

Website Submissions – The Affordable Business Advertising Edge

The Value of Web Marketing...

The Internet is changing the rules of business. As trite as these words may seem now, they are true. Like radio and television, the Internet has brought about an undeniable shift in how business is conducted. Unlimited information, instantaneous communication, and a market more vast than anything before have become available to both massive conglomerates and small home businesses. However, one underlying factor remains the same: advertisement. While the traditional business plan of a "Brick and Mortar" company has always included extensive advertisement, the same cannot be said about many Internet businesses. Many webmasters go to great lengths to craft wonderful web sites, putting little or no thought into advertising them. And any business that doesn't advertise is doomed to failure. Web sites need to advertise and promote themselves to create traffic on their site, to stay in business, and to grow.

Businesses on the Internet share a kind of equality that Brick and Mortar businesses do not. When a visitor arrives at a website, they really have no idea how large or small that company may be. In the Brick and Mortar world, it is easy to distinguish between the two--the larger will have the bigger store, flashier advertising, and a more expansive inventory. On the Internet however, small companies can project an uncharacteristically large presence by creating and properly promoting their web sites. While the Brick and Mortar retail world is consolidating and merging towards giant discount oriented retailers, the Internet is teeming with thousands of small, successful companies who might not otherwise be able to compete, or even start-up, in the Brick and Mortar world.

No matter how large or small your company is, you need to advertise. Unfortunately for most small businesses, Dot-com or otherwise, traditional advertising methods require immense capital and human resources. This is exactly why many smaller businesses fail--they spend too many of their resources in trying to compete on somebody else's turf.

The most obvious medium of advertisement is television. However, television's effectiveness in attracting customers is questionable. Its effectiveness lies in achieving brand recognition. Yet at this point most businesses are trying to increase traffic to their websites and gain more customers--brand recognition can wait until after the IPO. Television advertising is also the most expensive medium. More than one previously unknown Dot-com spent all of their available resources on a Super Bowl spot. They may or may not have been successful, but nevertheless, they spent millions of dollars for 30 seconds of airtime. Most businesses are more shrewd when it comes to spending their dollars, and they want more than just thirty seconds of exposure.

If you thought that targeting an Internet-based audience would be more effective at driving traffic to a website, you would be right. Banner ads and mass-mailings are much less expensive than television. However, they have their limitations as well. While remarkably cheaper than a TV spot, a small banner ad on a major portal website can still cost over six thousand dollars a month. Furthermore, it is generally agreed that

banners are not a cost effective way to bring visitors to a website. Most potential customers see banners as just a nuisance. Mass mailings have a similar drawback. If you opt out of spending money for your own list, you can buy space in someone else's. But you'll be competing for the customers attention with whoever else bought space. Another disadvantage that banner ads and mass-mailings have is that they aren't targeting the people who are most likely to be

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interested in the content you have to offer. They may reach a wide audience, but most of that audience will recoil in horror, yell "Spam!", and delete your expensive ad before having the opportunity to realize that you are exactly what they're looking for. While both traditional methods can and do work, they require a lot of what most of us don't have: money.

The most cost-effective advertisement would have to be both cheap and targeted at exactly the right customer. Years ago this was something of a pipe dream --today it is a reality. The Internet is the most comprehensive source of information in human history. But like any library of knowledge, it must be catalogued and organized to be used effectively. And therein lies the perfect solution: search engines. Like the card catalog of a library, search engines are a customer's way of sifting through the Web to filter out what they're looking for. And what better way to make sure you are found than to have an influence on what they find? Search engine listings meet both of our criteria in terms of focus and affordability. No other form of advertising is so focused that the customer is actually searching for you. A search engine user is a highly receptive and targeted audience because you are not trying to sell them on something they don't already want. They have come looking for you and they already want what you specifically have to offer.

According to the Georgia Institute of Technology, 88% of Internet users find new web sites through search engine listings. WebCMO data shows that in a side-by-side comparison of different forms of promotion, search engine listings are the number one way to generate traffic on websites. Search engine listings send droves of visitors to your site and they are free. I have personally seen websites where traffic has increased ten-fold as a result of good search engine positioning. Nothing could be better, but there is a catch.

