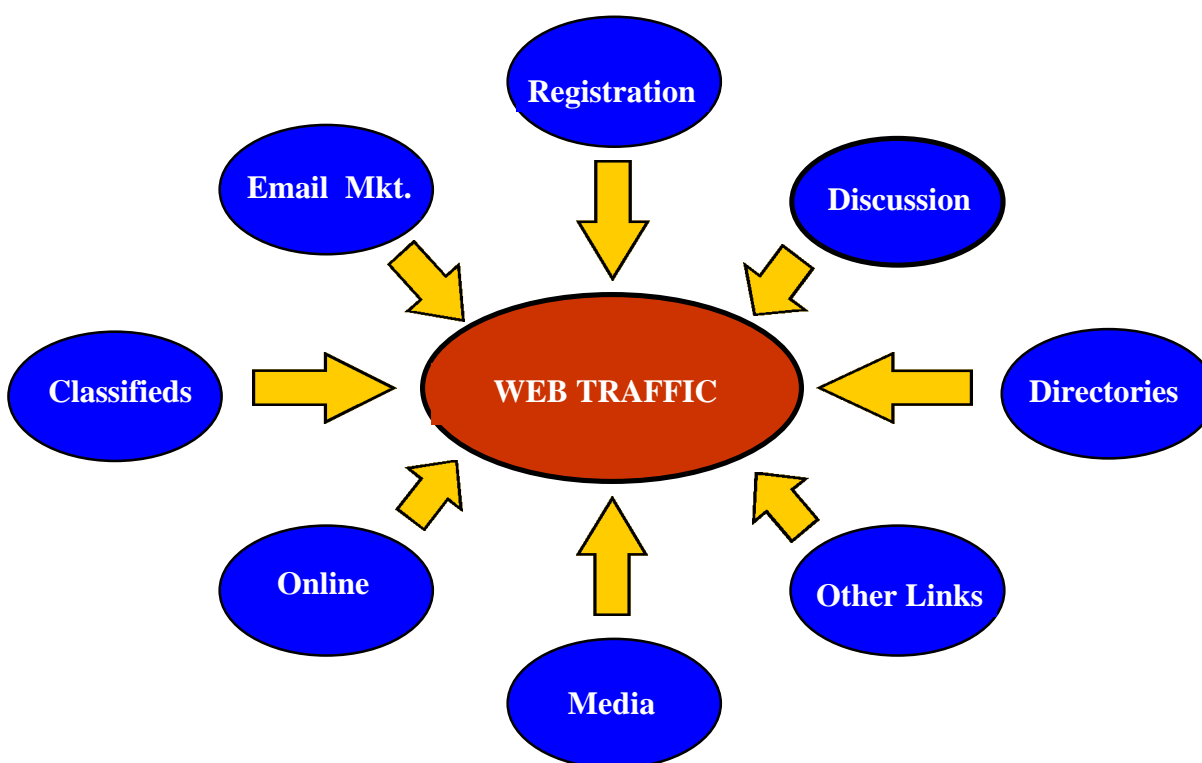




## Self-Learning Guide and Planning Manual



Learn by doing, active involvement. That's the uniqueness of "Black Belt Web Marketing". After completing the exercises in each lesson, you will have a thorough understand of how to dramatically increase web traffic and a comprehensive, well organized Web Marketing Plan for doing so.

# **Black Belt Web Marketing**

## Lesson Plans

### **Introduction**

#### **Lesson 1** – *Developing a Black Belt Web Traffic Plan*

Objectives for Lesson 1

Worksheets for Lesson 1

#### **Lesson 2** – *Registering Your Web Site*

Objectives for Lesson 2

Worksheets for Lesson 2

#### **Lesson 3** – *Announcing Your Web Event*

Objectives for Lesson 3

Worksheets for Lesson 3

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Worksheets for Lesson 4

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Objectives for Lesson 5

Worksheets for Lesson 5

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Objectives for Lesson 6

Worksheets for Lesson 6

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Worksheets for Lesson 7

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Objectives for Lesson 11

## **Appendices**

# **Introduction**

**What Is Black Belt Web Marketing?**

**Who Will Benefit from the Planning Guide**

**How to Use Our Guide**

**How Our Guide Is Organized**

## What Is "Black Belt Web Marketing"?

It seems hard to believe that within only a week or two, you could possess the knowledge, resources, and have a comprehensive plan for dramatically improving traffic to a web site, any web site. That's what makes our planning guide, ***Black Belt Web Marketing***, so unique.

Conceptually, it is a combination tutorial and planning aid. Easy-to-complete exercises teach you what you need to know to master proven methods for increasing Web traffic. While learning how to promote a Web site, you are actually developing a traffic plan.

We're not referring to a static textbook where you are required to extract bits of information from long-winded, rambling passages, much of which doesn't apply to your situation. Instead, ***Black Belt Web Marketing*** is an interactive tool that assists you in immediately applying what is being learned.

The lessons in our planning guide correspond to proven methods for increasing traffic. Each lesson consists of exercises. The exercises help you master the material and plan how you can use the method to increase visitors to your site. One exercise might be a worksheet to complete. Another is a set of guidelines to follow. Another is a report for summarizing and monitoring your activities.

You will learn how to generate Web traffic from numerous sources. By the time you have fully implemented your ***Black Belt Web Marketing Plan*** your site will be receiving visitors from dozens of sources.

When you are done completing and implementing your own ***Black Belt Web Marketing Plan*** as a result of having gone through the planning guide, you will become a "***Web Marketing Specialist***". This simply means that you have the skills and know-how to use all of the Internet's resources to dramatically increase Web traffic. It means that you have the ability to turn a seldom-noticed site into a popular hub of Web activity.

## Who Will Benefit from the Planning Guide

We developed our planning guide for both inexperienced web and veteran users. For net users with limited experience, it will become an indispensable tool for mastering web techniques. Veterans will find it a wealth of creative ideas, net resources, and a valuable organizer. We've identified these Net users as most likely to benefit from our planning guide:

Web marketers and promoters who need to prepare a web plan for their employer or client

Web site owners who want more from their web site

Entrepreneurs who want to have a successful Internet business

Consultants who want to help their clients turn the corner on Internet results

Developers whose ability to create a web site exceeds their ability to promote one

Retailers who are looking for more customers for their virtual store

Web project members who want to make a stronger contribution

Trainers who are looking for the next hot training subject

Job seekers who want to acquire a much-needed skill and beef up their resumes

Telecommuters who want to begin a lucrative Internet career from their home

Hobbyists who aren't happy with just a web site but want visitors too.

Regardless of your current situation, being able to make a site more successful is a skill that is in demand today and will be for as long as the Internet exists. Keep in mind that there are millions of web sites. Thousands of new ones spring up each day. Of these, probably less than 5% of them are actually successful at attracting large numbers of visitors. The vast majority languish in obscurity, un-fulfilling their promise or their potential. It's **tough to succeed on the Internet**, especially if you don't know the techniques for getting your site noticed.

Finally, most businesses and individuals still aren't on-line, they've yet to find their way. When they do, they will encounter the same obstacles that countless others have before them. The future for somebody who has the knowledge and skill to help web sites flourish is unlimited.

## How to Use Our Guide

A ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** isn't a one-shot wonder. You don't prepare one plan, implement it, and ponder what to do next. As you will learn in Lesson 1, a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** represents a systematic approach that is followed over and over again. It's a format for a series of overlapping but separate plans for describing Web events to different target audiences.

You may choose to develop the plan first, then implement it only after you've gone through the planning guide. The other alternative is to implement the plan as you complete the exercises. It's your call. In Lesson 1 we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.

As you progress through the guide and gain experience promoting a site, add your own thoughts, steps to follow, and resources found. Eventually, you will have a customized plan format and supporting database of net resources that increase in value with each use.

Not every step or guideline will apply to your web site, or your situation. It's impossible for us to anticipate every situation because web sites are as different as people. You will encounter ideas in the guide that may not seem to apply at first don't assume that they don't. Mull them over and see if you can mold them until they work for your situation, that's called creativity.

## How Our Guide Is Organized

We tried to arrange the lessons according to a "natural sequence" of promotional efforts and complexity. If, for example, you are publicizing a new site or page, a good place to start is with registration (Lesson 2). By the time you progress to On-line Advertising (Lesson 10) your plan is nearly complete and you are better able to complete the advertising exercises.

The sequence in which you complete the lessons is up to you. You may feel, for example, that classified ads (Lesson 4) are not applicable to your situation but you want to immediately begin contacting the media for free publicity (Lesson 9). Skip Lesson 4 and go to Lesson 9. Whatever works for you.

Here's a rundown on how we organized "***Black Belt Web Marketing***":

Lesson 1 – Developing a Plan for Increasing Web Traffic.

Lesson 2 – Registering Your Web Site

Lesson 3 – Announcing Your Web Event

Lesson 4 – Increasing Web Traffic with Classified Ads

Lesson 5 – Populating the Internet with Links to Your Site

Lesson 6 – Developing a Database of Content-Rich Resources

Lesson 7 – Participating in Internet Discussion Groups

Lesson 8 – Using Email to Generate Web Traffic

Lesson 9 – Publicizing Your Event to the Media

Lesson 10 – Advertising Online

Lesson 11 – Achieving Long Term Success

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Appendix B – Additional Resources

Appendix C – Media List and Site Reviewers

Appendix D – Search Tips

Appendix E – Extra Exercise Forms

Appendix F – Web Traffic Idea Generator

Appendix G – Web Traffic Plan Presentation Format

# **Lesson 1 – Developing a *Black Belt Marketing Plan***

## **Lesson Objectives, Overview of Web Traffic Concepts**

Exercise 1-1 -- Characteristics Shared by High-Traffic Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 1-1

Exercise 1-2 -- Introducing the Web Traffic Plan Concept

Exercise 1-3 -- Defining a Net "Event"

Worksheet for Exercise 1-3

Exercise 1-4 – Identifying Target Audiences

Worksheet for Exercise 1-4

Exercise 1-5 – Selecting a "Hook" for Your Event

Worksheet for Exercise 1-5

Exercise 1-6 – Implementing Your Web Traffic Plan®

Worksheet for Exercise 1-6

**Lesson 1 Objectives, When you have completed this lesson, you will:**

Understand the Web traffic concepts used throughout Mastering Web Traffic Techniques.

Know the 11 characteristics shared by high-traffic web sites

Know the three key elements of a web traffic planning

Understand the importance of a web event

Understand the importance of targeting specific Internet communities

Understand the importance of a "hook" or interesting description of a web event

Have an overview of a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** and it's implementation.

# Overview of Web Traffic Concepts

These explanations will help you better understand the traffic concepts discussed in ***Black Belt Web Marketing***:

Web Traffic: The number of Net users that check out your site. Not "hits", not "impressions" (Lesson 10), but real live individuals who visit your site. Traffic is comprised of first-time and repeat visitors. Counting the number of visitors at your site is an excellent way to keep score. Visitor count tells you how successful your mastery of ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is.

Web Traffic Techniques: Traffic techniques described in this planning guide make full use of all available sources for driving traffic to your site. Each is the subject of a lesson:

Registering at search engines (Lesson 2)

Posting announcements (Lesson 3)

Placing classified ads (Lesson 4)

Adding your link to other sites (Lesson 5)

Building a resource database (Lesson 6)

Participating in discussion groups (Lesson 7)

Email marketing (Lesson 8)

Publicizing your site to the media (Lesson 9)

On-line advertising (Lesson 10)

Building for long-term growth (Lesson 11).

Event: Something at your web site that is of interest to audiences.

Target Audience: An online community based on a common interest, skill, beliefs, etc. online communities that you want to let know about your Web site, product or service are your "target audiences".

"Hook": An interesting or intriguing way to describe an event that makes an audience and the media take notice. Much as a newspaper's headline and news story are meant to catch the public's eye, the objective of the "hook" is to catch the attention of Net users and the media.

Web Traffic Specialist: An individual who knows how to use all the methods available for increasing web traffic; and understands how to develop and implement a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** to maximize results from the methods used.

## **Exercise 1-1, Characteristics Shared by High-Traffic Sites**

Of the millions of web sites on the World Wide Web, an estimated 90-95% languish in obscurity, unable to attract interest or visitors. Many of these could in a few short weeks be transformed into a popular, busy site – if only their owners were able to master ***Black Belt Web Marketing Plan System***.

A big budget and large resources at your disposal do not guarantee a successful site. Among the thousands of web sites that have failed, primarily because they were unable to generate enough traffic, are many long-scale projects funded by deep pockets.

On the other hand, many small, low-budget sites with meager resources are doing quite nicely. They know how to use the resources and opportunities presented by the internet to thrive in a chaotic, high-risk environment. They are able to this by attracting attention and visitors.

**These 11 characteristics are shared by successful sites:**

Found a niche

Allocated time for promotion

Targeted promotion

Possessed Net awareness

Generated Creative ideas

Organized plan

Multitude of traffic sources

Adapted to change

Persisted in promotion efforts

Built momentum

Measured results.

Now for a discussion of how these characteristics apply to you and your web site:

### **Finding a Niche for Your Site**

With millions of web sites and thousands being added each day, it's becoming increasingly important to find a niche for your site. It doesn't have to be a completely new product or service.

Sometimes all it takes is a new page or a creative approach to the audience being targeted. The better job you do finding a niche, the easier it will be to make your site stand out from countless other sites competing for attention.

## **Time Is Your Most Valuable Resource**

A long time ago I read that if Chinese people started marching four abreast around the world, the procession would never stop. New generations would keep it going forever. The Internet is like that. You could spend all day, every day marching from site to site registering, announcing, placing classified ads, requesting links, sending news releases. The procession of new sites would keep pace with your ability to find and contact them.

So, a key requirement for having a successful site is to allocate your most valuable resource ..... time. It's time, not money, that imposes the major limitation on your ability to generate web traffic. You can spend a few days, a few weeks, a few months or full-time indefinitely promoting your site. Traffic to your site, especially for a low-budget site, is directly dependent on time spent promoting it.

## **Targeted Promotion**

Web traffic shouldn't be measured strictly in quantitative terms. The number of visitors for most sites isn't as important as the type of visitors. All sorts of gimmicks could be used to attract masses of unqualified visitors who will only clog up your site and leave behind nothing of value, never to return again. Instead, your promotional efforts should be aimed at attracting large numbers of specific Internet communities who are your prime prospects. These communities are what will be referred to continually in this planning guide as your "target audiences". Your site may have one, ten, or twenty targeted audiences depending on what is offered.

## **Possessed "Net Awareness"**

Not having "net awareness" is a double-edge sword. You can get nicked by not knowing what works and again by not knowing what is acceptable.

Not knowing what traffic techniques are working, or which are working best, hampers your efforts to increase traffic. Too much of your valuable time resource can be squandered on activities that produce little in the way of increased traffic.

The flip side of "net awareness" is knowing what is acceptable to net users, commonly called "**Netiquette**". Referred to numerous times throughout the planning guide, Netiquette is a "code of conduct". The Internet community is a touchy group. Easily offended, quick to anger, potentially revengeful toward those it feels violated "the code". You are well advised to steer clear of traffic techniques that could get you deep trouble with other net users, unless you know what your doing. This planning guide will help you steer clear of situations where you risk offending large numbers of netters.

## **Creative Ideas**

Frequently, exercises in this planning guide will help you tap your creative genius to, conceive web events to promote, a "hook" to entice audiences and media, and search for valuable resources that will help your promotion efforts.

The least effective way to get anything out of this guide is to just go through the motions, following the steps for completing the worksheets. To really learn the traffic techniques well and develop an excellent ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***, you also need to be as creative as possible. Customize ideas and concepts you read into something that will work for your situation.

The real test of your creativity though is to periodically conceive and implement new events to justify another ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***. In ***Appendix F*** we have provided a "creative tool" which we call the ***Black Belt Idea Generator***. It is specifically designed to give your creative powers a shot in the arm. Try it out and see if you don't come up with several creative ideas for events to implement and promote at your Web site.

## **Organized Plan**

Time and effort put into promoting your Web site will include false starts, misdirection, and wasted time if you don't have an organized, systematic plan of attack. Organizing your approach will be a primary benefit that you will receive from our planning guide. It will help you get organized and stay organized with the necessary planning, monitoring, and follow-up steps presented in an easy-to-follow format. The means we use to help you develop an organized plan is our ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** concept.

