

Website Promotion Tips

The marketing of your Website is not much different than marketing any other product, service or event. The same basic rules apply, however, there are some specifics about the Internet and the World Wide Web that may require a little research and self-education on your part. The one major difference is cost. Armed with a little knowledge you can very effectively market your Web site for little or no cost.

The first step is to create an attractive and useful site. Spend some time surfing the Web. Look at your competitors or similar sites - what works - what doesn't? Use your browser to view the source of their main page - look for META tags (described in detail in this document) to see what keywords they are using. Do they have links to other useful sites? Do they provide visitors with something more than a sales pitch? Did their site contain all the information you would expect to find? Forgetting they are your competition - would you be inclined to re-visit their site?

When it comes to the Web, there are three ways people will find your site:

1. Self-promotion: Listing your URL on business cards, letterhead, flyers, etc.
2. Search Engines / Online Directories / Newsgroups
3. Links from other sites

Promoting Your Website:

Search Engines / Online Directories / Newsgroups

This is where the user is actively searching for information through keyword searches, or categories in a directory or receives notification of your site through a newsgroup. The Submission software included on this CD will take care of this for you. Accurately submitting your site to over 200+ search engines, directories and newsgroups.

Links

The Web is basically built on Links. Links get you from one page of a site to another. More importantly, links to your site from another related site can generate a great deal of traffic. If you have a Web site about your new Low-Fat Cookbook, you could get links placed to your site on hundreds, if not thousands, of related sites on Health, Nutrition, Cooking, etc. Unfortunately, there is no easy or automatic way to do this. It requires visiting all the related sites, getting the Email address of the owner/webmasters and contacting them asking to trade links. The effort can be well worth it. Many site receive a great deal more traffic from links than they do from search engines.

Banner Ads

A very popular but expensive method of promoting your Website. These are the little rectangular graphics (40 x 440 became a standard) that you see near the top or bottom of some popular Web page. If you click on them, they transport you to another Web site. The price of a Banner ad depends upon the size you want and which Website is offering the ad. Also, you can use some free banner ads using free

link exchange banks. Do a search for "Banner Ads, Link Exchange, etc."

Virtual Domains

Although not necessary, having your own virtual domain can be worth its weight in gold. For one thing, it's portable. If you change service providers or hosting services, your domain name will stay the same. Secondly, it can make finding your site a lot easier. If you wanted to find out about the newest Toyota cars - what would you type into your browser without doing a search first? Do you think www.toyota.com might work? O.K., so your not a major corporation - remember your cookbook site mentioned earlier - which is easier to remember and best describes your site?:

<http://www.somethingt.net/~myWeb> page or <http://www.lowfatcooking.com> ?

Understanding Search Engines

There are three important elements to search engines: information database, the user search, and the presentation and ranking of results.

The Information Database is container of indexed description of your Web page. Historically they were a link list, later became a huge link list with small description for each link and now they have special Search algorithm to find needed Web pages by using keywords.

A Search engine can send back just the title and URL of each Web page it visits, or just parse some HTML tags, or it can send back the entire text of each Web page. Alta Vista, Excite, and OpenText has 80 million Web pages indexed.

The average time between submitting your URL and getting it into the database seems to be 6-8 weeks. In addition, a submission may expire very rapidly, no longer appearing in searches after a month or two, apparently due to insufficient site updating. Most search engines check their databases to see if URLs still exist and to see if they have been recently updated.

User Search

Most engines interpret lower case as unspecified, but upper case will match only upper case, but there are exceptions. There is no standard at all for truncation. It is different in general and advanced search mode for every engine.

Phrases

Check with your engine's help file before starting a search. Most engines allow you to type in a few words, and then search for occurrences of these words in database. Each one has their own rules of deciding what to do about approximate spellings, plural variations, and truncation. By searching only in titles, one can get Web pages with only brief mentions of a concept, and only retrieve Web pages that really focus on your concept. By searching links, one can determine how many and which Web pages point at your Website.

Understanding what each Web page does with the non-standard pluralization, truncation, etc. can be quite important in how successful your searches will be.

