

Methods to Market Your Web Site

By: Christina K. Hawkins
GlobalSpex Web Development LLC
www.globalspex.com
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You've got yourself a gorgeous web site and it's been live for a while, but you're not getting the kind of customer response you were expecting. Placing your website onto the Internet and expecting the world to come knocking on your door is impractical. More should be done. No matter your type of business, how you market your business will determine how successful it is. Here are some methods to accomplish this:

Search Engines

There are two types of search engines, a search engine and a web directory.



Search engines, such as **Google** (www.google.com), index web pages by sending a spider or crawler out to the web to find, crawl¹ and index web pages. When a spider finds a web page, it will typically index the contents of the page's TITLE tag, the body text and sometimes the META tags. A search engine will use the contents of the TITLE tag as the link title in the search results. The description for a link may consist of the contents of the META description tag, or excerpts from the body text.

Google[®]

The Google search engine used to drive the primary search results on Yahoo! and other popular search engines. Currently, with Google going public and the popularity of their search engine, Google is the most popular tool. They rank websites is by PageRank. PageRank relies on the self-ruled nature of the web by using its link structure as an indicator of an individual web site's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from website A to website B as a vote. But, Google looks at more than volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the website that casts the vote. Votes cast by sites that are themselves 'important' weigh more heavily and help to make other pages 'important'." Important, high-quality sites receive a higher PageRank, which Google remembers each time it conducts a search. Other factors to help improve Google rankings in a particular search phrase is to work on your website content (see more about Content).

Cost: Free but you should take the time to find the right listing for your site.

Yahoo![®]

On the other hand a web directory, such as the **Yahoo!** Directory (www.yahoo.com), which is the next popular search engine, does not use spiders to find, crawl and index web pages. Instead it relies on web site owners to submit their web sites for indexing. Businesses suggesting new sites to most commercial categories are required to use the paid Yahoo! Express program.

¹ **Crawl and Spiders.** Also known as an "ant," "robot" ("bot") and "intelligent agent," a crawler is a program that searches for information on the World Wide Web. It is used to locate new documents and new sites by following hypertext links from server to server and indexing information based on search criteria.

Cost: \$300 per year for for-profit businesses. For non-profits, personal, and educational institutional websites, you have the option of using the standard (no fee) submission process but you have no turnaround time guarantee.

Open Directory Project®

Like Yahoo!, the **Open Directory Project** (www.dmoz.com) is a web directory. It is constructed and maintained by a vast, global community of volunteer editors. The Open Directory powers the core directory services for the Web's largest and most popular search engines and portals, including Netscape Search, AOL Search, Lycos, HotBot, DirectHit, and hundreds of others. To be included in its directory is a free service.

Cost: Free

Web Content



Web content has become an extremely important part of web marketing. "Content is king," the web marketing experts say. The better your information on your site, and I am not talking about the selling tactics like you see with "in your face" techniques, but good, clear, interesting information. Make your site a resource for others, especially your target market.

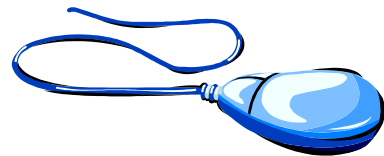
Your research in marketing should include what search phrases your customers are using to look for your products or services. Be sure to include these phrases, naturally, in your web content. Do not repeat the words endlessly but use your judgment. Does it make sense? Is what your customers are interested in learning more about?

For example, you could include a resource page if you sell products so your customers can make information decisions. Write articles monthly and submit them to your site for others to know that you are the expert. Make it so that your site is worth returning.

Cost: Your time coming up with interesting, clear and concise content.

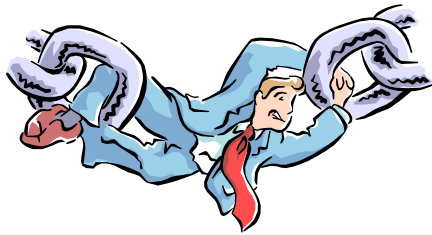
Pay-per-Click

A Pay Per Click (also known as Pay Per Ranking, Pay Per Placement or Pay Per Position) search engine enables you to list your site at the top of the search engine results using a particular key word or key word phrase. The three most important search databases with this option are *Google Premium Sponsorships*, which places your website at the top of the search list and highlights it, *Overture's pay-per-click* (www.overture.com) and the *LookSmart Directory* (www.looksmart.com). The campaign normally runs until a specified budget has been exhausted or you can purchase traffic on a monthly basis. You pay only when a *searcher* or *clicker* (these terms are used interchangeably) clicks on your listing and connects to your site. You don't pay to list; you only pay for clicks or click throughs. This method can be highly effective way to attract cheap, targeted traffic to your website.



Cost: Bids can range from pennies to dollars.

Link and Banner Exchanges



Another method of marketing your website includes link and banner exchanges (or banner ads). These programs give your affiliates some benefit for referring people to you. Experience shows that exchanging shared links with popular and relevant outside web sites can improve a web site's standing with several important search engines like Google. You need to develop these

links and banner exchanges, and position them on the website in such a way that they do not distract from the overall impact of your site. Also, be careful whom you choose to share your links with. Search engines that rank based on linkages review the validity and importance of website that provide links. Also, think about those sites that cater to your target market, for example, if you sell dog supplies find a site that caters to veterinarians and ask for a link on their site.