## **Traffic Diversity**

The Net offers a number of ways to generate traffic. By taking advantage of each possible source of traffic, you can achieve a higher level overall. An effective plan will generate traffic to your site from hundreds of different sources.

## **Maintain Adaptability**

The Internet is evolving rapidly. New techniques are being tried, old ones discarded, as Net dynamics change from day to day. Over the long haul, your site will be challenged to adapt to change by shifting resources and emphasis to take advantage of new situations, new tools, new competition, and new technology.

Not only a willingness to change is required, but the ability to read, interpret traffic data, and alter future ***Black Belt Marketing Plans*** is important. You also have to be ready to implement new events to be directed at new target audiences.

## **Persistence**

Persistence means to commit to working your traffic plans indefinitely. Adding hosts of new links to your site around the Internet, keep registering and announcing at new locations and directories will continue to drive visitors to your site in increasingly large numbers. Adding new resources to your database is also a commitment you must be willing to make.

Promoting a web site isn't a one-shot push. It's consistency and persistence that bring results.

## **Build Momentum**

As you implement your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** the number of visitors to your web site will increase steadily. You must strive to maintain and even accelerate this momentum. As soon as you slack off and cut back on time promoting, you will notice an immediate drop off in attendance.

To maintain momentum you must stay active. Periodically introduce new events and identify new audiences to target. Consider it a professional challenge to keep building web traffic. If traffic declines, renew your efforts to drive it to new heights.

## **Measure Results**

To be able to analyze how well your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is working, you need to keep score. Count the number of visitors your site receives before, during, and after you implement a. Set traffic objectives. Measure progress toward those objectives.

Also analyze where the visitors are coming from. This will tell you which parts of your traffic plans are working the best. You can allocate your time more wisely if you know what is working and what isn't .

In addition to knowing how many visitors stop by your site, track where they go once they reach your site. Learn which are your most popular pages. Then leverage this success by adding new pages and new incentives to them. Revamp the least popular pages to improve their appeal. See Lesson 11.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 1-1**

### ***Guidelines for Having a Successful Web Site***

**Find a niche:** With so many sites on the web it's important that yours stand out. Try to find a niche that your target audiences will appreciate: unique product, service, content, pricing, etc. :

**Allocated time for promotion:** The more time you spend promoting the site, the more successful it will be. No time for promoting means no chance of success. Plan how many hours you can devote:

**Targeted promotion:** Don't waste time trying to reach all 70 million Net users. Just focus on contacting those who are most likely to be interested in your web site. In the worksheet for Exercise 1-4 you will identify target audiences.

**Net awareness:** Spend time getting acquainted with what is acceptable interaction with other Netizens or proper "Netiquette".

**Creative ideas:** Everyday new ideas are being tried on the web for attracting attention. Use your creative abilities to turn some of these into potential events.

**Organized plan:** Plan ahead of time how you are going to promote your site. Keep track of what you tried and maintain a database of resources for future plans.

**Adaptable:** Change is occurring so fast on the Internet. Be ready to adopt new techniques and shift emphasis to where you are getting best results.

**Persistence:** Keep adding new techniques, new links, new resources to your marketing plans.

**Build momentum:** Work to maintain and accelerate the traffic momentum at your site. Keep setting your sites on higher and higher levels and work to achieve them.

**Measure results:** Analyze your traffic patterns. Keep testing and fine-tuning results. Keep track of what works so that you can continue to leverage your success.

## **Exercise 1-2 -- Introducing the Web Traffic**

### ***Plan Concept***

***A Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is a systematic approach using all the proven methods available on the Internet for pumping up traffic to a web site. It integrates web marketing, site promotion, and public relations functions in an organized, comprehensive plan for web site success.

***A Black Belt Marketing Plan*** guides you step by step through the process of developing a plan. By completing the worksheets and following the guidelines in the exercises, you'll find yourself simultaneously learning proven web traffic techniques and developing a plan for your site.

The planning guide presents the necessary information and tools for you to fully employ all the proven methods used by net professionals for increasing web traffic:

Registration

Announcements

Classified Ads

Links at other sites

Participating in discussion groups

Email marketing

Media publicity

On-line advertising.

### ***Three Key Elements in a Black Belt Marketing Plan***

***A Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is based on three elements:

A Web "event" that is significant and "Net acceptable" (Exercise 1-3)

A target audience that you have reason to believe is interested (Exercise 1-4)

An interesting "hook" to describe the event to audiences (Exercise 1-5).

Each time you change one of the elements, depending on the importance of the change, consider developing a new ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***. Here's why:

A new event may merit another announcement, more registering if a new page has been added, a new media campaign, etc.

Generally each target audience has its own set of resources: places to register and announce, discussion groups, super directories, media, email lists, etc. that should be contacted. So adding a new audience opens up a whole new set of resources to use.

Each new hook for an event justifies new announcements, new postings in discussion groups, another approach to the media. A new hook might occur because you weren't satisfied with the results of the previous one or feel it is time to try another tact.

Whether you expand an existing ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** or develop a new one, chances are you won't have to start from scratch. Many of the resources and approaches used for one plan can be reused over and over for other plans, especially plans with the same target audience. The extent to which the original plan's resources are reusable depends on how much the three key elements change.

### **You Are the Best One to Develop Your *Black Belt Marketing Plan***

A host of Web marketing services and consultants stand ready to help you increase web traffic. However, an underlying assumption of this planning guide is that anybody can develop and execute an effective traffic plan if they have the time and persistence, and follow our instructions and guidelines.

Besides, taking a long-range view, you are the best one to do the job. When success is in your hands, you have more control. Promoting a Web site is an on-going project and if you rely on others you will always be dependent on them for success.

Another consideration is that, as a Web Traffic Specialist, you have a valuable skill that will greatly enhance future Internet activities. The Internet is becoming an ever-increasing source of wealth and jobs. The skills possessed by a Web Traffic Specialist are in short supply.

### **Exercise 1-3 -- Defining a Net "Event"**

The first important element in a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is the event being promoted. It's hard to accurately define what is a significant worthy event. The number of possible events that may interest the net community is limitless. The event's significance depends on the audience it is being promoted to and the effectiveness of the "hook" used to describe it (Exercise 1-5). Some audiences will view an event as more significant than others.

Below is a sample list of common events that are generally considered "Net Acceptable":

A new product or service offered

A new product release or upgrade

A new Web page

A new or expanded directory of valuable resources

A contest

A FAQ

A report or white paper

A published interview

Local announcements

The key to the on-going success of your web site is to periodically create events (Lesson 11). Schedule them at least a few months apart. Develop and execute a event. This the best way to build momentum toward a popular, active web site.

## Completing The Creative Events Worksheet

The worksheet accompanying this exercise is for brain storming possible events for your web site upon which a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** could be developed.

Want a little assist revving up your creativity? Check out our ***Black Belt Idea Generator***. It's bound to help you think of possible events for your site.

### Worksheet for Exercise 1-3

#### Possible Web Events

Note some possible events for your site :

A new product or service offered:

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A new product release or upgrade:

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A new Web page:

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A new or expanded directory of valuable resources:

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A contest:

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A FAQ:

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A report or white paper:

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A published interview:

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Local announcements:

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Other possible events:

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### **Exercise 1-4 – Identifying Target Audiences**

The Internet is not one large global network. It's tens of thousands of smaller networks, many of which represent separate "communities" whose members share a common bond. Examples are: an interest, a skill or profession, geographical location, product usage, knowledge, and hobby.

They hang out and discuss issues in mailing lists, newsgroups, and chat rooms. They announce events to each other and use the same web sites for resources. They subscribe to the same newspapers, magazines or ezines (electronic newsletters), and trade journals. They are on the same mailing lists. They even search for information using the similar keywords.

Unless your web site promotes a product or service that has mass appeal, an important element in your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is these communities, or target audiences, that you've identified as most likely to be interested in your event. Chances are your site will appeal to a number of audiences (we've identified more than 20 audiences to target for our planning guide). The effectiveness of your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** depends on your ability to contact and interest these audiences in visiting your site.

The most thorough, systematic approach is to prepare separate ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** for each target audience. This helps you focus on developing a database of net resources for each audience (e.g; announcement locations, directories, discussion groups, etc.) that you can use over again each time you want to promote an event to the audience.

Finally, whether you develop a separate plan for each audience or combine multiple audiences in one plan, evaluate your audiences' potential – either in terms of size or interest in your site. Prioritize your approach so that you hit the best audiences first. Some events can probably be promoted to multiple audiences using the same plan without modification.

As you progress through our planning guide, from lesson to lesson, you may identify more audiences that you didn't consider at first. Keep expanding your traffic plan as you think of more audiences, or develop another plan specific for the new audience.

## **Guidelines for Determining Your Target Audiences**

Who are your target audiences? Chances are you know some of them already: Certainly, they are the ones that you had in mind when you first created your web site. They are the ones your competitors are also trying to attract. They are ones that you could easily target possibly by adding a new page, a new service, new contents to your site.

What's important is that you recognize up front who your potential audiences are and evaluate what you could do to add more audiences. As noted earlier, we've identified over 20 target audiences for this planning guide. We are in the process of reaching each of these audiences with news about our guide. As time goes on, we are sure to identify and target many more. That's what you need to also do, through your marketing plan, contact each of the audiences you can identify now and continue to look for more.

### **Completing the Worksheet for Identifying Target Audiences**

The Exercise 1-4 worksheet is another brainstorming exercise. In the first column, list current and potential audiences. Refer back to the Events worksheet in Exercise 1-3. Some of the events listed may help you identify audiences who could be interested.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 1-4**

### **Identifying Target Audiences**

In column one, list possible target audiences. In column two, rank them in terms of potential.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____


## **Exercise 1-5 -- Selecting a "Hook" for Your Event**

The third key element in a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is the hook or method used to describe an event in such a way that target audiences and the media will want to see for themselves.

Describing your event is similar to pitching a story to an editor (which you will learn how to do in Lesson 9) or pitching a book proposal to a publisher. The hook has a major impact on the reception your event description receives.

### **Guidelines for Great Hooks**

These types of hooks improve the odds that your event will be noticed. They may not be enough to get your event covered in Time Magazine but they are likely to be noticed by target audiences and the media that serve them:

Describe an event that is unique and meaningful

Relate the event to something in the news.

Describe an event that is exciting

Describe the event in "best" or "first" terms

Announce the event as something that affects audience

Describe the event as a solution to a problem the audience faces

Describe the event as an impressive success story

Get an expert or celebrity involved.

### **Completing the Possible Hooks Worksheet**

For the worksheet for Exercise 1-5, brainstorm possible hooks for each of these types. Then narrow the list down to the best ones. Try to combine more than one idea, such as a newsworthy

idea with an audience benefit idea. Consider different hooks for different audiences.

The next step is to begin developing a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** based on the three best components – the event, a target audience, and hook – chosen from the last three exercises.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 1-5**

### **Possible Hooks**

Describe an event that is unique and meaningful

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Relate the event to something in the news.

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Describe an event that is exciting

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Describe the event in "best" or "first" terms

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Announce the event as something that affects the audience

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Describe the event as a solution to a problem the audience faces

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Describe the event as an impressive success story

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Get an expert or celebrity involved.

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### **Exercise 1-6 -- Implementing Your Web Traffic Plans**

Now you have a pretty good idea what a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** is. In the last three exercises you have brain stormed possible web events – current and future – for your site, target audiences who should be contacted, and hooks that describe the event in a manner that likely to generate interest. The worksheet for this exercise involves selecting the best of each element and putting them into possible combinations.

Completing the ***Black Belt Web Marketing Plan*** Elements Worksheet

Test different combinations until you have several potential plans, then select the best one. This will be the basis for your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***.

### **Implementing a *Black Belt Marketing Plan*.**

If you follow the sequence of lessons and exercises in this planning guide, your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** will be implemented in progressively involved stages. To help you better understand what's involved in implementation, we've separated the plan's parts into "passive" and "pro-active" stages.

We call the first stage "passive". Although you actively seek out locations around the web to place links to your site, links are passive in nature. They sit there waiting for Net users to see and click on them. Some links will be at another location. Some will be in the results of a search. This passive links stage generates traffic by:

Registering your site or page at numerous search engines and directories (Lesson 2)

Posting announcements in discussion groups and announcement sites (Lesson 3)

Placing classified ads (Lesson 4)

Requesting your link be added, such as to directories and other sites (Lesson 5).

This stage is also the easiest to implement. It mostly requires searching for locations and providing the information requested or requesting a link to your site. This is also where many site owners slip up. They think that this is all they have to do – register, announce, put out a few links, and, kazaam! Visitors will flock to the site in droves. The Net doesn't work that way. A complete ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** has a second, more involved implementation stage.

This stage we called "pro-active". You actively seek out net users most likely to be interested in your site – your target audiences. You don't wait for them to see your link somewhere.

Having found them, you attempt to catch their attention and give them incentive to visit. The pro-active stage generates traffic by:

Participating in discussion groups where target audiences hang out (Lesson 7)

Email marketing (Lesson 8)

Approaching the media for publicity (Lesson 9)

Placing online advertising where it can be seen by audiences (Lesson 10).

This is not to imply that the second stage starts when the first one ends. The two stages overlap. It's more of a shift in emphasis. You will always continue to register and announce when opportunities such as new resources and directories present themselves. Always look for more opportunities to get your site noticed.

### **Time Spent Implementing a Traffic Plan**

Wonder how long it's going to take you to implement a ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***? Depending on time available, full implementation may involve a week or two of intense activity. After that you may feel that you've employed the best resources available and can start tapering off. After this initial implementation, "mopping up"; monitoring, following-up, and analyzing results are still required.

If you have to juggle promoting Web traffic with other responsibilities, you may not be able to spend full time to spend implementing a Traffic Plan. Implementation could occur a few hours a day over a longer period. You have to find the balance between time available to spend and getting desired results from your traffic plan.

### **Implementation Options**

You have several options for implementing your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***:

**Implement as You Go:** You don't have wait until you have finished the last lesson before starting implementation. Implement as you go is one option. For example, register your site or event while doing the exercises in Lesson 2 rather than waiting until you have finished the last Lesson 11. This option allows you to begin registering right away. Some search engines lag registration submissions by 4-8 weeks. Your site won't appear in some search engines until after you have implemented the other stages of your traffic plan. The disadvantage is that your site or new page must be completed and ready for viewing as soon as you begin registration. A search engine like Infoseek records your registration immediately.

**Implement Upon Completion:** An alternative is to wait until you have completed all eleven lessons before implementing. This approach enables you to continually improve your plan as you learn more about web traffic techniques and encountered more resources to use. Upon completion of the lessons, your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan*** will be more comprehensive but implementation will be delayed, hence greater traffic is delayed.

## **Likely Scenario After Intense Implementation**

Imagine that after two weeks of implementing your ***Black Belt Marketing Plan***, you compile a report that summarizes your activities. It might look like this:

### **Locations**

Registered at search locations: 224

Posted an announcement: 24

Placed classified ads: 15

Place our link at compatible sites 15

Added our link to super directories 11

Sent new releases to media 150

### **Net Users**

E-mailed potential customers 11,000

Participated in 6 discussion groups 35,000

Placed banner ads at busy sites 12,000

After implementing a traffic plan that chalks up these kinds of numbers – not outside the realm of possibility – how can it not dramatically improve traffic to your web site? How can it not build a momentum for the future that you can sustain and accelerate with new marketing plans developed at regular intervals?

## **Worksheet for Exercise 1-6**

## Completing the Web Traffic Plan Elements

1. List the best events, audiences and hooks.

Events	Audiences	Hooks

2. Test them together in combinations:


# **Lesson 2 – Registering Your Web Site**

## **Understanding the Registration Process**

Exercise 2-1 – Improving Your Site’s Standing in Search Engines

Worksheet for Exercise 2-1

Exercise 2-2 – Collecting Data to Submit to Search Engines

Worksheet for Exercise 2-2

Exercise 2-3 – Selecting Key Words to Associate with Your Site

Worksheet for Exercise 2-3

Exercise 2-4 – Describing Your Site So That Others Can Find It

Worksheet for Exercise 2-4

Exercise 2-5 – Choosing an Automatic Registration Service

Worksheet for Exercise 2-5

Exercise 2-6 – Registering Your Site Manually

Worksheet for Exercise 2-6

Exercise 2-7 – Verifying that Registration Was Successful

Worksheet for Exercise 2-7

Exercise 2-8 – Registering Multiple Pages

Worksheet for Exercise 2-8

Exercise 2-9 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson Objectives**

Upon completion of this lesson, you will have learned:

The importance of registering not just when a site is new but with each major event.