Ranking

Search engines give each document they find some measure (ranking) of the quality of the match to your search query - a score. Relevant scores reflect the number of times a search term appears, if it appears in the title, if it appears at the beginning of the document or HTML tags, and if all the search terms are near each other; some explanation are given in each search engines help files. Some engines allow the user to control the relevance score by giving different weights to each search word. One thing that all engines do is to use alphabetical order or date stamp in their display algorithm. If relevance scores are not very different for various matches, then you end up with default list . A good summary is useful too. The summary is usually composed of the title of a document and some text from the beginning of the document.

Links

Some search Engines find your Website by links from other Web pages. Even if you have sent in your URL, your Web site can be indexed longer and ranked higher in search results if many links lead to your Web site. Links can be important in some Search Engines in achieving good exposure.

Text

If a Web page lacks descriptive text, then there is little chance that Web page will come up in the results of a search engine query.

Pick your keywords

Focus on the 4-6 keywords that you think are most important to your Web site, then ensure those words are both in your title and mentioned at the beginning of your Web page. Generally, most people will already have those words present on their Web pages but may not also have them in Web page titles.

Keep in mind that the keywords you consider crucial may not be exactly what users enter. The addition of just one extra word can make a Website appear more relevant, and it can be impossible to guess what that word will be. Choose right keywords and right description.

Links inside Web pages

If there are no links inside Web pages from the Web page, it seems that some search engines will not register a Website.

Patience

Some search engines take weeks before they update their databases. They may be crawling each night, but those new findings aren't available until the new update. Once you are in an engine, check your Website at least once a month. If your listing is deleted, resubmit URL again. Many search engines are visiting Web sites on a schedule developed from Website changes. Resubmitting every month or two will ensure that your Web site's content is kept current.

Meta Tags

Meta tags will help you control your Website's description in engines that support them. Adding some meta description code can be useful, but is not the only method to increase your rankings.

Link to Competitors' links

If your Web site is not listed in the top thirty, contact all the sites in the top twenty for your category and see if they will trade links with you. Links are what the web was built on, and they remain one of the most powerful method for people to find your Website.

Alternative forms

Search engines are a primary way people look for Websites, but some people find Websites through links, traditional advertising, newsgroup postings, online directories. These alternative forms can be more effective draws than are search engines.

Specialized Search Engines and Directories

Other than the main search engines, there are other minor search engines/online directories that specialize in certain fields. These Web sites can be found using keyword searches. Many allow you to register for free. This could be time consuming, but well worth it.

Other tips

Change your title regularly and register your Web Page again. Many search engines will list both versions of your site.

Also, including your web address, E-mail address and/or autoresponder in print advertisements, radio/TV commercials, brochures, and business cards will greatly increase traffic to your website.

Title

Search Engines consider a Web page title to be the most telling description of the content of a Web page.

This does not mean the first major heading on the Web page itself, it means the caption which appears on the title bar of your browser. It's important to put as many keywords as possible in the title of your main index page.

META Tag

Your <META> text should appear in the <HEAD> part of your document, like this:

<HEAD>

<META Name="description" Content="Write your description here">

<META Name="keywords" Content="Keywords or phrases, separated by commas">

</HEAD>

Body

The search engines sort Web pages in order of the density of keywords in the document. It doesn't matter how many times keywords appear in the document, only the percentage.

Newsgroups

Continue promoting your site by announcing it in relevant Usenet newsgroups and news directories. Some of them will not accept already registered websites. If you run into one of those, make a new page with almost the same contents but a new description. You should announce your website in these groups about once a month. Hint: the two major newsgroups to which to post your announcement are:

comp.internet.net-happenings

comp.infosystems.www.announce (non-commercial only)

Please read the Frequently Asked Questions before posting to these groups or you won't get listed.

Web Page Design

Promotion is necessary, but if your visitors don't like your website design, they probably won't return. On the Internet "image is everything".

Yahoo Registration

Yahoo has about 80,000 different categories in their online directory. Up to 50% of your hits (visitors) could come from there.