obsession With Search Engines). OWSE afflicts website owners by occupying all of their time and effort on traditional search engines, causing them to ignore the dozens of other great promotional tools available on the Internet.

Search Engines are still important and deserve effort and attention because they can generate good qualified traffic for some sites. The good news is, even if your site gets ZERO traffic from search engines it should be little cause for concern because there are dozens of other resources available to promote a site and generate hundreds or maybe thousands of visitors a day.

Please also be aware that just because your site has been submitted to a search engine there is no guarantee that it will be listed or that you will be anywhere near the top of the search results instantly. To reach the top of the search engines naturally takes time and some search engines can take up to 3 months before they even list your site. Do not expect instant results from search engines otherwise you will definitely catch a dose of OWSE.

So How?

Geo-Targeting Strategies (Free/Fee): Most people see little or no application for a local or regional business to have a website to promote their business. After all, the Internet is a global thing right? Wrong. There are dozens of ways to promote a website locally or regionally so that it brings a disproportionate volume of traffic.

Put your web site address with a business ad on:

- The side of your van or car – This has a huge success rate
- Business cards
- Your letterheads
- Your invoices
- Receipts - either your own receipts or advertise on other receipts (grocery stores etc.)
- Small promotional item giveaways
- Postcards
- Your fax cover sheets

Never go anywhere without business cards. Leave a business card everywhere you go: with store clerks, service people, restaurants, anywhere!
Any Business owner not using a website to promote a local or regional business is making a huge mistake, and ultimately leaving money on the table.

Web Directories (Free/Fee): Web Directories are hierarchical directories on the Internet that are maintained by people (as opposed to robot spiders of the relevancy search engines). The major web directories are Yahoo (which now gets second billing to relevancy results provided by Google), Looksmart and Open Directory Project. There are loads of smaller web directories also on the Internet. We recommend you research your keywords (search terms for your product/service) and submit manually to all the web directories. It will take you about an hour to submit to all the live directories, some do charge but most are free.

Bid Ranked Search Engines (Fee): Bid ranked search engines are different than traditional relevancy search engines, because unlike traditional search engines you can precisely control the bid ranked engines. Bid ranked engines are pay-per-click advertising tools where you pay exactly what you want to pay for traffic. If used properly, bid ranked search engines can be one of your best sources of upper-qualified, low cost traffic. Google, Yahoo Search Marketing, Go Click and Miva would be good places to start. There are plenty more available and you should do a search on the term 'bid ranked search engines' to find them.

Link Trading (Free/Fee): We believe trading reciprocal links with other websites that share your market demographic is absolutely crucial to your success. Not only does link trading increase direct traffic to your site, but it also helps your link popularity which can positively influence your search engine position in some search engines. Link trading takes time and effort, and typically costs nothing.

Just remember that when looking for other sites to trade links with make sure that they compliment your product/service and don't take business away from you. If you find a site that you would like to exchange links with simply make contact and ask them.

Webrings (Free): Joining Webrings is a great way to tap into the community that is interested in your subject matter. Webrings are free and easy to join; require no maintenance; and, depending on the site, can send dozens of qualified visitors to your site each week.

Usenet (Free): The message boards on the Usenet can be a great source of free ultra-targeted advertising as long as you obey the rules (called netiquette) of the specific message board. The Usenet allows you to quickly and directly tap into your target online community. It should be a permanent part of your website promotional efforts. Again, this does not cost any money, just a little time and effort.

Free Classifieds (Free): Free classifieds take only time and effort, but are great. Submit your advertising, complete with a link to your website, to the giant network of free classified ad listings on the Web.

Permission Marketing (Free): By using a well-crafted permission marketing effort you can gather the email addresses of the visitors to your website (with their express permission), send them your periodic newsletter, product updates and special offers etc...This is a valuable tool and another way to help generate sales, additional traffic and improve conversion rates. This function can be added to your website at any time free of charge. Never sell or give anyone else your collected email addresses. They are your potential customers and will not appreciate being spammed by a third party.

DO NOT SPAM to promote your business or web site. You will end up losing your web site, your internet service provider connection, or both.

What is spam? Definitions vary slightly, but basically it's unsolicited email. Most web hosts and internet service providers (isp's) have adopted fairly strict spam policies which state: If you can't prove that your recipient is a past customer who has actually completed a business transaction with you *as your customer*, or if you do not have a confirmation email from any non-customer recipient requesting specifically to receive commercial email from you, then it's spam.

What about rented, borrowed, or purchased "opt-in" or "safe" email lists? Don't waste your money. Without that direct confirmation email in your possession from the recipient agreeing to receive *your* email, most web host providers and isp's still consider it to be spam. **The only "safe" list is one made up of your actual customers, or of people who signed up at your web site, in which they were required to return a confirmation email before being added to your list.** You must also provide an "opt-out" choice in every email you send.

Vertical Portals (Free/Fee): Virtually every possible vertical market segment is represented on the Internet by at least one, usually several, vertical portals.

These vertical portals represent a fantastic resource for super-targeted advertising for your site. Most vertical portals are free, and some offer paid advertising, but more importantly, they almost always have some great free resources to promote your website, like listings on their directory of industry resources, or their vertical search engine etc... Again, this is another free method to generate traffic to your site.

Per-Impression (CPI) Campaigns (Fee): Only site owners that have bit of experience with other promotional tools should consider this resource. Impression ads like banners, skyscrapers, button, pop-ups and pop-unders, are a good method of online-branding, because there is no better way to put your name in front of huge amounts of eyeballs fast. While they do cost money, and the click-through rate is not as high as it used to be (or as high as other methods), they are another way to generate traffic to your site.

Banner Exchanges (Free): You can get free banner advertising by joining a free banner exchange like linkexchange.com, virtuads.com or dozens of others. By giving up some advertising space on your site, you can get free banner advertising on someone else's sites.

Newsletter Campaigns (Fee): There are literally thousands and thousands of permission based email newsletters on the Internet. Most of these sell commercial ad space. There are some unbelievable bargains to be had on these resources, and click-through rates are much higher than banners. They are great tools and should not be neglected.

Newsletter Ad Swaps Trades (Free): Once your permission marketing email list is built up to reasonable level, you can easily trade ads with other newsletters that share your target audience, but who are not necessarily your direct competitors. This can give you a massive reach to your target audience on the Internet.

Comparison Shopping Portals (Fee): One of the best sources for superqualified traffic is the comparison-shopping portal, of which there are literally hundreds. You pay only for the traffic you get, and the traffic from these portals usually generates a higher conversion rate than your other traffic.

Traditional Media (Fee): You should always remember to include your URL in any and every form of traditional media that you would buy anyway. Your business cards and brochures, telephone book ads, direct mail, TV, radio, etc...