How to increase traffic by improving your site's ranking in keyword searches.

To speed up the registration process by assembling required data in advance.

How to choose appropriate keywords for your site.

How to describe your site so that others are more likely to find it and want to visit.

Why you should choose an automatic registration service to effortlessly register your site at hundreds of lesser important search engines.

At which major search engines you should register your site and how to do it in minimum time.

How to verify registration and ranking at search engines.

Learn the importance of registering multiple pages to increase traffic.

## **Worksheets for Lesson 2**

Worksheet for Exercise 2-1 -- Improving Your Site's Search Engine Standing

Worksheet for Exercise 2-2 -- Search Engine Data Form

Worksheet for Exercise 2-3 -- Keyword Selection Worksheet

Worksheet for Exercise 2-4 Registration Descriptions

Worksheet for Exercise 2-5 Choosing an Automatic Registration Service

Worksheet for Exercise 2-6 Manual Registration

Report for Exercise 2-7 Registration Follow-Up Report

## Understanding the Registration Process

You learned in Exercise 1-6 that registering is a "passive" method for generating Web traffic. After registering your site at numerous search engines you sit back and hope that your site appears in Net users' searches and that they are motivated to click on your link.

Over time search engines provide a steady source of traffic. A recent study found that over 70% of all Web sites receive at least 20% of their visitors from search engines. How many visitors are generated by how well you register your site and where your site appears in results of Net users' searches (Exercise 2-1).

### **Importance of Repeat Registration**

Registration is not a one-time task for new sites only. It should be repeated at least monthly – more often depending on continuing additions and events at your site. These are some of the events that should prompt re-registering your site:

A promotional event  
new content containing important keywords  
new products or services  
Identifying a new target audience with new keywords

A new FAQ

Hopefully, each time you register, it improves your site's ranking over the previous registration. If not, you can count on gradually losing your ranking to new competitor sites and pages. Thousands of new sites join the web each day. To preserve and improve your ranking you must keep vigil, and continually expand your site's contents and design.

You won't be aware of the deterioration of your site's ranking unless you continually monitor major search engines. First, you need to verify that the search engines registered your site (they don't always) and that your site's ranking is high enough to get noticed. With an approximate 70 million Web pages, ranking high enough to get noticed is increasingly difficult.

This lesson shows you how to register your site at several hundred search engines automatically and manually so that the chances are improved that searchers click on your link. This means that your site appears high on the list of sites returned by their keyword search, and that searchers are intrigued by it enough to click on it instead of the majority of other sites listed. You will be introduced to guidelines that will help ensure that you do a thorough, effective job of registering.

Finally you will learn in this lesson that submitting requested data does not automatically guarantee registration. Some search engines are overburdened. Some lose things like registrations. Some reject incorrect submissions without telling you. The registration job is never really done. You need to follow-up, verify that your site was registered correctly, and then plan to re-register

at regular intervals. You'll learn to maintain a registration report and schedule follow-ups to make sure the job is done right.

## **Difference Between a Search Engine and a Directory**

An explanation of terminology used in this planning guide is in order: we used the term "search engine" to refer to web sites where registrants go to register their sites and where searchers go for keyword searches. Technically, two different types of sites accept registration and are used for searches. Directories such as Yahoo! and true search engines such as Infoseek

A directory is a catalog of web sites where registrants manually register their sites in one or more categories. Actual human beings on the directory's staff screen registrations for relevance. Search results at directories therefore are usually more relevant but considerably less comprehensive than search engines.

A true search engine has a massive database of web pages created by "robots" or "spiders" that regularly scoot around the web collecting information on new and updated sites. While more comprehensive, search engines tend to include a lot more garbage (non-relevant sites). AltaVista, Excite, Infoseek, Webcrawler, and Lycos are the largest, most popular search engines.

Exercise 2-1 tackles an important issue that needs to be addressed before registering your web site. Steps should be taken to improve your site's ranking in search results before registering otherwise your efforts will have minimal impact on traffic to your site.

## **Exercise 2-1 -- Improving Your Site's Standing in Search Engines**

Registering your site at hundreds of search engines won't do you much good unless it ranks high in search results. When a searcher enters keywords associated with your site, you want your site name, description, and link to be on the first several pages.

Millions of web pages are vying for net users' attention. Many keyword searches return thousands of pages. If your link is #5,221, guess what? Don't expect much traffic. You might as well not to have bothered to register at all. The likelihood that users will scan page after page after page until your listing appears are slim.

Now you can see how important it is for your site to finish high in searches. Over time the difference in the number of visitors to your site will be significant.

## **Techniques for Improving Your Site's Ranking in Searches**

Fortunately you can take some steps in site design and content that will improve your ranking. If

you aren't the one responsible for site design, you can recommend to person who is that he or she consider these key factors in search rankings:

## **Title**

The first thing a search engine's robot reads when it snoops around your site is the HTML title (between the <TITLE> and </TITLE> tags). The title may be the single most important factor affecting where your site ranks. It's the first thing that a search engine's robot reads that affects your site's ranking.

For some search engines, like AltaVista, if a keyword isn't in the title, your site will not finish high in a search ranking. Yet too many Web sites give too little thought to the words in their site's title. (Remember, the HTML title you register doesn't have to agree with the actual title on your page. The HTML title appears in search results and in the browser title bar when a visitor is at your site.)

Your title should have other ingredients other than the keywords. Guidelines when creating a title:

### **Guidelines for a Title**

- 1) Describe your site using up to 60 characters.
- 2) Include the most important keywords.
- 3) Describe what you most want potential visitors to know about your site.
- 4) Make your site sound really interesting.
- 5) Try unusual words that few other sites use.
- 6) Search for possible keywords for test purposes.
- 7) Consider your title's alphabetical standing.

Most search engines list page titles by relevancy first, then in alphabetical order. You may want to fudge on the HTML title to improve your alphabetical ranking. If the first word in your title begins with an 'A' or a number, your site's standing is higher. Watch out however, some search engines discount single-character words and numbers.

**TIP:** A good title may also work well in your signature. If the title is effective in attracting searchers to your site it should attract discussion group participants too.

## **Text**

Descriptive text on Web pages also affects rankings. Follow these guidelines:

### **Guidelines for Page Text**

- 1.Repeat important keywords at least 4 or 5 times.
- 2.Include descriptive text on your home page.
- 3.Look for unusual keyword combinations
- 4.Text is high on the page.
- 5.Link to other pages inside your site.

**Keywords:** Some search engines rank sites based on their "relevance" to the keywords entered by a searcher. The more key words appear throughout a site, the higher that site appears in search results. Essential keywords should appear at least four or five times. One way to do this is to add text in the form of a slogan or trademark at the bottom of each web page. Something along the order of Ford's "Quality is Job 1" slogan. While the slogan gives you opportunities to increase the frequency of keywords on your pages, it wouldn't be particularly unusual or odd-looking.

For example, we've added this slogan to the bottom of our home pages so that our site will appear higher in search rankings:

Acquire these valuable skills: Web promotion, Web marketing, Web development, Public relations, Publicist, Advertising, Marketing, Promotion, Training, Instructors, Internet training, New users support, Entrepreneurs, ISPs, Webmasters, Telecommuters, Business opportunity, Job seeking, Consulting, Small business development, Home office, marketing skills.

Search engines index text starting with the home page. If your home page lacks descriptive text your site probably won't rank as high.

Text in the top half of the page seems to count more than text further down. Don't ask us why??? If anything pushes the text down, like tables or an image, this could hurt your ranking.

Links to other pages inside your site. Some search engines are unable to index an entire site if they can't follow links from the home page. If you have important pages with keywords and

descriptive text inside your site, be sure that your home page includes links to them. Otherwise search engines may not recognize them even through another page.

## **Meta Tags**

Even if your pages fail to meet our title and text guidelines, their ranking with some search engines can still be improved with meta tags – providing you load both the description and keywords tags with essential keywords.

Several major search engines -- notably AltaVista, InfoSeek, and HotBot – recognize meta tags. One set of tags controls the description, the second keywords:

```
<meta name="description" content="Smart, step-by-step, interactive guide on web promotion and marketing with exercises, worksheets, and guidelines. Acquire valuable, rare Internet skill while developing comprehensive, plans for dramatically increasing traffic to any web site.
```

```
<meta name="keywords" content="web promotion, Web developer, Web marketer, Web marketing, Web traffic, Web traffic plan, Web traffic specialist, Webmaster, advertising online, announcement, campaign, banner ad, business opportunity, consultants, direct email, email marketing, Email news releases, entrepreneurs, ezines, home office, Internet consultants, Internet trainers, Internet training, job seekers, media campaign, media list, newsletter, online advertising, promotion, public relations, reciprocal link, registration service, search engine, ranking, search tips, site promotion, Web, zines, advertising ">
```

## **Popularity**

Your ranking at some search engines is affected by how many sites link to your site. In Lesson 5 you'll learn how to populate the Internet with links to your site – not only search engines but directories, compatible sites, and other sites willing to exchange links with you. Ideally, daily traffic to your site will be a composite of visitors clicking on your link at hundreds of locations around the net. A host of links to your site could improve search rankings.

## **Diligently Avoid**

Just as there are ways to improve your site's ranking there are ways to inadvertently harm it. If any of these conditions exist at your site, you should take corrective action or compensating steps:

**Frames:** Major search engines aren't able to follow links in frames. In fact, they don't recognize words inside a frame tag. One solution is to add meta tags (see above).

**Imagemaps:** Of the major search engines, only Lycos can follow links in an image map. Image maps should be accompanied by text links.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-1**

### **Improving Your Site's Search Engine Standing**

Techniques for Improving Your Site's Ranking in Searches:

1.Title: Draft an interesting title that incorporates several of the most important keywords, preferably starting with one that will do well in an alphabetical ranking:

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2.Text: Make sure that keywords also appear in text on the pages, especially on your home page. Preferably the text is positioned high up on the page. Ideas/wording for improving your web pages:

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3.Meta Tags: Your ranking with some search engines can be improved with meta tags. Ideas for META tags:

<HEAD>

<META NAME="description" CONTENT=

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---

<META NAME="keywords" CONTENT=

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---

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---

---

<TITLE></TITLE>  
</HEAD>

4.Popularity: Work to add a link to your site at numerous other sites. It will help your ranking.

5.What to avoid: either avoid these features that will hurt your site's ranking or take compensating steps:

Frames: Many search engines can't read frames so avoid them if possible. If not META tags will help compensate.

Image maps: Search engines can't follow links in an image map (Lycos is the only exception).

## **Exercise 2-2 -- Collecting Data to Submit to Search Engines**

This exercise helps you organize data in advance that you will need for registration. By assembling data beforehand you can quickly copy and paste it into the input forms required by some search engines. Most automatic registration services also require this data. They try to anticipate search engines' data requirements. You should too.

This exercise requires you to gather all the data you will need except for keywords. Keywords are so important to the registration process that the next exercise is for listing and ranking the keywords that are relevant to your site.

### **Completing the Search Engine Data Form**

1. Name: The name of the contact person at the site.
2. Email Address: The email address of the person to be contacted.
3. Title of Site: The name of the Web site.
4. URL for Site: The complete URL. Some search engines offer a link back to your site for you to verify that it is accurate. Be sure to do this. If the link you entered doesn't work, the site won't get registered.
5. Street Address: Address for the person or company who is responsible for the site.

6. City: City of residence for the responsible person or company location.
7. County/State: County, province, or state location where the Web site is hosted. In US, enter the state code.
8. Country: The country code.
9. Telephone: Phone number of the person to be contacted.
10. Fax Number: Fax number of the contact person.
11. Categories: An excellent way to choose the categories under which you want your web site classified is to go to Yahoo! Follow links through applicable directories and subdirectories until you find those which list sites similar to yours. If you know of similar sites in advance, use Yahoo's search feature to find them. Record the same categories they use. Repeat this process until you have several suitable categories for your input data form (up to six which is the same number you should register at Yahoo!). Be sure to rank the categories with the most important first. Most search engines permit fewer categories.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-2**

### **Search Engine Data Form**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Title of Site: \_\_\_\_\_
4. URL for Site: http://\_\_\_\_\_
5. Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. City: \_\_\_\_\_

7. County/State: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Country: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Categories: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Exercise 2-3 – Selecting Keywords for Registration**

The keywords you associate with your site are important. They represent how you want others to find it when they search the net. Keywords help you identify target audiences (Exercise 1-4), find resources, locations for links to your site. Throughout this planning guide you will rely on keywords repeated for searches.

Begin the keyword selection process by brainstorming a list of words specifically for each audience. Practice word association to identify pertinent words that would interest target audiences. For example, searchers looking for "web marketing" probably won't search on "web traffic", so I have to make sure that "marketing" is one of my keywords. The same is true with "public relations". People interested in these two areas are two primary target audiences for ***Black Belt Web Marketing's*** planning manual. They both are interested in increasing traffic to their web site. Individually, their responsibilities are generally narrower than the scope of this planning guide.

### **Consider these guidelines in selecting keywords to register:**

#### **Guidelines for Selecting Registration Keywords**

1. Anticipate what keywords your target audiences are likely to use.
2. What keyword concepts appear over and over at your site?

3. What keywords do competitors use?
4. Don't make up names or phrases because nobody would think to search on them.
5. Don't use one-character keywords such as 'A' or '1' because some search engines don't count them.
6. Include your business name because as your Internet presence grows, more searchers will search for you by name.

Most search engines limit the number of keywords you can register. The limit is different from one search engine to the next. So after you've compiled list of all possible words, next rank them in order of importance.

Keywords play an important part in your marketing plan. Many of them over and over for registration descriptions in the next exercise, for announcements in Lesson 3, classified ads in Lesson 4, and for finding similar sites in Lesson 5 and competitors in Lesson 6. How well you identify which are the most important keywords will have a major impact on how much your plan increases web traffic.

### **Completing the Keyword Selection Worksheet**

1. Target Audiences: Identify your primary audience – those net users who would be most interested in what your site has to offer. The more legitimate target audiences you identify, the better the opportunities for increasing web traffic.
2. Possible Keywords: Brainstorm keywords associated with each target audience. Don't worry about relevance for now. The objective is to produce a list of words based on a rush of creativity.
3. Keyword Ranking: Your list of possible keywords in the previous step is bound to include words that you should eliminate either because they will already be included such as words that are in the title or words that appear at most every site like "Internet", "web", "site". Also cross out in column 2, the single-character words and numbers. Many search engines do not recognize these. Rank the remaining words in this column.
4. Practice Search on Keywords: The final step is to search on the top four or five ranked keywords in your worksheet. Take a look at a sampling of sites on your list:

Are they similar to yours?

Do they suggest keywords you hadn't thought of?

Are there clues there that these sites are reaching your target audiences?

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-3**

### **Keyword Selection Worksheet**

Target Audiences	Possible Keywords	Keyword Ranking
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

### **Exercise 2-4 – Describing Your Site So That Others Can Find It**

By identifying important keywords in Exercise 2-3, you you've got the descriptions you'll register partially written. Keywords should be included in your description when permitted by a search engine.

Unfortunately, search engines that accept descriptions often have their own limit on how many words or characters they allow. For example, Yahoo! will reject descriptions that exceed 200 characters. Some engines allow 50 words, some 25, 10, etc.

### **What's Your Unique Selling Proposition?**

Not only should your description include important keywords but it should also identify what you most want prospective visitors to know about your site. More often than not, this is your "Unique Selling Proposition" (USP). This is simply the most important, most unique proposition offered by your site that distinguishes it from competitors. Think of your site's USP as the primary reason why somebody would be interested in coming to your site.

