

How to Increase Website Traffic



Submit your site to search engines

This may seem obvious, but a lot of people don't do that, hoping that the spiders will somehow magically find their site. While this may happen, why leave it up to chance? There are some great programs out there that will help you do your submissions quickly and for free. Some of my favorites are listed on my Promoting Your Web Page net links section.

Content

Create and maintain actual content on your Web site. If you're trying to sell something, it helps if you have articles and information about it. If you're providing information, make sure that you have more than just lists of links for your customers to browse. Having high quality content that is updated regularly will keep your customers coming back.

Have Good Content. You should strive to have something new on your site once per day. Don't let your site get stale.

Use meta tags

Well formed meta tags will get your site higher in the search engines that use them than many sites without meta tags or sites with poorly written meta tags. My article on meta tags explains a lot about meta tags and how they work.

Keywords

What is your site about? Find a few key words and phrases that you think describe your site and that people may actually enter into a search box on Google. If you pick very popular keywords and phrases, you might be disappointed. Millions of people will search for those keywords and phrases, but you will be way down the search results because lots of sites are optimized for those phrases. If you pick less popular keywords and phrases, you may have a shot of actually showing up in the search results because fewer sites have optimized for those keywords and phrases.

Put your site in the spotlight

If your site can't be found, no one will visit it. Make sure that the name makes sense and that you use all the tools available to maximize your search engine views.

Ways to get your site found by viewers:

- * Get a domain name with your company name, or page information.
- * Submit it to as many search engines as you can.

- * Whenever relevant, mention your site, in newsgroups, chatrooms, email, over coffee with your friends, etc.

- * Have your URL in your email signature.

Optimize Your Site

Use your keywords and phrases on your site. Put them in the title of your page, in the H1 tags, metatags and throughout your site. Use them in the text of links that point to your page. Shoot for having keyword density of about 6%.

Keep it interesting

If you know what your readers want, but don't give it to them, why would they keep coming to your site? If your site has nothing at all, make sure that it has compelling content. People will return to a site that is interesting and useful even if it doesn't use the latest tricks or features.

Ways to keep your site interesting:

- * Make your site interactive, have surveys and contests to let your readers feel a part of the site.
- * When people suggest things, acknowledge that help live on the site.
- * Keep your site up-to-date.

Don't hide information

Important information on your site shouldn't be hidden. Make sure that it can be easily found by your readers, because most won't search for it.

Ways to bring information to the forefront:

- * Keep your pages to 800x600 resolution.
- * Don't make your readers scroll for the good stuff.
- * Keep your navigation intuitive and near the top.

Make sure your site loads quickly

A slow loading page is an instant turn off, and most browsers won't stay, even if the page is worth the wait. Keep this in mind and make your first few pages quick and intense so that they are hooked and then will wait for more.

Ways to improve the download speed:

- * Use fewer, smaller images. (not larger than 12K per image).
- * Keep the total page size down. (stay below 30K for a total page).
- * Pre-load images.

* Use the `lowsrc` attribute. If you have a huge image, you can take away the sting of the download by using `lowsrc` to load a smaller image first.

Request link back to you

If you have a page of links that are to external sites, why not write to them and ask if they will link back to you? For one thing, this brings them awareness of your site, and you might get a link. I don't recommend demanding links (along the lines of "I'll link to you, but only if you link to me") as this can seem rude. When you write to a site to tell them you've linked to them you are telling them that you find their site valuable, and a compliment is much more likely to win you a return link.

Use formal link exchanges

There are Internet companies where all they do is set up links and banners for various sites to use and promote one another. Some of the best known ones are Link Exchange and Banner Exchange.

Advertise your site

Where ever you are, and whatever you do, you should talk up your site. Your email should have your site URL, and possibly a small blurb about what people can find there. If you are willing to spend the money, you can get business cards, shirts, toys, novelties, and more to give away with your site URL on them. Keep in mind, I am not advocating sending unsolicited email or annoying your friends with commentary about your site, but if you write a site about dogs and don't tell your Doberman loving friend about the fawn dobie photos you just put up on your site, you are missing out on a marketing opportunity.