Getting listed on a search engine below 499 other websites simply won't work. You need to get a listing near the top of your category to collect all the traffic a search engine can deliver. But the good news is that you can dramatically improve your positioning with a little bit of elbow grease. All it takes is some key modifications to your website and a little thought. Our service guides you through every aspect of the Search Engine Positioning process so you don't have to be a tech-savvy guru to get excellent results. With good search engine listings a small business can project a large image on the Internet and get the kind of traffic that so many big business sites get.

Search Engine Positioning...

Search Engine Positioning, or SEP, is the process of boosting and maintaining your website's position in the results that Internet users see when they run queries on different search engines.

There are two distinct steps you need to take in order to maximize the effectiveness of your position in a search engine listing. The first is to make key modifications to your pages in order to gain top positioning within a search engine's index. The second is something that is commonly ignored. That position needs to be maintained. Too often, webmasters gain a great position on a search engine only to let it slip away, taking business away with it. Don't make this mistake.

As you probably know by now, merely being listed in a search index is not enough to bring new visitors to your website. Your website must rank at or near the top of the search results in order to collect all the traffic that search engines can produce. The first major step in positioning your

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site is choosing descriptive and focused meta-keywords. The importance of excellent keywords cannot be emphasized enough.

The hardest part is now remaining patient as you wait for all of the indices to pick up your listing. This can take anywhere from several seconds to several months, depending on the individual search engine. Check for your ranking regularly to determine if you are listed, and if you are, where you are positioned.

If you have chosen good keywords, and followed the steps outlined above, you should have a good position near the top of the listings. Now the trick is to maintain that position. Just because you appear at the top of the search results doesn't mean that you are guaranteed to remain there. New websites appear by the second and search engines regularly change the methods they use to index them. To ensure that you maintain your position, you must first re-submit your site around once a month and check your ranking on each major search engine regularly, preferably once a week. By checking your ranking you can determine what your position is and whether it is trending upward or downward. If you are heading up over time, great, pat yourself on the back for a job well done. If your rank is spiraling downwards, or you just can't seem to push ahead of certain competitors, its time for some more advanced work.

Take a look at the websites that have higher listings than you and note their URL's. Go to Page Advisor and run a comparison analysis on the specific URL that is competing against you. Maybe that extra keyword or those extra hyperlinks are nosing them ahead of you into Position 1. Check your rankings again in a week or so and look for any differences. This is a constant process that you must maintain with some vigil. Don't let your competitors get a leg up on you by ignoring your ranking trends for too long. Maintain your position and you will get a constant, steady reward in the form of new visitors and increased traffic to your site.

Keyword Importance...

In order to take the right steps towards a better position on the search engines, you must first identify exactly what your website is offering. **Once you have a good idea of what that is, you need to cut down your idea to just a few words, literally. A search engine doesn't use a full-page public relations newsletter to index sites—it uses words and short phrases.** If you are not sure about what words or phrases best describe your site, look at it from the user's perspective. How would they find your site? What search words or phrases make sense? The importance of these choices cannot be emphasized enough.

The keywords that you choose will dictate the life or death of your website. When you choose your keywords, you need to be able to compete with them. It is unrealistic to think that a young and small company's website could rank number one on keywords like "Software" or "Books". Hopefully though, you will be using more specific keywords than the ones mentioned above.

The fact that most people do not query search engines on single words such as "Books", or "Fish", works in your favour. Users are more likely to search for something more specific like "Cook Books", or "Monk Fish". **The first step, then, in choosing the right keywords, is to make them specific.** You can also be more specific in your keywords by narrowing down your geographic location. For example, if you're a dentist in Washington, you would be most interested in attracting web site visitors from the Washington area. Washington Internet traffic would also be more likely to visit you, rather than a dentist in another state. So you would be best off picking keywords like:

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- Dentists WA
- Dentist in Washington
- WA dentists
- Washington Dentist

You also have an excellent chance at ranking well on keywords that are closely related to the main subject of your site. For example, if your website subject is gourmet foods and culinary arts, you might try targeting related keywords such as “Vietnamese cinnamon” or “Cajun spices”. The point is, people looking for these items are probably interested in cooking as well. Furthermore, the competition for these keywords is much less intense than for “food”, or “Cooking”. You have a better chance of getting an excellent position using focused and targeted keywords such as these.