The challenge is to promote your site's USP with the keywords included in the description. Rather than truncate the same description at each search engine so it meets the maximum requirement, you should prepare several descriptions of varying sizes in advance. This forces you to focus on making sure that the description includes the USP, and as many of the important keywords as possible, and still makes sense. Note: Your USP will be used repeatedly in this guidebook to help you promote your site to net users and to the media. It is sure to pop up again albeit with different wording in your announcements (Lesson 3), classified ads (Lesson 4), email marketing (Lesson 8).

## **Write and Rewrite**

Another consideration to keep in mind is not to be satisfied with the first draft. The description's role in attracting visitors is too important not to put time and effort into it. Write several drafts. Then combine the best ideas into a final draft that will attract visitors.

### **Checklist for Writing Descriptions Clearly state the most unique proposition offered by your site, its USP.**

Maximize use of key words while still being coherent

Use strong, colorful words

Eliminate superfluous words

Correct spelling and grammatical errors

### **Steps for Completing the Writing Descriptions Worksheet:**

1. Unique Selling Proposition: Describe your site's USP. This is usually what distinguishes you from your competitors.
2. Inject as many of the top-ranked keywords from Exercise 2-3 as possible into several rough drafts. Explore new ideas and their sequence in each draft.
3. Combine the drafts in step 2 into one description using the best ideas. Rework and massage the wording into a 40-word description. 4. Attack the 40-word description to pare it down to 25 words. Either substitute fewer words to express the same ideas or eliminate the least important idea.
5. One more time. Reduce the 25-word description in Step 2 by another 10 words. Be ready to discard another idea – the least important one.
6. For Yahoo, count the characters. Make sure that the description has 200 or less.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-4**

### **Registration Descriptions Worksheet**

1. What is your site's Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

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2. Draft several descriptions that combines the USP and keywords from Exercise 2-3:

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3. Prepare a 40-word draft from the best ideas and wording in step 2:

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4. Prepare a 25-word draft:

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5. Prepare a 15-word draft:

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6. Prepare a description for Yahoo that is limited to 200 characters:

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### **Exercise 2-5 – Choosing an Automatic Registration Service**

Although the web has hundreds of search engines, about 95% of the traffic generated by them will come from the eight or nine major search engines. Does that mean that you should ignore all others? No. Every little bit helps but the lesser search engines don't justify you spending time registering at them individually. The solution is to have an automatic registration service do it for you.

Dozens of companies generally offer either a service or software to download. The number of search engines they register you at varies from company to company. So does the fee and their effectiveness.

Companies that offer a service are likely to charge you for a one-time shot. Each time you use their service you pay another fee.

Software you download usually allows you to register as many times as you want during a limited time period, such as one month, or no time limit.

Whether it's fee-based registration or software, you must fill out an input form with the information necessary for registration at all the search engines included in the company's

database. The input forms require generally the same information you completed in Exercise 2-2. There are now many free services that allow you to try before you buy, so shop for some of these too.

### **Shortcomings of Automatic Registration**

Automatic registration is far from a perfect solution for your registration needs. Either the search engine has its own unique registration form that is not properly completed by the automatic registration or it recognizes that a robot is trying to register. Some search engines reject or assign a low priority to robot registrations. They want live individuals to visit their site so they can show better traffic numbers to their advertisers or because they want to promote their fee-based services.

That's why in the next exercise you will learn how to manually register at major search engines where it's worth your time to customize your registration so that you do it right. These search engines are too important to leave to automatic registration.

Companies which offer a manual registration service as opposed to automatic find that manual submissions often get listed quicker and with better results.

**TIP:** Consider setting up a separate email address for registration. You can expect a lot of email, some of it junk email, as a result of registration. If you don't want to pay for another email box, use one of the free email services available, such as at <http://www.hotmail.com>.

### **Steps for Exercise 2-5 – Automatic Registration Worksheet**

**This exercise serves a multi-purpose. You'll learn:**

About several major, well-known automatic registration services

How to find a list of automatic services in Yahoo.

How to search for more services in a major search engine.

1) Before choosing a registration service, consider these guidelines:

Number of search engines registered at vs cost of registering: You may be tempted to go with the lowest cost per site registered. I would recommend that other guidelines be given more weight. Dozens of registration services are vying for your business and, frankly, some of them don't seem very substantial.

**Quality of the Site:** I imagine that the programming required to create a quality automatic registration service is beyond the abilities of all but a few technocrats. I'm suspicious about paying for a service that is promoted at a poor-quality Web site. A poor site may be the result of lack of resources and/or competence. (I included a registration site that leaves a poor impression in the worksheet for Exercise 2-5. See if you can spot which one).

**Other Services Offered:** Some of the best-known registration companies offer multiple services. I recommend that you choose a company that offers a wide range of other services.

**Source of Revenues:** I particularly like to see indications of advertising revenues as well as fee-based services. It generally means that the site has the resources to offer a quality services. It is less likely to be scraping by on a limited budget with limited manpower resources.

**Number of Times You Can Register:** If you will be registering a number of times, such as when fine-tuning a new site, then consider using a software program that allows multiple registrations for no extra charge.

2. Visit each of the sites listed in this exercise. They offer a number of related services and important content that may come in handy in later lessons and in developing future web traffic plans.

3. Yahoo: This step shows you how to follow the links in Yahoo to find more registration services, announcement locations, etc.

**TIP:** While you are at the Yahoo page bookmark it. You will be returning here for announcement locations in Lesson 3.

4. Search Engine Query: Go to Excite to search for more services. In the Search box, type:  
*automatic+registration+URL+submit+search+engine*

This query will return over 600 links to sites that include all of the six keywords in your query (as opposed to any of the six words if you had not separated each word with a plus sign). To further refine your search results, click on "More Like This" link next to one of the best links listed. This prompts Excite to pare down the list even more by finding sites similar to the one you selected.

5. Super Directories: In Lesson 5 you will learn about what we call "super directories". As a service to visitors, super directories offer a multitude of links to similar sites in a field or area of interest. The Web has dozens of directories which lists automatic registration services as well as other sites that will help you increase Web traffic.

In Exercise 2-6, you'll begin manually registering your site at major search engines. More traffic will probably come from these manual sites than all the automatic registration sites combined.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-5**

### **Choosing an Automatic Registration Service**

1. Before choosing a registration service, consider:

The number of search engines vs the cost of registering

The quality of the site's services

Other services offered

Source of revenues at the site

2. Visit these automatic registration services or software, and evaluate them based on the above considerations. Make your comments on the blank lines provided:

Web Promotion Spider = <http://beherenow.com/spider/>

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Submit-It = <http://www.submit-it.com/>

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Netcreation's Postmaster2 = <http://www.netcreations.com/postmaster/registration/buy.html>

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Exploit Submission Wizard = <http://www.exploit.com/wizard/>

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Add-URL = <http://www.add-url.com/>, \$29

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3. Yahoo: Follow these links: Computer and Internet / Internet / World Wide Web / Announcement for a list of more registration services. Here is the URL:

[http://www.yahoo.com/Computers\\_and\\_Internet/Internet/World\\_Wide\\_Web/Announcement\\_Services/](http://www.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Announcement_Services/)

4. Excite: Search for more with this query:

"automatic+registration+URL+submit+search+engine"

5. Super Directory: You'll find more registration services listed at this Super Directory:

The Internet Promotions MegaList = <http://www.2020tech.com/submit.html>

6. Choose the registration service you will use.

## **Exercise 2-6 – Registering Your Site Manually**

After the last exercise, you learned how important it is to register your site manually at the major search engines. It doesn't take long and you have better control over the results than if you use an automatic registration service.

This exercise takes you through manual registration at the major search engines used by most searchers. They are also the ones that appear on Netscape's and Internet Explorer's search pages.

You don't have to limit manual registration to the search engines in this exercise. The last step in the Manual Registration Worksheet encourages you to register at more of the four-star sites listed at a good starting point for manual registration – WebStep 100. WebStep 100 lists 100 of Internet's best registration locations. WebStep rates each of the 100 sites – four stars and below. If you feel that you would like to register at more sites than what are covered in this exercise, we recommend that you concentrate registration on four-star sites.

**TIP:** Create a "Registration" folder in your browser to bookmark manual registration sites. The bookmarks will come in handy later when you verify registration or reregister.

### **Steps for Completing the Manual Registration Worksheet**

1. Go to WebStep100. Begin registering your site manually. Sites are listed in alphabetical order so you can quickly jump to the major four-star search engines listed in this exercise. Start with Yahoo. It is the most popular and takes several weeks for the registration to be recorded (sometimes much longer or not at all).

2. Yahoo!: Add your URL on the page where you want your site's link to appear. You can either "drill down" through the directories and subdirectories, or you can search for the category (or a competitor). When you find the applicable page, click on the 'Add URL' button at the top.

If you are uncertain whether or not your site is already listed, search for it. If it is there, complete

the Change Form instead of the Add URL form.

Use the data and categories recorded in previous exercises to complete Yahoo's form.

3. AltaVista: AltaVista requires only the URL for the site you are registering. Check to make sure that your site isn't already recorded.

4. InfoSeek Infoseek requires only a URL for each page registered. Submit a URL for each page or email [www-request@infoseek.com](mailto:www-request@infoseek.com) with a list of URLs. Each URL must be on a separate line and begin with "http://".

5. Excite: Excite requires only a URL and email address in case they have a problem registering the site.

6. Lycos: Lycos also only requires a URL and email address.

7. HotBot: HotBot also requires only a URL and email address.

8. WebCrawler: WebCrawler allows you to submit a list of URLs – one for each page. Each URL must begin with "http://" and be on separate lines.)

9. Magellan: Magellan is another site that requires only a URL and email address.

10. More Registration: Register your site manually at as many additionally sites as you have time for.

Note: If time is more valuable than money to you, WebStep will manually register your site for you at the top 30 four-star sites for only \$79.

A word of caution: Don't register your site until it is ready for visitors. Since some registrations take place immediately (Infoseek), you want to make sure the URL works and all the key components are place. You may see immediate traffic from the registration. You don't want visitors to be underwhelmed with no desire to return.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 2-6**

### **Manual Registration**

1. WebStep100 (<http://www.mmgco.com/4-star.html> ) Begin registering your site manually.
2. Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com> ): Choose up to six categories you want then, click on the Add URL button at each directory.

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3. AltaVista (<http://altavista.digital.com> ): Submit the your site's URL.
4. InfoSeek (<http://www.infoseek.com> ) Submit only a URL per page being registered.
5. Excite (<http://www.excite.com> ): Submit a URL and email address.
6. Lycos (<http://www.lycos.com>) Submit URL and email address.
7. HotBot (<http://www.hotbot.com/addurl> ): Submit a URL and email address.
8. WebCrawler (<http://www.webcrawler.com/WebCrawler/SubmitURLS.html>): Submit a list of URLs – one for each page.

9. Magellan (<http://www.mckinlye.com>) Submit your URL and email address. Your submission is automatically handled by Excite, the parent company.

10. **Special Interest Registration:** Some search engines are specifically for a target audiences. Search for these and register manually.

11. More Registration: Register your site manually at as many additionally sites listed at WebStep100 as you have time for. List these on the reverse side.

List other search engines where you registered manually:

[illegible]

## **Exercise 2-7 – Monitoring Registration at Search Engines**

Registration isn't a one-time event where you submit and move on to other portions of your ***Black Belt Web Marketing Plan***. It requires follow-up, on-going monitoring, and periodic resubmissions. Every manual registration should be followed up to make sure that it was recorded, that it reads exactly the way you want it to, that it accurately reflects the contents of your site, and that your site is satisfactorily ranked in searches.

### **Verify That Your Site Is Registered**

Your first monitoring actions are to see that the major search engines added your site to its database. Frequently, submissions don't get recorded for one of these reasons:

Some search engines are backlogged for 6-8 weeks, or longer.

Some search engines are so overwhelmed by submissions that a few slip through the cracks and never get registered.

Something is wrong with a submission, such as a URL that for some reason wasn't working and it is rejected without notification.

The search engine didn't like something about your site and rejected it.

Even after being recorded, a site sometimes drops mysteriously from the search engine's database.

### **Check the Ranking**

If your site has been added to the search engine's database, the next step is to check its ranking in search results. As noted in Exercise 2-1, if it doesn't appear on the first several pages, registering will not do you much good.

Go to each major search engine where you registered manually and search on important keywords in your title, on your pages, and in your meta tags. If you're not satisfied with your site's ranking, look for advice in the search engine's Help pages, then make whatever modification at your site that you feel will improve your ranking. Review Exercise 2-1 for guidelines for improving search results.

## **Re-register to Reflect New Content**

Each time you make a major change to your site and prepare a new marketing plan, you should re-register. new keywords, new target audiences, new pages all justify repeating registration. Only by re-registering can you be certain that information recorded for your site is up to date.

Besides, some search engines schedule visits based on how often pages change. Sites with frequent changes are visited more often by some search engines' robots.

## **Steps for Completing the Registration Follow-Up Report**

1. Search Engine / URL: List the search engines where you manually registered your site and their URLs.
2. Date Submit: Record the date you registered.
3. Follow-up Date: Record follow-up date(s).
4. Status, Ranking: Note pertinent information such as ranking in a search, need to register, etc.

## **Report for Exercise 2-7**

### **Registration Follow-Up Report**

Search Engine / URL	Date	Submit	Follow-Up	Status	Date	Ranking
---------------------	------	--------	-----------	--------	------	---------

## **Exercise 2-8 – Registering Multiple Pages**

Several of the major search engines allow you to register more pages than just the home page. When you multiple pages with valuable content, registering it at those search engines can improve traffic to your site.

### **Possible benefits from registering multiple pages:**

By not registering pages other than your home page, you run a risk that the search engines won't fully index all of your site's pages.

You never know when a page other than your home page will make generate traffic because a searcher used keywords associated with that page.

If you can get several of your pages to rank high in a search, the searcher is more liable to click on one of your links. Your site appears to offer more than the other listed sites.

Too many other sites are registering multiple pages. You may be at a disadvantage if you only register your home page. You will be surprised how many visitors will come to a page other than your home page.

### **Major Search Engines that Allow Multiple-Page Registration**

According to Search Engine Watch, the best source of search engine information on the Web: Infoseek will register all pages you submit via email within minutes, AltaVista and Hotbot take a day or two, and Excite takes about three weeks. Lycos and WebCrawler are months behind in registering page submissions.

AltaVista limits the number of pages you can submit in one day, so you may want to ration out a maximum for five page submissions per day until your site is completely indexed. Excite takes about three weeks to index page you submit.

Don't bother registering a page that has little content. It is not worth the effort and will have little impact on your site's search ranking. If you don't have many worthwhile pages to register, then you may want to take another look at your site's contents and see what else you can add.

**TIP:.** Someday, consider spinning off the page into a separate web site with its own domain and its own marketing plan. Beef it up new pages and expanded content.

To prepare the page for registration, follow the guidelines in the exercises in this lesson just as if you were registering a standalone web site:

1. Select a popular page for a product or service for separate registration.
2. Assign a title worthy of a standalone Web site.
3. Develop keywords and descriptions for the page being registered.
4. Select an automatic registration service to register the new page.
5. Manually register the page at the major search engines that permit multiple page registrations.

### **Exercise 2-9 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson**

The most important ideas that you learned in this lesson and that will have the most impact on web traffic are:

The importance of registering your site periodically as registration data requires updating.

How you can improve your site's standings in searches thereby significantly boosting web traffic.

**Titles have a major impact on how well your site does in a search. An effective title:**

Includes keywords

Is interesting

Reflects alphabetical order

**The descriptive text at a Web site affects a search ranking. An effective description:**

Has keywords in it that will help target audiences find your Web site

Includes text on the home page where search engines start cataloging contents.

Is positioned near the top of pages because search engines attach more importance there.

**How to use meta tags to improve your site's position at some search engines.**

**How your site's ranking is improved by placing numerous links to it at other web sites.**

**How to avoid having frames or image maps in your web design harm search result rankings by using meta tags or having a text version.**

**The importance of assembling in advance data to be used for registering and what data is required.**

**Guidelines for choosing keywords by which searchers will find your site:**

Use pertinent keywords

Use single words not phrases

Don't use words nobody would think of

Don't use generic words such as 'Web', 'Internet', etc. that are at nearly all sites.

Don't start off the title with one-character words or numbers be some search engines don't recognize them.

Include your business name because that is how some customers will find you.