Keep them coming back

If you have a site that changes on a regular basis, and the content is compelling and useful, your readers will come back. And in the time between when they left and returned, they may (and most likely will after two or three visits) tell someone else about your site. ("And she told two friends and they told two friends and so on and so on...").

Post to related newsgroups/forums

Participate In Social Media. Groups like Yahoo Groups, Google Groups, or even the About forums have many topics - there is sure to be one related to your Web site. Get involved with the forum - don't just post ads, and your site will get more traffic. Be sure to include your URL in your signature.

Post to related mailing lists

Just like the newsgroups, you should find related lists and get involved on them.

Answer your email

One of the best ways to keep people coming back to your site is to be a friendly voice over the Internet for them. Encourage communication with your readers, and when you get it, answer it.

Things to keep in mind when using email:

- * Don't spam. Unsolicited email is annoying and can get you in more trouble than it helps.
- * Try to be prompt in your replies, or if you cannot, explain to your readers the delay.
- * Remember to include your URL in the reply.

Run a contest

Contests get people interested in your site. And if you have a good prize, you'll get people excited to try to win. Be sure to include an official rules page, and you'll want to find out if there are any rules in your state or country regarding contests. For example, in Canada, there must be a skill testing question to determine the winner.

When you're promoting your Web site, try to use the methods that work best for you, but remember the drawbacks.

Submit your site to search engines

Search engines all have different methods of adding sites, but if you submit your site to them, a listing will help improve your site statistics.

But... it can take a long time to submit your site to a lot of search engines. Also, you can't be sure that all search engines will accept your site.

Use meta tags

Meta tags allow search engines to categorize your site based on the keywords and descriptions you place in your pages. They go in the head of your HTML document. Meta tags most often use the keywords and description meta tags. There are even several sites that will help you build your meta tags to increase your standing.

But... not all search engines use meta tags. For example, About.com pages list sites that are relevant to topics, but the sites listed are chosen by the Guides. Submitting your site to be listed at a relevant About.com Web site is a good idea, but the listing will be decided upon by a person, not a machine reading meta tags.

Talk to developers of sites that are relevant

Most sites have a "related sites" link and if your site is relevant, try to get it linked there. Remember that Web sites don't build themselves, and if you are nice to the owner of a Web site they may want to work more with you to promote your site as well as their own. Also make sure to submit your site to ratings organizations that are relevant to your subject matter.

But... you can't force any Web developer to link to your site. They will do it if they want to. Reciprocal links will do a lot for getting people to link to you.

Word of mouth

This is a nice, community oriented way to get your site visited. There are services like Recommend-It that make it simple for your readers to tell their friends. Make sure that all your friends know about your site as well.

But... there isn't a lot you can do to promote your site this way. Make sure that you have good customer rapport and encourage people you talk to to tell their friends about your site.

Advertise other than just the Web

Keep your URL in your email messages and other correspondence. Direct mail (US Postal Service) can get you good exposure, as can billboards, newspaper and magazine advertisements, and posters. Your URL should be on your business card, and if you get promotional products such as pens, mugs, or t-shirts, make sure that your URL is on them too.

But... this can be expensive. If you can, try to get your site featured in local news stories, possibly as a "local color" type interest story. This will get your URL in the paper, and get more people to your site.

Get a Good URL

Many Marketing people will tell you that their page is a success because it has a good URL that is easy for their customers to remember. A good URL is short, "intuitive", and preferably has a domain name that reflects the content. For example:

<http://www.bookstore.com/>

is a better URL than

<http://www.isp.net/~bookstore/>

which is better than

<http://www.isp.net/~jenn/interesting/sites/links/bookstore.html>

But... some very popular pages are on GeoCities, which often have very long URLs, are not on their own domain name, and are not necessarily "intuitive". Clean URLs can be important, but remember that many people will get to your page via links, and URLs are not important to them.

Websites:

<http://www.moregoogletraffic.com/>