For banner advertisements, a banner is usually a 468 x 60 graphical ad placed at the top of a website. But banners are not limited to this size. You will see them in shorter graphics to the margins of a site or even more advanced as windows that slowly scroll onto your page (as often seen on Yahoo!). Link exchanges work similarly but without the actual graphic.

Cost: Depending on your budget, link and banner exchanges may run you between \$50 per 100 visitors and \$500 per 1000 visitors or free if you find the right site or kind webmaster willing to put your website's address on theirs.

E-mail Marketing

E-mail marketing is a two-fold marketing scheme. First is creating the right e-mail format (text or web-based) and building the e-mail and second is targeting the right person to receive the e-mail.



First a short lesson in marketing. E-mail campaigns should be targeted to those who, after research, you would think would be interested in your product or services. However, before sending out those e-mails make sure your promotion answers your customer's question: "What's in it for me?" Your customers are not interested in your company, who runs it, where it's located, or whether you are new or have been in business for years. They are interested in whether your product will improve their lives, make them richer, lead to better health, save them money, or protect them from bad things.

For example, if you are selling designer sunglasses, your customers are more likely interested in sunglasses with high SPF and style that will save their eyesight as well as offer a distinctive shape.

Be sure to allow the recipient to take their name off of the marketing list to prevent being labeled spam². As mass-marketing response rates continue to plummet and new privacy laws are passed, marketers will be forced to uphold strict opt-in³ guidelines. The trend toward ensuring marketing programs are permission based will continue as spam thrives. Conversely, the campaign should have an easy way to opt in and receive e-mail at their preference.

E-mail Newsletter

I separated this section from E-mail Marketing because I consider this a marketing campaign that you promote with current customers. Newsletters are a great way to show-off your expertise, products, and sales with articles, promotion of new products, and announcements. This is e-mail marketing list that you would want to capture and separate from your regular marketing campaign. Folks that receive this type of information have already mentioned that they are interested in what you have to say either through a purchase or as separate request.

Cost for Campaigns and Newsletters: Costs can depend on whether you pay a service to provide all of the e-mail marketing capabilities (designing the e-mail, maintaining e-mail lists, and monitoring the campaign), or you hire your web developer. For newsletters, consider the time needed to create and edit your articles.

Capturing E-mails



So how do you capture e-mails for your marketing campaign? One way is to purchase opt-in e-mail subscribers from reputable companies, another is create your list through company associations and another is through your own website. For example, if you are seed distributor, you may belong to several organizations that cater to seed makers, nurseries, farmers, *etc.* These are people that might be interested in your product, and therefore, should be considered when looking for qualified e-mail addresses. Another is through your own customer list or those that have requested information from you in the past and have allowed you to retain their e-mail for future marketing purposes.

Cost: You can capture e-mail lists for prices ranging between free where you find and capture potential e-mails on up to \$10,000 to buy lists from marketing agencies. An indirect cost is maintaining this list. Done right, for a reasonable fee, your web developer can maintain this list through a dynamic database⁴ that can be utilized within your website.

² **Spam.** Spam is e-mail that is not requested. Also known as "unsolicited commercial e-mail" (UCE), "unsolicited bulk e-mail" (UBE) and "gray mail," the term is both a noun (the e-mail message) and a verb (to send it). Spam is used to advertise products or to broadcast some political or social commentary. *Source: TechWeb.com*

³ **Opt-in.** To purposefully accept some situation or condition ahead of time. An opt-in program implies that you can cancel, or "opt-out," when you no longer want the service, which makes it quite different than spam. *Source: TechWeb.com*

⁴ **Dynamic Database.** Refers to databases created "on-the-fly" based on decisions made while the program is running

Offline Marketing

Online marketing is not the only way to get individuals to come to your website. Remember to utilize your current marketing methods. Your web address should be prominently displayed on all of your advertisements, marketing materials, letterhead, e-mail signatures, and business cards. Through flyers and postcards, announcing your new website is also another way to notify your current customer how you are establishing a better relationship with them and improving your services.



Cost: Again, costs depend on your budget. Adding a line to business card with website address may cost money depending on your printer. But adding your website to the bottom of all of your e-mails is a cost-effective way of marketing your site.

Monitoring Web Statistics



So how do you capture e-mails for your marketing campaign? The best way to ensure your website is performing as intended is to review and respond to regular reports which help you monitor website traffic, search engine ranking, and page URL registration. Website link popularity, referral data (the website that sent visitors to your site, their IP address, *etc.*) and viewing trends (what pages they see first, second, third, how long they stay on certain pages, error messages, *etc.*) provide essential feedback information on internet traffic and allow you to adjust your campaign strategy to increase website search engine visibility and subsequently, sales.

Conclusion

Each of these techniques can be used congruently, with a mix and match of methods. But it is imperative that all of your marketing efforts work in harmony with each other conveying the same overall idea but in different ways. You must be sure to capitalize on the website you just created and spent a good deal of your time and budget to ensure your current and future customers find and, most importantly, use your website. Selecting the right Webmaster, therefore, is key to your success in Internet marketing via your new website.