**Why it's a good idea to use an automatic registration service to register your site with hundreds of minor search engines. Your time is too valuable to register at these and the cost is minimal.**

**Why you should register manually at the major search engines. The importance of major search engines in generating web traffic and shortcomings of automatic registration make manual registration the only way to go for these search engines:**

Yahoo

AltaVista

InfoSeek

Excite

Lycos

HotBot

WebCrawler

Magellan

More 4-star search engines at WebStep 100.

The importance of verifying that registration was successful because of the unreliability and backlogs at major search engines.

The potential for increasing web traffic by registering multiple pages and the steps for preparing a page for separate registration.

# **Lesson 3 – Announcing Your Web Event**

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **Stages of an Announcement Campaign**

Exercise 3-1 – Publicizing Your Site with Signatures

Worksheet for Exercise 3-1

Exercise 3-2 – Writing Subject Lines That Get Noticed

Worksheet for Exercise 3-2

Exercise 3-3 -- Writing the Body of the Announcement

Worksheet for Exercise 3-3

Exercise 3-4 – Announcing in General Announcement Forums

Worksheet for Exercise 3-4

Exercise 3-5 – Targeting Special Interest Newsgroups

Worksheet for Exercise 3-5

Exercise 3-6 – Improving Your Announcement's Reception

Worksheet for Exercise 3-6

Exercise 3-7 – Preparing a Discussion Group Evaluation Report

Worksheet for Exercise 3-7

Exercise 3-8 – Reaching Target Audiences in Mailing Lists

Worksheet for Exercise 3-8

Exercise 3-9 – Recapping the Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson 3 Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson, you will:**

- Know the important stages of an announcement campaign
- Know when it is appropriate to post an announcement
- Know how to improve the effectiveness of an announcement
- Attach a signature to enhance the announcement's promotional value
- Learn how to write a subject line that will grab the reader's attention
- Learn how to write the three parts of the body of the announcement
- Know where to post the announcement in general forums
- Learn how to reach target audiences in special interest newsgroups
- Learn how to modify your announcement to improve its receptivity in discussion groups
- Learn how to summarize your announcement activities in a *Discussion Group Evaluation Report*
- Learn how to reach target audiences in mailing lists.

## **Stages of an Announcement Campaign**

An announcement campaign offers you an excellent opportunity to generate interest in your web site. Announcements are usually concise details about an event occurring at your web site and are relatively free of self-promotion. Hype is held to a minimum otherwise the announcement is certain to generate a backlash from ever-vigilant "Netiquette" enforcers.

The other aspect of a "clean", backlash-free announcement campaign is that it occurs at acceptable locations only. Announcements are generally posted to general announcement forums or specifically target discussion groups.

**An overview of the announcement campaign includes these four stages:**

Preparing a signature to append to the announcement

Write an announcement that will entice visitors to your web site

Find the appropriate discussion groups to announce in

Announce

Monitor reactions.

**When to Announce?**

One of the ways to sustain traffic momentum is to periodically create "events" that justify more announcements which, in turn, warrant more attention, and generate more traffic.

Newsworthy events that you can announce:

New site, especially offering something unique

A new product or service offered at your web site.

A new product release or upgrade

A new page or event added to your site.

A new or greatly expanded directory of valuable resources

A contest

FAQ

A new report or white paper

A published interview

An appearance of somebody important in your chat room

Local announcements

Any event or happening at your site that you deem important enough to announce

Summaries of a new publication

## **What Makes an Announcement Work?**

An announcement is like a press release, only not for the media but for the general public. Hyped up promotion pieces are probably not suitable for an announcement. Tone it down but still end it with an invitation to visit your site.

For an announcement to encourage visitors to your web site it should describe an event in terms of:

Newsworthiness

Benefit to reader

Curiosity

Better results come from emphasizing the newsworthiness of the event rather than just the event itself. Describe what the event means in terms of benefit to the reader, or what's special about the event that justifies an announcement and is worth checking out.

## **Where to Post Announcements?**

An estimated over 20,000 discussion groups exists in which, at least in theory, you could post your announcement. Unfortunately, only a small fraction of these would be appropriate. For the vast majority of groups in which your announcement wouldn't be appropriate, the members would get upset and probably "flame" you with hate email. You wouldn't want to target them in the first place. The primary objective of increasing web traffic is to get more of the right kind of visitors, not just more visitors.

The announcement campaign should be directed toward general Internet audiences through popular forums created specifically for such announcements and, more importantly, targeted audiences in special interests discussion groups where they hang out.

Ordinarily, announcements are a good way to initiate web traffic but don't have a lasting effect unless you are prepared to build on this initial momentum and the interest generated. Sustaining interest in your web site over a long period is the subject of Lesson 11 – Building Long Term Success.

Post an announcement consistent with Internet's own "netiquette". This means avoid blanketing the net indiscriminately hoping that tens of millions of net users will see your announcement. More harm than good comes from that approach.

## **Exercise 3-1 -- Publicizing Your Site with Signatures**

A signature (or "sig file") is a text file automatically appended at the end of your emails and discussion groups postings by your email program or newsreader (if it doesn't, get a new program). The sig identifies you to others: your name, position, company, how to get a hold of you. Sort of like an "electronic business card". It conveniently provides pertinent information about you automatically each time you send an electronic correspondence without you having to laboriously provide it every time.

Unlike a business card, a signature doesn't involve printing charges and isn't handed out gradually over time. It's massed distributed instantaneously. It's even likely that thousands of readers around the world read your "electronic business card" within seconds after you send it.

### **Signature as Promotional Tool**

In view of the widespread readership of your signature, it offers an excellent opportunity to promote your web site. While the announcement should be relatively free of hype, the same isn't necessarily true of your signature that follows it. After posting to a discussion group, a promotional signature will help your site experience an increase in traffic. Readers will read what you have to say and be interested in taking a look at your site.

Also, like some business cards, promotional wording added to the bottom of your signature further stimulates interests in your web site, product, or service. This is what I did for my signature. The addition of promotional wording at the bottom dramatically improves the signature as a vehicle for promoting my service.

### **Netiquette Applies to Signatures Too**

Signatures are an unobtrusive, acceptable means of promoting your web site if you don't get carried away with it. An acceptable signature is 4-8 lines long. Long, over-hyped signatures will attract some negative attention. Some discussion groups may cut it off if the signature is more than four lines or so.

### **Don't Stop at One Signature**

Just as some enterprising business people have several different business cards to hand out depending on the recipient, so should you have several signatures – one for each target audience. Consider developing a signature specifically for each targeted audience. Customized signatures that reflect the interests of the recipients are usually more effective than one generic signature.

## **Type of Information Found in Signatures**

A signature can include any information or wording you choose to put in it. Exercise 3-1 discusses the type of information you often find in signatures and considerations.

## **Design Considerations**

Be ready to change your signature often. Study others' and borrow good ideas you like. I wouldn't copy ideas you see in ones that are unique and specific to its author, but others are a rich source of design and layout ideas. Simply copy the signature in its entirety and save it as a sig file in your email program or newsreader. Then make the necessary changes to make it yours.

Some people spend a lot of time on "ASCII art" for their signatures. While some of the artistry is impressive, it probably doesn't have much impact on web traffic.

If your signature involves any type of alignment, such as two columns of characters, vertical borders, or ASCII art be sure to use monospaced font such as Times-Roman or Courier.

## **Exercise 3-2 -- Writing Subject Lines That Get Noticed**

The subject line for your announcement is much like a headline on an advertisement. A good one means success. A bad one spells disaster. The reason that the announcement's subject line is so important is it that it is the only thing the reader sees unless he or she initiates the next step which is to click on it.

Once that requirement is met, four more steps are required. In the face of stiff competition from countless other announcements, yours must motivate a discussion group member to take these five steps:

1. Notice it
2. "Mark" it for retrieval
3. Retrieve it
4. Read it
5. Visit your web site.

With the reader at your web site, the announcement has done its job.

## **Subject Line Guidelines:**

From these five steps you can know how important your announcement is. If it doesn't get noticed, zilch happens. So, what does it take for a subject to get noticed?

Watch out for long subjects. Long subjects over 55 characters get cut off. Make sure that if your subject is cut off it doesn't lose its importance and key words don't appear.

Don't use all caps. On the Internet that is considered "shouting" and is rude. It's also harder to read. Consider instead making one or two words all caps for emphasis.

Match the tone of the other subject lines. A subject with hype stands out as inappropriate in a group where other subjects are straight-forward statements. A straight-forward subject in among hyped up subjects will also stand out as out of step.

Especially moderated groups where an administrator is screening out-of-step message, a hype announcement won't get published. In no-holds barred, unmoderated groups, probably only hyped subjects get noticed. You'll quickly see by reviewing other announcements what tone is being set by the other group members.

Match the interest of the group. If you are announcing in a special interest group, try to make the subject more appropriate to the members' interests. That could have a noticeable impact on how your announcement is received. In a moderated group, it could mean the difference between accepting and rejecting your announcement.

## **Completing the Subject Lines Worksheet**

Before writing the subject line for your announcement, briefly describe the event being announced as if you were talking to a friend.

**Newsworthy Subject Lines:** An effective way for your announcement to attract attention is to promote its most newsworthy aspect. Imagine that you are writing the headline for a news release. What it takes to interest an editor is not coincidentally what it would take to interest the general public. See if this sample headline doesn't have a "newsworthy" quality. Then think up three different news headlines for your web site (don't stop at one).

"Shortage of Web Marketing Specialists Spawns New Internet Training"

**Question Subject Lines:** Subject lines phrased as a question often work well. Draft three interesting questions that are answered at your web site particularly in regard to the event being announcing. Here is a sample question subject line that gets our announcements noticed:

## "Puzzled by Pathetic Web Traffic????"

Free Offer Subject Line: A "free" mentality thrives on the Internet. Net users expect to get something of value for free. So announcing a free offer is a good way to boost traffic. Draft three free offer subject lines.

## "Free Report – Techniques for Boosting Web Traffic"

Pick the best subject line or combination of subjects lines from each category. What's important in being creative is to work up a number of ideas. In this exercise you drafted at least nine subject lines. Chances are you have several excellent ones from which to choose.

From these three candidates, select the best one for your announcement's subject line.

Take one last look at your subject line to make sure that it isn't too long, in all caps, and matches the tone and interest of the discussion group in which you are posting.

## **Exercise 3-3 -- Writing the Body of the Announcement**

The body of your announcement will generally consists of three parts:

The *hook*  
The *description*  
The *inducement*

The *hook* is an interesting thought that makes the reader want to read on. Readers' attention span online is extremely short – much shorter than for printed material. So you have to pique the reader's interest right away.

The *description* provides enough pertinent detail so that the reader knows enough about your web site to quickly evaluate if it is something interesting. Finally, the *inducement* must spur the reader to take the next step which is to visit your site for more information. Out of self-interest, a desire to learn, or curiosity, the reader must want to follow your URL.

Your challenge then is to write approximately a three-paragraph announcement that grabs the reader's attention, comes quickly to the point, and motivates the reader to take the next step which is to visit your site for more information.

That pretty much summarizes the structure of your announcement. But what about the quality of the actual writing? Make the writing interesting. To do this, have fun with it. Inject your personality into the writing. Write the kind of announcement that would interests you.

## **Watch Out for Flames**

When you announce in many discussion groups, particularly narrow interest groups, you run the risk of generating hostile emails, called "flames". A few is to be expected but certain steps you can take will help prevent the negative reaction from getting out of hand:

Identify how the reader benefits from the event being announced

Tailor your announcement for the group

Offer something of value for free

Offer a report, FAQ or white paper

Avoid sending the same announcement to many different interest groups at once (called "cross-posting")

## **Steps for Writing the Announcement Body**

1. Writing the Hook: Practice writing several hooks until you have several that grabs readers' interest and propels them to continue reading. Often you will want to build on the thought expressed in the subject line.

2. Description: Explain enough about the event so that the reader has a clear idea what he or she will find when they visit your web site. Draft three different ways to describe the event.

3. Inducement: Write three drafts offering incentives for readers to visit your site. Explain what awaits them, how they can benefit, or what they will learn, or have a curiosity satisfied.

4. Bring the best pieces together for the body of your announcement.

## **Exercise 3-4 -- Announcing in General Announcement Forums**

In the last two exercises you learned how to write an announcement. In Exercise 3-4 you'll learn where to post your announcements. Numerous places exist on the Internet for posting free announcements. Several of these have a large readership which will generate immediate traffic from interested net users.

This exercise will identify the most popular places to announce at and show you how to find

more. Announcing is a lot like registering: you can spend weeks posting in countless locations. After the first ten or so, the effect of your announcement on web traffic is minimal.

To be able to follow the steps in this exercise, it's important that you have a newsreader – one is included in both Netscape and Internet Explorer – and that you know how to search newsgroups, subscribe, and post a message. Posting a message is as simple as sending an email. If you don't know how to do these tasks, now is a good time to learn. These skills are essential to developing and executing an aggressive web marketing plan.

### **Completing the General Announcement Locations Worksheet**

1.comp.infosystems.www.announce: This newsgroup one of the most popular announcement locations for new web events such as:

New web resources

Updates of URLs

New Web server, client, and supporting software

New releases and upgrades.

Short summaries Web magazines and journals.

It's not as easy to announce here though as it used to be. It no longer accepts commercial announcements but if your site offers a free benefit to the Internet community, it may be acceptable. Modify your announcement if necessary to stress the benefit to the community.

Your announcement should be no longer than 75 lines. Also you may want to limit your signature to four lines or less. The subject of your announcement should be preceded by one of these ID tags:

ARCHIVE  
ENTERTAINMENT  
MAGAZINE  
SCIENCE  
ART  
ENVIRONMENT  
MISC  
SERVER  
BOOK

FAQ  
MUSIC  
SOFTWARE  
BROWSER  
GAMES  
NEWS  
SPORTS  
COLLECTION  
HEALTH  
PERSONAL  
TRANSPORTATION  
ECONOMY  
HUMANITIES  
POLITICS  
EDUCATION  
INFO  
REFERENCE  
EMPLOYMENT  
LAW  
RELIGION

This newsgroup is pretty touchy about being used for commercial promotions. The moderator will snuff out your posting without it ever seeing the light of day if it is:

- Blatant commercial advertisement
- "Make Money Fast" or chain-letter scheme
- Non-Web resource
- Geographically limited web resource such as for local residents.

In spite of these reservations, its popularity is such that it's worth a shot at getting your announcement published here.

2. Net-Happenings: A popular forum for announcing a new site as well as other events. Net-happenings is a service of InterNIC Information and Education Services, the Net Scout project, and the list is moderated. The list publishes announcements of interest to the Internet community. To publish your announcement at Net-Happenings, go to <http://www.mid.net/NET/input.html>. Like [comp.infosystems.www.announce](http://comp.infosystems.www.announce), Net-Happenings also requires you to add a category identifier on the subject line of your announcement. You may want to subscribe to the mailing list first at the Web site and review new announcements to get a feel for what is considered acceptable announcements.
3. Yahoo: Any site anxious to have your announcement is going to list with Yahoo. Follow these links at Yahoo!: "Computer & Internet" to "WWW" to "Announcement Services."

You will find a number of suitable sites for announcing your web page or event.

4. Comp.newprod: Another newsgroup to announce a new product or service is comp.newprod. Your submission must be computer-related, and it must be of interest to a large number of net users.
5. New Page List: Submit your new page announcement to New Page List. New Page List distributes an announcement per day to its mailing list. Limit your announcement to 30 words describing your new page. There is no guarantee your announcement will be selected.
6. Net Announce (part of All-in-One-Promotion) at <http://www.erspros.com/net-announce> sends an email announcement of your Web site to those who request it.
7. Email Announce at <http://www.EmailAnnounce.com>.
8. Search "announce" newsgroups: To find other newsgroups eligible for your announcement, search for "announce" newsgroups; i.e., those with "announce" in their name. They publish announcements, usually to a targeted audience. In your newsreader, select the option to show all newsgroups. Then enter "announce" in the search or find field (depending on the command in your newsreader). Every time that your search returns an "announce" that you think might be appropriate for your announcement, select post a usenet message. You may have to customize your announcement to make it more appropriate for some newsgroups. My search returned this sampling of newsgroups:

Comp.infosystems.announce

Comp.std.announce

Deltanet.announce

Misc.news.internet.announce

News.announce.important

News,announce.newusers.