Deciding on the correct keywords can be the most critical decision you can make regarding the success or failure of a website. The keywords chosen must be specific and narrow in their meaning. Picking related or misspelled words is also a viable option. Geography should be used to your advantage as well. The Internet may be a new business medium, but the same rules of basic survival apply--websites that don't take advantage of every opportunity will be surpassed by the ones that do.

How to Avoid Trouble

While planning your website promotion strategy, it is wise to remember that the search engines are very capable of sniffing out when someone is trying to trick or deceive them. A certain road to disaster is to consciously try to fool search engines into giving you a better listing. While this may work for a short period of time, invariably the scheme is found out and the offending site is severely penalized or even banned altogether. Most of us are not, however, intentionally engaged in trying to scam search engines. Even so, there are mistakes that an honest user can make which are nonetheless interpreted as intentional and malicious behavior. Here are some of the things you can do to ensure that you will never be penalized or banned by the search engines.

First and most important, don't over-submit your site. The search engines each have their own procedures and lead times for adding new sites to their indices. Some may immediately add you while others may take months to list your site, so be patient. They are happy to accept your submission because it adds to the resources they can offer to their users. But submitting your site to them repeatedly in an attempt to get their attention will only get you penalized or banned. Generally, a submission once a month to each of the search engines and directories on your list is sufficient. Some link pages may allow you to submit more frequently. Using Our service to automate your submissions is an excellent way to make sure that you never over-submit. Our service automatically checks how frequently you can submit and will not let you over-submit your site. Another way that well-intentioned users get into trouble is by submitting too many pages at once.

In most cases, it is only necessary to submit the URL of your home page. Search engine spiders are then sent to crawl through the site to examine the links and other content of the site. While there are certain search engines that will allow you to submit as many pages of your site as you like, the majority do not. Any pages submitted beyond the home page or doorway will be interpreted as submission “Spam,” and will promptly get you penalized or banned. Submit only your homepage or doorway page. However, as a side note, never submit a doorway page to

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Yahoo!™. Each site submitted to Yahoo!™ is reviewed by a breathing human being. This is yet another reason not to try to deceive the search engines.

Some ways of trying to deceive engines have become commonplace. One such tactic is to endlessly repeat keywords over and over again on the home page text, then trying to hide it by making it the same color as the page background. There was a time when this was a commonly used tactic, and it may have worked for a while. However, the search engines caught on and they now know how to detect obvious deception such as this. Don't try this because it will get you penalized or banned. The same will be true for any new tactics that surface and try to subvert search engine analysis methods. Some unethical webmasters have resorted to using meta-keywords in their sites that have no relevance whatsoever to their actual content. This is highly misguided and has potentially drastic consequences for the engines that are trying to return relevant results on a query. Guerilla tactics like this might work for a short time but the search engines will catch on and you will be penalized or worse. **Remember that many search engines share common indices of listings. If you get your site banned on one of these engines, chances are that you will be banned on several engines at once.**

I've submitted my site to Google and it's still not listed. Why?

Google finds sites through a process known as "crawling" the web. This involves robot software that follows hyperlinks from site to site. Google currently looks at more than 3 billion URL's during the crawl. The process may take several weeks to complete.

When a URL is submitted to Google, we look for it in our next crawl. If you've already submitted your URL, your site could easily appear in our new index, which will go up when the current crawl is completed.

Occasionally, websites are not reachable when we try to crawl them because of network or hosting problems. When this happens, we retry multiple times, but if the site cannot be crawled, it will not be listed in our current index. If it was a transient problem, the site will likely show up in the next index, which will be completed in a few weeks.