9. Comprehensive Promotions Sites: Another source for possible announcement location is a Super Directory that provides a comprehensive list of promotion resources. A number of these are listed in Appendix B, Additional Resources. Start here: look for announcement sites at All in One Promotions and Announcements. It claims to list 1001 sites.
10. Unmoderated Newsgroups: Of the 20,000 or so newsgroups many are unmoderated. That means that nobody is "minding the store". Messages of all kinds are posted without a

moderator to filter out "garbage", the off-topics ones. Your announcement can be as promotional as you desire and nobody will chastise you. You will have a hard time matching the level of hype for many of the postings in these newsgroups. They do offer a free opportunity however to publish your announcement to a large group of net users, some of whom will be in your target audience. Subscribe to these newsgroups, then post your announcement in them. After you are done, most newsreaders will let you open an out box where sent postings are stored just like an out box in your email program. You can quickly resend the announcement or a new posting within seconds. Do this as often as you like -- every day, every week, whenever.

alt.bbs.ads

alt.bbs.internet

alt.best.of.internet

alt.business

alt.business.career-opportunities.executives

alt.business.home.pc

alt.business.misc

alt.cyberspace

alt.internet

alt.internet.commerce

alt.internet.guru

alt.internet.services

alt.misc

biz.marketplace.discussion

biz.marketplace.services.discussion

comp.bbs.misc

comp.infosystems

comp.infosystems.www.misc

misc.creativity

misc.entrepreneurs

It may be worth your time to look for other unmoderated, busy newsgroups to add to this list. What you have to ask yourself is how much time do you want to spend posting to general newsgroups? You could conceivably find hundreds of newsgroups that you could post your announcement to but like registering a web site in Lesson 2, the law of diminishing return may apply. Your time would be better spent focusing on finding target audiences in the next exercise. You can always add to your list of general groups later after you've completed the rest of the lessons in this guidebook.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 3-4**

### **Posting General Announcements**

- 1.comp.infosystems.www.announce: Post your announcement to this newsgroup. Stress benefit to community rather than promotional hype.
- 2.Net-Happenings: Post at this web site. Consider subscribing to the mailing list for a get acquainted period.
- 3.Yahoo: Follow Yahoo links to research more announcement sites starting at <http://www.yahoo.com>, then "Computer & Internet" to "WWW" to "Announcement Services."
- 4.Comp.newprod: Announce a new product or service at this newsgroup.
- 5.New Page List: Submit your new page announcement at <http://web-star.com/newpage/newpage.html>.
- 6.Net Announce (part of All-in-One-Promotion) at <http://www.erspros.com/net-announce> sends an email announcement of your site to those who request it.
- 7.Email Announce at <http://www.EmailAnnounce.com>.
- 8.The DirectoryGuide: <http://www.directoryguide.com/>
- 9."Announce" newsgroups: With all newsgroups showing in your newsreader, search for groups with "announce" in the name. Post to the ones that seem appropriate. Be ready to customize your announcement for a better "fit".

10.Promotions Sites: Search for announcement locations at sites that lists promotions resources. Start with: All in One Promotions and Announcements page  
<http://www.erspros.com/internet-promotion/promotesrvcs.html>.

11.Post to these unmoderated newsgroups:

Alt.bbs.ads

alt.bbs.internet

alt.best.of.internet

alt.business

alt.business.career-opportunities.executives

alt.business.home.pc

alt.business.misc

alt.cyberspace

alt.internet

alt.internet.commerce

alt.internet.guru

alt.internet.services

alt.misc

biz.marketplace.discussion

biz.marketplace.services.discussion

comp.bbs.misc

comp.infosystems

comp.infosystems.www.misc

misc.creativity

## **Exercise 3-5 -- Targeting Special Interest Newsgroups**

This section is an important stage in developing your web marketing plan. You will learn to find where your target audiences hang out – primarily in which newsgroups and mailing lists they can be found. For now you just want to reach them with your announcement. In Lesson 7, you will evaluate these lists, and decide which one to join and participate in discussions. In these groups you want to build one-to-one relationships with members.

Also in this section you will learn to make your announcement more acceptable to your target audiences so that you don't offend a significant portion of them.

### **Finding Discussion Groups Where Target Audiences Hang Out**

1. Finding target audiences in newsgroups is similar to searching for Web sites. The search is based on a keyword associated with a newsgroup. Some of the keywords will likely be the same as ones used to register your site in Lesson 2. Other keywords could identify the specialized field or skill set of the target audience. Sometimes newsgroups can be found by product or service offered. Still others consist of members of an organization or association.

2. Making sure that you are online and that your newsreader is showing all newsgroups (not just subscribed ones), search for each of the keywords listed. An alternative is to go to Deja News and search there.

3. List the newsgroups returned as a result of your keyword search.

4. Subscribe to each newsgroup that appears to be a suitable place to post your announcement.

5. Retrieve the new "headers" or messages in each group.

6. Review the headers for each group before deciding if you want to announce in the group. Look for level of activity and topics of current discussions as indicated by the subject lines. In Exercise 3-7 you will compile an evaluation report of newsgroups visited. This will lay the groundwork for Lesson 7 when you will become a group member and start participating in group discussions.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 3-5**

### **Finding Target Audiences in Special Interest Newsgroups**

1. Search for target audiences by keywords:

Applicable registration keywords:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Specialized field or skill:

_____	_____
_____	_____

Product or service:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Organization or association:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Other keywords:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2.Open newsreader's search feature or go to DejaNews.

3.One by one enter keyword in Search or Find field.

4.List potential newsgroups found on the Discussion Group Evaluation Report in Exercise 3-7

5.Use newsreader's Subscribe option to join appropriate newsgroups found by search.

6.Retrieve new "headers" or newsgroup messages. See your newsreader for instructions.

7.Review new headers for current discussion threads and tone of messages posted to newsgroups.

## **Exercise 3-6 -- Improving Your Announcement's Reception**

Online audiences are a touchy bunch. Many will see nothing unusual about your announcement providing you have correctly found an audience who will be interested in what your web site has to offer. Others however expect more than an empty announcement. They will look to see you are not an outsider merely cross-posting (i.e., posting the same announcement to many newsgroups at the same time) without making any effort to connect with their newsgroup. They will look to see how well you fit in the group's culture. They want some sign that you are one of them. Postings from "one of the gang" seldom get flamed.

### **Improving the Acceptability of Your Announcement Worksheet**

For the little extra time required, it is well worth your time to cater to the members of each newsgroup. Some techniques that will improve your reception are:

1. Vary the subject line to conform to the group's interest
2. Personalized your announcement adding a comment to show that this announcement is for them and nobody else ("I thought my fellow writers would want to know that...").
3. Offer something of value to the group such as a free report, FAQ, special discount, valuable directory of resources, etc. If you add a deadline such as "for 30 days only" or "the first 100 visitors" that will usually spur some to act.
4. Customize your signature if necessary to "strengthen your ties" to the group. Usually the best way to do this is to substitute another promotional text at the end of the signature to appeal to the specific group. Most newsreaders will allow you to maintain a large number of signatures. The challenge comes in remembering to attach the right signature before posting to a newsgroup.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 3-6**

### **Improving the Acceptability of Your Announcement**

- 1) Review each newsgroup selected in the last exercise. Consider how you can improve the appeal of your announcement to each newsgroup. Focus on:

Modifying the subject line

Add a personal touch to the body

Offer something of value

Modify the signature to strengthen group ties

2) Note how you plan to customize your approach to each newsgroup:

Newsgroups	How Customize Announcement

3) Make sure your customized signature is attached.

4) Use your newsreader to announce in each selected group.

## **Exercise 3-7 -- Preparing a Discussion Group Evaluation Report**

It's important to maintain a report of where you posted and an assessment of each group for future postings. This report will serve as a valuable database for deciding which groups you want to join in on the discussions. In Lesson 7 you will use this report for selecting in which groups you want to participate. If you have a boss or client, this report comes in handy as a record of your activities. It demonstrates how organized and how thorough you are.

In this exercise, list the newsgroups you selected for your announcements. In the next exercise you will add the mailing lists that received your announcement. You may want to maintain a separate report for the general announcement groups in Exercise 3-4.

### **Completing the Evaluation Report**

For now just complete the first two columns. The remainder of the report will be completed in Exercise 7-2.

1. Name of Group: Record the name of the group. Even if you don't subscribe to the group, the name will make it easy for you to find it in a list of all newsgroups.
2. Date Posted: Record the date you announced in the group.

## **Report for Exercise 3-7**

### **Discussion Group Evaluation**

Name of Threads	Date	Messages	Members / Daily	Discussion	Group/List Evaluation
-----------------	------	----------	-----------------	------------	-----------------------

(Newsgroups)

(Mailing Lists)

## **Exercise 3-8 -- Reaching Target Audiences in Mailing Lists**

Unlike newsgroups where anyone can read and post messages, a mailing list requires you to be a member first. Only after you subscribe can you read other members' messages and post your own to them. Messages sent to the list are electronically copied and distributed to each member. So, if a list has 5000 members, for example, your announcement will reach all 5000.

A mailing list is an excellent way to reach a specific audience if the content or subject of your announcement or other posting is what list members are interested in. Thousands of lists cover every subject or interest imaginable. The chances are excellent that you will find one or more that caters to an audience you have targeted.

Often mailing lists have moderators who screen messages considered inappropriate or off-topic. As a results, postings are generally more relevant, more on-topic than they are in many newsgroups, particularly the general groups in Exercise 3-4.

Announcements and other types of messages will get a better reception if you belong to a group. For this reason, it's a good idea to subscribe to a list at least a week in advance. Then when you announce, start off by stating that you were a "lurker" (one who belongs but doesn't participate in discussions).and now decided to participate. Members are more tolerant of "lurkers" than new members who jump right into the discussion without making any pretense of learning about the group first. Most members were themselves lurkers at one time or still are.

Moderators want to encourage others to "de-lurk" so they are more apt to approve your announcement than from a new member. However it pays to spend time customizing your announcement for the group the same way you did in Exercise 3-6 for special interest newsgroups.

### **Worksheet for Reaching Targeted Audiences in Mailing Lists**

1. Several Web sites provide a database of mailing lists. They allow you to search by keyword. Each list includes a description and instructions for subscribing. For purposes of this exercise, use L-Soft's CataList, "the official catalog of LISTSERV lists". It allows you to search for lists by:

Special interest

Host site

Host country

With 10,000 or more subscribers

With 1,000 or more subscribers

In alphabetical order.

2. Click on "Search for a mailing list of interest" link. The site's search feature finds your search word in names, titles, and host names. You can search on multiple topics by inserting a comma between topics.
3. A page of lists matching your search words is returned. I searched for "publishing". Twenty matches were found. Each had a link to a description, number of members, archived web site, and subscribing information.
4. Subscribe to those lists that look worthwhile based on subject and number of members. Ideally, subscribe about a week in advance of posting to the list. You will get email instructions for acknowledgement that you are a member. Save these instructions. They will tell you how to post to the list and how to unsubscribe when you are ready to quit. They will also contain the moderator's email address if you need to complain because your announcement was never posted.
5. Add subscribed lists to the Group Evaluation Report from Exercise 3-7 under the "Mailing Lists" heading.
6. Plan how to customize your announcement for each list. Follow the same suggestions as in Exercise 3-6 for newsgroups:

Subject line

Personal touch to announcement

Offer something of value

Modify your signature if applicable.

7. Post your announcements to selected lists.
8. Monitor each list for several days to make sure that your announcement is published and to answer any responses.
9. Unsubscribe to any lists that you don't have time for.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 3-8**

### **Targeting Special Interest Mailing Lists**

- 1.Go to this Web site to begin your search <http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html>.
- 2.Search based on keywords in Exercise 3-5.
- 3.Review archives or other database if available for type of discussions
- 4.Study members' postings for appropriateness.
- 5.Subscribe to lists you consider appropriate for your announcements.
- 6.Add selected lists to Group Evaluation Report in started in Exercise 3-7.
- 7.Evaluate lists for the report. Note which to remain a member of and which to un-subscribe after the announcement.
- 8.Customize the announcement to be more acceptable to each list:
  - Subject line
  - Personal touch to body of the announcement
  - Offer something of value
  - Modify the signature for the list

9. After a suitable waiting period, email the announcement to the address specifically for posting to the list.
10. Monitor the lists for several days to verify your announcement was published and for any responses from list members.

### **Exercise 3-9 -- Recapping the Ideas in This Chapter**

**The most important ideas that you learned in this lesson and will have the most impact on your web marketing plan are:**

What an announcement is and how to prepare to announce your new web site, page, or event, including the stages of an announcement campaign.

When to announce. Announcements aren't just for new sites. If you understand all the types of events that justify posting announcements, you realize that you should be able to regularly begin a new announcement campaign that will increase publicity and traffic generated by your site.

What types of announcements work best. By emphasizing the newsworthiness of an event or its benefit to the reader, or pique the reader's curiosity, announcements are more effective.

Announcements should have a signature attached. You learned how a signature greatly enhances the promotional value of an announcement or any other type of Internet communications. What kind of information you include in your signature depends on the circumstances, such as how many different ways you want somebody to be able to reach you. You also received guidelines for formatting and using signatures in different situations.

Writing the subject for your announcement is a lot like writing the headline for a story. It must be interesting enough that the reader wants more information. Guidelines for writing subject lines included making the subject newsworthy, or in question form, or offer something for free.

The body of the announcement consists of three parts: the hook, the description, and the inducement. The hook propels the reader to the description of the web event. It often bridges the subject and body.

Posting an announcement in general forums, particularly in those that are specifically for

announcements, is the first step in an announcement campaign. Caution must be exercised so that they aren't treated as blatant commercial promotions except in those unmoderated newsgroups where few restrictions apply. Other locations to announce may be found in Yahoo and comprehensive Super Directories of promotion sites that include sites for announcements.

Probably even more important locations than general forums for announcing are special interest newsgroups where you are most likely to find the target audiences you must want to reach. You learned how to find special interest newsgroups by keywords, subscribe to the newsgroup in your newsreader, and retrieve headers so that you can review the types of messages posted in the newsgroup.

Once you found newsgroup that suitable for your announcement, there are certain techniques you can follow to make your announcement more acceptable to the newsgroup participants. You should consider modifying the subject line and the body of your Announcement so that it appears to have been written specifically for the newsgroup.

One of the keys to developing an effective web marketing plan is to organize information and resources into reports and forms so that you have a complete record of your activities. The information will also be the basis for future web marketing plans. One of the most important reports covered in this lesson is the Discussion Group Evaluation Report which summarizes pertinent information about newsgroups and mailing lists.

Special interest mailing lists are an excellent way to reach your target audiences with your announcement. One of the best locations for finding them is at L-Soft's CataList. Using the same keywords used to find appropriate newsgroups, you should be able to find a number of lists where target audiences hang out. Once you found one that appear to be appropriate, you should become a member for a week or so before posting your announcement. The lists are added to the Discussion Group Evaluation Report with the newsgroups you found.

# **Lesson 4 – Increasing Web Traffic with Classified Ads**

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **Classified Ads as a Way to Increase Web Traffic**

Exercise 4-1 – Writing the Classified Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 4-1

Exercise 4-2 – Selecting Sites for Your Classified Ad

Worksheet for Exercise 4-2

Exercise 4-3 – Maximizing Results from Classified Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 4-3

Exercise 4-4 – Recording Results of Your Classified Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 4-4

Exercise 4-5 – Recapping the Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson 4 Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson, you will:**

Learn the importance of classified ads for increasing web traffic

Decide on the scope of your classified ad campaign

Write a subject line for your add that will improve results

Write the body of your classified ad

Learn how to end your ad with a call to action

Follow for selecting locations to place classified ads

Find super directories which list hundreds of classified ad locations to select from.

Follow guidelines for selecting the best classified ad sites.

Learn the importance of testing to continually improve the results from your classified ads

Know the importance of recording results of different ads at different locations.

## **Classified Ads as a Way to Increase Web Traffic**

Classified ads are another approach to generating more web traffic. Hundreds of locations exist on the web for placing a classified ad. Many of them are free. Your challenge is to determine how extensive you want your classified ad campaign to be. How much time (and money) do you want to spend?

First, you may want to ask yourself, "What's the risk?" Reportedly, some classified ads sites are actually schemes to generate email lists. Placing an ad could get you more junk email than web traffic. Junk email is a risk you run though just be being active on the net. Registering or announcing your web site will also likely attract junk email. It's a small price to pay for the benefits of exploring another avenue for generating web traffic.

You have a large selection of regional, national and global ad sites from which to choose. A lot depends on the audience you are trying to attract to your web site. Most classified ad locations offer headings under which you place an ad, similar to print media. Attracting the right audience rests in part on how relevant the heading, or headings, you choose are.

With many free sites, it is a case of "you get what you pay for" They don't have the resources to aggressively promote themselves so traffic is low which means you are wasting your time if they are on your list of sites where an ad was placed.

Some of the best site cost, but not much -- certainly not as much as print ads. It's probably good idea to start with free sites and analyze the results before spending money on classified ads.

## **How Much Time Do You Want to Spend?**

Like registering a site (Lesson 2) and announcing an event (Lesson 3), you could spend a week doing nothing but place classified ads. You have to decide for yourself how much time you want to spend placing ads. We recommend that you select ten reputable-looking sites and track traffic from those ads. Then decide how much more effort you want to put into an extensive ad campaign.

If you do decide to place your ad in a multitude of sites, we recommend that you select the best for now and wait until after you have tried the other approaches for boosting web traffic described in the lessons in this guidebook before continuing to place more ads. By that time you should have an idea how the classified ads you placed are doing.

A lot depends on the product or service offered at your site. If an analysis of these sites after a few weeks suggests that classified ads are profitable, only then should you devote considerable time and money to classified ads.

Finally, keep track of all the places where you placed classified ads. Then test results to fine tune your ad campaign. NOTE: Also keep track of the ones where you decided not to place ads so you don't waste time visiting them again.

Don't forget the unmoderated newsgroups in Lesson 3 where you were encouraged to posted announcements. These are entirely suitable for classified ads too. If you are selling a product, search all newsgroups for those with "forsale" in their name. See if any of those are appropriate for your ad.

## **Exercise 4-1 -- Writing the Classified Ads**

With the potential for thousands of viewers to see your classified ad, the difference from generating a 1% response versus a 2% or 3% is significant. Several time-tested techniques will improve the effectiveness of your ad.

**Like your announcement in Lesson 3, your classified ad consists of three parts:**

- Subject
- Body
- Call for action.

### **Writing the Subject Line**

At some classified sites, readers scan headlines and select the ads they want to read. For this reason it is important to write an especially appealing headline. It is your only shot at connecting with the reader. The subject line is preferably:

- Clever, appealing
- Straight-forward, honest
- Eye-catching.

Warning: "Eye-catching" doesn't mean all caps, a string of asterisks before and after, exclamation points, or dollar signs. These techniques for trying to catch the reader's eye are tacky, over-used, rude, amateurish. They will immediately turn off most discerning net users.

### **Writing the Body of the Ad**

Describe your product or service in terms that will benefit the reader. Your readers are more likely to visit your site if they are told how they will benefit rather than a straight description of features.

The description should be written in an informal tone, written as if you were describing something important to a friend not to a thousand people. Use second person "you" and first person "I", "we".

Ordinarily you will want to provide concise, specific details that will encourage the reader to visit your site for more information and/or to take advantage of a free benefit. Avoid vagueness which is more apt to arouse suspicion. Honest and integrity are important. You have to inspire confidence in the buyer.

### **Finish with a Call to Action**

All ads should end with a call to action. Request that the reader take the next step: visit your site. If there's no call to action, chances are pretty good you won't get any action.

You may want to consider including in your call for action one of these incentives which usually improve the response:

- Free gifts to limited number of visitors
- Coupons
- Prizes
- Special discounts for limited time
- No-risk offer, satisfaction guarantee
- Limited time offer
- Hurry before stock runs out
- Free trial period
- Special guarantee

With so many classified sites to choose from, the next exercise presents some guidelines for choosing where to place your classified ad.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 4-1**

### **Writing the Classified Ad**

1) Write several "appealing" subject lines:

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2) Write several "straight-forward, honest" subject lines:

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3) Focus on "eye-catching" subject lines:

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4) Pick the best headlines to test:

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5) Write a friendly, informal body that focuses on benefit to reader:

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6) Experiment with several calls to action:

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## **Exercise 4-2 -- Selecting Sites for Your Classified Ad**

Obviously, you aren't going to demand too much from a free site, but consider these guidelines when analyzing potential sites for your classified ad:

### **Guidelines for Classified Ad Sites**

The site must aggressively promote itself. If it isn't taking the necessary steps to generate traffic then your ad isn't going to be seen by many visitors.

The site must offer appropriate headings. If the product or service offered by your web site doesn't fit neatly in one of the categories offered, then you may be wasting your time. Any traffic to your site from a misplaced classified ad is purely by chance.

The site should have a large number of classified ads. The better the selection of ads, the more visitors are likely to come. Also, the site is probably promoting itself heavily in order to attract a large number of ads.

Banner revenues from independent sponsors provide revenues. The presence of banner ads probably means that the site is working diligently to get the traffic up to satisfy the banner sponsors. If it's giving ad space away, then banner revenues are probably what keep it going.

The site has a professional look and feel. Many net users have a prejudice toward working with sites that exhibit a fair degree of competence and professionalism. Stay away from chintzy, low-tech sites.

Finally, the site should pass a rudimentary test: satisfied customers. Email some classified advertisers, particularly ones offering a similar product or service. Ask them how well they are doing with their ad. As long as you're inquiring, ask them for the names of locations where their ads are doing well and how they are doing on the Internet in general. It might be worth your time to establish a one-on-one relationship with compatible sites. You may be able to exchange tips and eventually links.

### **Completing the Classified Ad Site Selection Worksheet**

1. Well-known Sites: A number of large, busy, reputable sites offer free classified ads. A good start is Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>). Look for others which have name recognition.

2. Super Directory of Classified Ad Sites: Several excellent Super Directories (Lesson 5) provide a convenient mega-list of classified ad sites. With your ad ready, you can click on a link to a classified ad site from the directory, paste your ad, return to the directory, and click on another link. A good directory for starting the selection process is this comprehensive directory of classified ad sites: <http://www.uran.net/imal/mother.html>.

3. Target Audience: Some of the links may be to special interest sites for one of your target audiences, or a specific geographical area you want to reach. These may be more effective than ad sites for the general public. Select the most reputable of these.

4. Classified Ads with Newspapers and Other Media: You may want to consider the classified ads sections of major newspapers. These are definitely reputable and have a larger drawing power than most ad sites. They will probably cost you a small amount to place your ad however but the results may justify the expense.

5. Other Classified Resources: Appendix B lists other classified ad resources. You may want to check out other sources for more opportunities to post classified ads.

### **Exercise 4-3 -- Maximizing Results from Classified Ads**

The primary objective of the classified ads was to attract visitors to your site. To turn this into a positive though you need something more. What that might be depends on your site's primary objectives:

Sales of a product or service

Compile a valuable database of prospects for future promotions

Increased awareness of your company or Web site

Position your site for ad revenues.

Many of the techniques for maximizing results are based on your ability to analyze web traffic to your site. These are several of the most important statistics you should know:

How many people visit your site?

What are your most popular pages?

Where did the visitors come from ?

How did they find out about your site?

What type of browser of they using?

Analyzing Web traffic is discussed in Lesson 11, Building Long-term Success.

### **Completing the Worksheet for Maximizing Results from Classified Ads**

A great thing about online classified ads is that many are free or entail minimum cost. You can afford to test until you hit on the right combination. Testing is the key to maximizing the results from your ads.

1.Headings: Select several different categories under which you expect your target audience to find you. Decide how long your ad will run before changing it. If the site lets you place multiple postings – same ad, different headings. This is a good way to increase exposure, thus generate more traffic to your web site.

2.Headlines: Headlines are so important to generating interest in your ad, test a number of headlines to see which draws the most traffic – the right kind of traffic; i.e., from your target audience. Brainstorm several possible headlines. When you've identified the most effective one, brainstorm several more. Keep trying to find the headline that outdoes the "reigning headline champ".

3.Body: Keep testing the body of your ad. Re-work the lead-in sentence and the rest of the body of your ad.

4.Offering: Change the offer that entices visitors to your site: free report, FAQ, contest, discount, etc.

5.Ad Locations: Test different classified ad sites. Some will be more effective than others at getting your ad before a large number of net users.

6.Pricing: The lack of satisfactory results may be the fault of your ads but in the pricing of your product or service. Test different pricing schemes: sell more at lower prices or fewer at higher price. A lot depends on your cost structure and your goals. If your costs drop dramatically after a certain production level, you may want to price your product to encourage a maximum number of sales. If generating web traffic is your primary goal, then drop your price dramatically or even give it away for free.

Finally, consider hiring a direct mail copywriter if you aren't confident in your abilities to write effective ads. It's a small job for a copywriter and will probably cost only a few hundred dollars.

### Worksheet for Exercise 4-3

#### **Maximizing Traffic from Classified Ads Worksheet**

1.Run ad consistently and under different headings

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2.Test your headlines

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3.Test the body of your ad:

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4. Test the offering used to entice visitors to your site.

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---

---

---

5. Test different ad locations.


6. Test multiple postings.

7. Test pricing of your product or service.

## **Exercise 4-4 -- Recording Results of Your Classified Ads**

Keeping a record of where you post your ad and how each is doing is extremely important. Your primary task in Exercise 4-3 was to test, test, test; to keep trying to improve results through a better combination of ad components. All that testing is for naught however unless you keep track of results of your tests. Good records are the necessary extension of testing.

### **Completing the Worksheet for Recording Results from Classified Ads**

1.Location: Identify each location where you placed classified ads. Complete more than one worksheet if necessary.

2.Ad Name: Assign a name or code for each classified ad. Every time you change something, such as the category, subject line, body, or offer, assign a new name or code.

3.Dates Run: Record the starting and ending dates for the ad.

4.Effectiveness: Estimates the increase in traffic and/or sales from the ad. This is made easier if you are able to track the source of visitors to your web site.

You should make an effort to periodically place new ads. Especially, if you sense that results from existing ads, no matter how effective they were, are starting to taper off. You may want to time the ads with new offers or inducements to visit your site.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 4-4**

### **Recording Results from Your Classified Ads**

Classified Ad Location	Ad Name or Code	Dates Run	Effectiveness
------------------------	-----------------	-----------	---------------

## **Exercise 4-5 -- Recapping the Ideas in This Lesson**

Classified ads are yet another means for driving web traffic higher. With hundred of locations for posting a classified ad, the potential reward make a classified ad campaign worth trying.

Placing classified ads is like registering and announcing discussed in previous lessons. Each has an almost unlimited number of locations where you can post to. You have to decide, preferably after a trial period, how extensively you want to pursue placing ads.

It's a good idea to be selective at first where you place an ad. Then analyze results before spending too much time placing an ad at numerous locations.

An effective ad starts with a subject line that attracts the reader's attention. A good subject line is usually clever, straight-forward, and eye-catching. If the subject doesn't grab the reader's attention, then your ad never gets read.

The body of the ad should focus on the benefits to the reader by visiting your site. It should be written in a friendly and informal manner, preferably using second person "you" and first person "I", "we".

The ad should finish with a call to action. It should instruct the reader to take the next step which is to visit your site for more information, a free offer, a special promotion, etc.

Start with a relatively few sites in which to post a classified ad until you've been able to analyze their effectiveness. These guidelines will help you choose the locations for your classified ads:

The site should include indications that it aggressively promotes itself to generate Web traffic.

The site should offer appropriate headings under which your target audience will logically find your ad.

The site should have a large number of ads that encourages higher traffic.

Banner ad placed by independent advertisers indicate the site is highly motivated to increase traffic and produce results for its classified advertisers.

The site has a professional look and feel indicating technical expertise and adequate resources.

Classified advertisers, particularly in appropriate headings, should be contacted for feedback on how successful their ads are at classified ad location.

To improve the odds of your classified ad campaign will be worthwhile, start with such well-known sites as Yahoo.

Also look in Super Directories for specialty classified ad locations which attract your target audience.

Review the host of links in these Super Directories for other suitable classified ad locations.

To improve results from classified ads it's essential that you keep testing each ad component. Because most ads are free, you have an excellent opportunity to test until you come up with the right location, subject line, body, and call to action combination.

The benefits from testing are limited unless you keep a detailed record of the results of your testing.

## **Lesson 5: Populating the Internet with Links to Your Site**

### **Lesson Objectives**

### **Stages of an Aggressive Link Placement Campaign**

Exercise 5-1 – Organizing a Database of Essential Web Resources

Worksheet for Exercise 5-1

Exercise 5-2 – Finding Super Directories for Your Link

Worksheet for Exercise 5-2

Exercise 5-3 – Requesting a Super Directory to Add Your Link

Worksheet for Exercise 5-3

Exercise 5-4 – Compiling a Report of Link Requests

Worksheet for Exercise 5-4

Exercise 5-5 – Requesting Links at Complementary Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 5-5

Exercise 5-6 – Partnering with Other Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 5-6

Exercise 5-7 – Compiling Your Own Super Directory

Worksheet for Exercise 5-7

Exercise 5-8 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson, you will have:**

An overview of a campaign to place links to your web site.

Organized a database of valuable resources for your web marketing plan.

Located super directories to link to your site.

Requested directories to link to you.

A record of all super directories contacted.

Requested complementary sites to link to your site.

Ideas for partnering with other sites.

A plan to develop your own super directory to increase traffic and the number of links to your site.

## **Worksheets for Lesson 5**

Worksheet for Exercise 5-1 -- Constructing a Resources Database

Worksheet for Exercise 5-2 -- Finding Super Directories for Your Link

Worksheet for Exercise 5-3 -- Requesting Super Directories Add Your Link

Worksheet for Exercise 5-4 -- Preparing the Super Directory Request Report

Worksheet for Exercise 5-5 -- Guidelines for Requesting Links at Complementary Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 5-6 -- Partnering with Other Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 5-7 -- Compiling Your Own Super Directory Stages of an Aggressive Link Placement Campaign

An important, on-going source of traffic to your web site will come from links you've placed around the Internet. Imagine that you had a hundred links at other web sites. Each feeds visitors to your site. Some may funnel visitors your way in dribbles and drabs, but the combined result is a steady stream. It adds up. Some sites find that most of their traffic comes from links at other sites than from search engines.

What you'll learn in this lesson is how to find and qualify sites for your link, how to approach them, and what additional steps you can take to encourage others to link to your site.

The goal of an aggressive linkage program is to get as many links to your site as possible from super directories and complementary sites. The more links, the more traffic headed toward your site. It's as simple as that.

Remember from Lesson 2 that some search engines base its rankings partially on how popular a site is, as measured by the number of links to it. The more sites that link to yours, the better your site shows up in search results.

## Steps in a Link Campaign

An aggressive link campaign includes these steps:

1. Prepare a database to organize a record of sites assisting your Web Traffic Plan. Create separate folders for super directories and complementary sites.
2. Locate super directories that provide a comprehensive list of important resources for targeted audiences.
3. Email super directories requesting them to add a link to your site.
4. Maintain a report of super directories contacted and contact name
5. Locate complementary web sites and request that they add your link. Offer a reciprocal link if necessary.
6. Consider partnership arrangements involving:
  - Cooperative advertising
  - Joint promotions
  - Shared content
  - Sales associate program
  - Co-sponsor events.
7. Compile your own super directory if your field is lacking a competent one or can support another one.

## **Exercise 5-1 – Organizing a Database of Essential Web Resources**

It's time to consider giving some thought to organizing your growing database of resources that is essential to your web marketing plan. Mostly these resources will be that you want to revisit periodically to help develop current and future traffic plans. So far you should have a database of:

Registration sites

Announcement locations

Classified ads sites

Newsgroups, mailing lists discussion groups

### **In this lesson you will add to your database:**

Super directories

Complementary sites

Candidates for reciprocal links

In Lesson 6 additions to your resources database will be:

Competitor sites

Locations for target audiences

Information resources

Promotional sites.

In no time at all you will be inundated with so many sites it will be hard to keep track of them all. It's worth your time to organize a database.

### **Completing the Resources Database Worksheet**

1. Create separate folders for bookmarked web sites that relate to each phase of your web marketing plan.

2. Separate bookmarked resources you presently have into the appropriate folders. For those that fit into more than one category, add them to each appropriate category. So, for example, all registration sites should go into the Registration folders.

When you have completed Exercise 5-2, Finding Super Directories for Your Link, you will have a folder of all Super Directories that you have found.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-1**

### **Constructing a Resources Database**

- 1) Folders: Create bookmark folders in your browser for types of web sites and discussion groups in your resources database:

Registration sites

Announcement locations

Classified ad sites and forums

Super Directories

Compatible sites

Reciprocal links

Discussion group archive sites

Competitor sites

Information resources

Sites with promotional resources

Site with Web design ideas.

- 2) Classify existing bookmarks into folders. Either drag and drop in your browser, or cut and paste bookmarked sites into one (or more) of the folders you created in the last step. All new bookmarks relating to your web marketing plan should go into one of these folders.

- 3) For an alternative, consider creating a database of resources in your word processor, spreadsheet, or database program. These applications permit a more comprehensive database than your browser.

## **Exercise 5-2 -- Finding Super Directories for Your Link**

A popular way used by many sites to attract a target audience is to build a comprehensive "super directory" or "mega-directory" of links to related Web sites. The sites listed in the directories provide a convenient, valuable resource for members of that audience. These directories exist in nearly every field or special interest.

Not only are these directories doing the targeted audiences a favor but they are doing you one too. They attract the target audience you want to reach. It's important that you find these Super Directories and ask that a link to your site be added.

### **Guidelines for Finding Super Directories Worksheet**

1. Begin your search at these sites:

Yahoo -- Follow the links to the Free\_for\_All\_Pages page and select from the general directories those suitable for your link:

Computers\_and\_Internet / Internet / World\_Wide\_Web / Searching\_the\_Web / indices\_to\_Web\_Documents / Free\_for\_All\_Pages

the Yahoo – Again at yahoo, this time drill down through the directories and subdirectories to locate special interest Super Directories. Look for keywords in title or description such as "Directory", "Resources", "Center", etc.

Search.com – C/Net's Search.com search multiple search engines simultaneously. They make it easy for you to continually narrow your search until you have a manageable list of links.

Infoseek - When your search turns up a couple of likely candidates, click on "Similar Sites" for other links.

A "Meta-directory of directories" for specific target audiences.

Argus Clearinghouse -- A thorough compilation of resources.

The Info Service (over 21,600 links) - With so many links, including a link to "mega-directories", you stand a good chance of finding plenty of valuable resources for your database.

1001 FREE Places to Promote Your Site – Another mega-site with a multitude of valuable resources.

Website Promoters Resource Center.  
Hot100 Websites.

BizWeb

CommerceNet

The Internet Mall

NetMarket

Einet Galaxy

Marketplace

Bestweb List

Add the bookmarks to your Super Directories folder.

2) Search for More Directories: In the previous lessons you used keywords associated with your site to register, announce, and place classified ads. Now use them to locate Super Directories in major search engines. Revisit several of the search engines where you manually registered your site in Exercise 2-6 (they should be bookmarked in the "Search Engine" folder). To further narrow your search, supplement the keywords with "directory", "resources" or "center". That may increase the likelihood that your search will narrow the search without dropping any Super Directories from the results. Appendix D describes search tips that will help you find Super Directories.

3) Check Links to Similar Sites: Review the links in Super Directories found so far. Pick several prominent sites like yours. AltaVista has a nifty "Advance Query" feature that allows you to see a list of sites linking to the prominent sites you selected. The odds are pretty good that some of these links will be other Super Directories that are also linking to those prominent sites. Follow these steps:

- a. Type: link:[siteURL] AND NOT [siteURL]. Plug in the URL for the prominent site beginning with "http://". The "AND NOT" excludes that site's links to its own pages from the list.
- b. Check out the links that appear likely to be Super Directories.

4) Ezine Archives: Special interest magazines and newsletters often publish articles identifying web sites that have compiled a comprehensive list of related resources. Check out their web site and back issues. If the target audience is broad enough, general computer and Internet publications are also likely to have this information.

5) Yellow Pages: Check out Internet Yellow Pages books in bookstores and library, particularly ones with an accompanying CD-ROM with hot links to sites listed.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-2**

### **Finding Super Directories for Your Link**

Sites Visited

Links Found

Importance

## Similar Sites Directories Found with AltaVista Query

Search Keywords: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Ezines, Newsletters, Trade Journals, Internet Yellow Pages

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## **Exercise 5-3 – Requesting a Super Directory to Add Your Link**

You should have found a number of Super Directories in Exercise 5-2. In this exercise you'll receive tips on contacting them to request that a link be added to your site. Follow this simple list of guidelines for best results:

1. Look for an "Add Link" button at each site.
2. If no "Add" button, look for the name of a contact. As a last resort, email the Webmaster to request that your link be added.
3. Draft a friendly, informal request. Stress the one-to-one nature of the correspondence.
4. Find something at the Super Directory to compliment. Select its most salient feature of which the recipient is sure to be proud.
5. Compiling and maintaining a Super Directory takes a lot of work. Be sure to compliment the recipient on the valuable service he or she is performing.

6. At a minimum, you want a text link to your site. If permitted by the directory, you would also like to include a graphic logo and short promotional statement. Have these ready to go in the event you get the green light.
7. If the directory includes a number of categories, mention under which heading you would prefer to see your site listed.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-3**

### **Requesting Super Directories Add Your Link**

#### **Request Checklist:**

1. Look for an "Add New Link" button. This is the easiest and quickest way.
2. If no Add button, look for the name of an individual to contact. As a last resort, email the Webmaster.
3. Draft a friendly, informal request to add your site. Remember, there's a real person there whom you want to do you an important favor.
4. Begin the request with a sincere compliment. Choose to write about what impresses you the most about the site.
5. Also express your appreciation for the time and trouble spent creating such a useful resource.
6. Have your link ready to go. Be prepared to include a graphic and short promotional wording if allowed.

7. Be prepared to tell the directory contact where you would like the link to your site placed if the links are separated by categories.

### **Exercise 5-4 – Compiling a Report of Link Requests**

Maintain a simple report of Super Directories contacted to add a link. You will want to report for follow-up purposes to see that a link to your site was added and to be available for future web marketing plans. You also may want to save outgoing email requests in a separate mailbox so that you have a quick reference to who you contacted and how your phrased the request.

If you want to maintain the report in an electronic file, it's easy enough to set up in a word processor, spreadsheet or database program.

#### **Preparing the Super Directory Request Report**

1. Name: List the Super Directories you found and contacted with your request.
- 2.URL: Show the URL for each Super Directory. If you are uncertain what it is, check the directory's bookmark Properties in your browser (right-click your mouse on the bookmark).
- 3.Contact: Show the name of the individual you contacted. If you completed an input form, note "input form". If you directed the email to the Webmaster, note that.
- 4.Request/Follow-Up Dates: Record the date you made the request and the date(s) you followed up to see if a link to your site was added. You may need these dates if you have to follow up to see why a link was not added.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-4**

### **Preparing the Super Directory Request Report**

Super Directory URL	Individual Contacted	Request/Follow-Up Dates
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## **Exercise 5-5 – Requesting Links at Complementary Sites**

Chances are the Super Directories you found have links to sites that complement yours. They may be established on the net longer and have a larger following. They may be more successful in targeting the same audience you want to reach. These sites could be an excellent source of traffic. It doesn't hurt to ask if they will add your link. Often the Webmaster wants to have a list of valuable resources for visitors and your site qualifies as a welcome addition.

Generally, phrase your request much as you did to the Super Directories in the last exercise. The difference is you are noting how the two sites complement each other and how relevant your site is to the other site's audience.

If you get a negative response, that isn't necessarily the end of it. Don't give up. Suggest that the link be to the page with important content thereby bypassing your home page. Perhaps you could add meaningful content that would make your site more interesting to other sites. If the content is important to the site's visitors, the Webmaster should grant your request, or at least counter with a reciprocal link offer. The additional content should also make other Webmasters be more receptive to your link request. Each time you add content, you may be creating new opportunities to place links with sites whose visitors are interested in your new content. In the final analysis, the more valuable your site's content is, the more favorable responses you should receive to link requests.

### **Reciprocal Links**

Many sites won't consider adding your link unless you add theirs. This is called "reciprocal linking". It's only fair. It should also be your response if you get asked to add somebody's link to your site.

Before agreeing to add a link to your site, create a page specifically for reciprocal links: a "Hot Links", "Important Resources", or "Selected Links" page. You have a place for reciprocal links and another page with worthwhile content. Visitors spend more time at your site and the number of "hits" or page requests increases.

Caution: avoid linking with a direct competitor. Learn from them (Exercise 6-2) but don't link to them. For one thing, you don't want them monitoring your activities as closely as you are going to monitor theirs.

The same as in the last exercise, have the text link, a graphic logo, and a short promotional statement ready to go in the event your request is approved. You'll settle for a simple text link but your preference would be to have all three components. Together they will generate significantly more traffic than just a simple text link.

## **Finding Complementary Sites**

Chances are there's a wealth of complementary sites on the web which are candidates for your links. Where you are most likely to find them:

1. Super Directories: As noted previously, a good resource for a listing of complementary

## Guidelines for Requesting Another Site to Add Your Link

1. Look for an individual to contact. Email your request to the Webmaster as a last resort.
2. Draft a friendly, informal request. Try to establish a one-to-one relationship.
3. Compliment the person on their site and point out how the sites complement each other. Describe how a link to your site benefits his or her site.
4. Offer a recommendation where you think the link should go.
5. Retain a copy of the email request in a separate mailbox for follow-up and reference.

## **Guidelines for Exercise 5-5**

### **Guidelines for Requesting Links at Complementary Sites**

- 1) Look for complementary sites here:

- Super directories
- Discussion groups
- Classified ads
- Keyword searches.

- 2) Avoid contacting a direct competitor for a link.

- 3) The site should meet these guidelines:

- It has a polished, reputable look to it.
- It reaches your target audience.
- It appears to aggressively promote itself.
- It looks professionally well-designed and incorporates recent technology.

- 4) The initial request should be for the other site to add a link to your site.
- 5) Draft a friendly, informal request that promotes a one-to-one relationship.
- 6) Start off the request with a sincere compliment about the site. Focus on the best feature about the site.
- 7) Describe how the other site benefits from adding your link.

- 8) A compromise or follow-up request is to offer a reciprocal link arrangement.
- 9) Be prepared to recommend where your link should go.
- 10) Create special page for links to other sites. Call it "Hot Links", "Other Resources", etc.
- 11) Have a text link, graphic logo, and short promotional statement ready to go.
- 12) Retain a copy of all email requests in a separate mailbox for follow-up.
- 13) Follow up to see that your link has or has not been added. Monitor periodically to make sure that it hasn't been removed.

### **Exercise 5-6 – Partnering with Other Sites**

Partnering with another site carries the "reciprocal link" concept to the next level. Instead of merely displaying each other's link, possibly one of many, you cooperate with other sites in a joint effort such as a promotional campaign -- sometimes called "fusion marketing".

Fusion marketing could involve:

Cooperative advertising

Joint promotions

Sharing valuable content

Sales associate program

Co-sponsoring a contest.

### **Sales Associate Programs**

Some sites are aggressively lining up "sales associates" to help sell their product or service. A "sales associate" site earns a commission for selling another site's product or service, or at least steering traffic to the site where the sale is made.

Probably the most well-known of these is Amazon.com's which bills itself as the world's largest bookstore. It has hundreds of "sales associate" Web sites promoting Amazon's books to a target audience. If a visitor clicks on a link for an interesting book, he or she is taken to Amazon's site where the book is described and may be purchased. The originating site gets a percent commission on the sale.

If you have a product or service upon which another site can earn a commission, it may be easy to line up partnerships. You are offering these sites a chance to generate revenue. In return, you are making sales that probably would not have been made.

For this to work you need to be able to track where visitors come from who end up buying your product.

### **Start with Natural Combinations**

Some combinations of products and services are an easy partnership fit. Generally both partners target the same audience, or at least closely related audiences. Examples:

HTML or web design instruction

Sites for Web designers and graphic artists

Gift sites promoted at individually each site or together as a package.

The complementary sites you found in Exercise 5-2 should yield a long list of sites in which you could arrange for a mutually-beneficial partnership. Review each site on the list for a partnership possibility. Focus particularly on sites that meet these criteria:

They have a polished, reputable look to it.

They reach your target audience.

They appear to aggressively promote itself.

They look professionally well-designed and incorporates recent technology.

### **Look for Innovative Combinations**

The real challenge would be to arrange for innovative partnerships where there appears to be no natural connection at first between what two sites offer. After some creative thinking, you come up with interesting possibilities. The potential is limitless.

A good place to start looking for these sites is at listings of "Hot" or "Cool" sites in "What's New" directories, etc. These sites listed are generally interesting, have attracted attention, and are probably enjoying an uptick in traffic because of the recognition.

Next search the archives of Internet and computer ezines for articles describing the "1001

Best Web sites" or a similar subject. Try the Internet Yellow Page directories. If you buy one at the bookstore, be sure to get one with a CD-ROM containing active links to each site. The Internet hosts a multitude of free or low-cost, promotional opportunities. Partnering with other sites is another example of one that is limited only by your imagination.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-6**

### **Partnering with Other Sites**

1) Compile a list of complementary sites that may be potential partners. Many of these will have been found in Exercise 5-2.

2) Screen sites based on:

Polished, reputable appearance Reaches target audiences Looks to be active, dynamic  
Aggressively promotes itself Looks professional and competent.

3) Review each site in terms of possibility for:

Cooperative advertising  
Joint promotions  
Sharing content  
Sales associate program  
Co-sponsoring a contest  
Other ideas.

4) Compile a list of off-beat sites requiring an innovative partnership:

"Cool Sites", "What's New", other such lists  
Internet Yellow Page directories  
"Best Web sites" articles in ezine archives.

## **Exercise 5-7 – Compiling Your Own Super Directory**

If you are unable to find first-rate super directories in your field, consider starting your own. You would be performing a valuable service by bringing together target audiences and related web sites. As you have learned in this lesson, super directories play an important role in populating the Internet with links to your site.

A super directory would bring sites to you wanting to be listed. You could use your leverage as super directory administrator to aggressively promote reciprocal linking by encouraging other sites to link to you. A dramatic increase in web traffic is sure to follow.

Compiling a super directory is not difficult, only time-consuming. After making sure that your directory includes all the worthwhile links on existing directories, you could search the web using the resources and techniques described in this manual.

Compiling a directory for users in your field would be an "event" worthy of an announcement in appropriate news groups and announcement locations. Maintaining and enhancing it would also justify ongoing announcements and interactions with online communities.

### **Worksheet for Compiling Your Own Directory**

1. Create the web page off your home page for the directory. Assign a title and include meta tags to improve its standing in searches (Exercise 2-1).
2. Visit each of the super directories found in Exercise 5-2. Some of these will lead you to more directories.
3. Combine the directory into one "mega" super directory on your new web page.
4. Visit each site listed. Delete those in which the link doesn't work or are totally devoid of any content that would be worthwhile to target audiences.
5. Note where you would like a link to your site
6. Notify each remaining site that it is listed in your directory. Describe your plans for promoting the directory and how it will benefit the site.
7. Ask for a reciprocal link to your site. Provide the necessary text and graphics with a recommendation for where you would like the link.
8. Visited the resources listed in this lesson and in Appendix B. Look for more sites to add to your directory.
9. Conduct keyword searches for more sites in major search engines.
10. Register your directory in search engines (Lesson 2).
11. Announce your super directory in newsgroups and mailing lists. Ask for more worthwhile sites to list.
12. Contact each new addition to provide a reciprocal link.

13. Monitor sites contacted to see that they are linking to your directory.
14. Prepare a web marketing plan for your super directory.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 5-7**

### **Compiling Your Own Super Directory**

1. Create a web page for the new directory. Assign a title and meta tags to improve its standing in searches.
2. Combine links at the super directories found in Exercise 5-2 into your directory. Look for more super directories at these super directories.
3. Visit each site listed to verify that the link is still active and the site is worthy of inclusion. Note where you would like the link to your directory.
4. Notify each site selected that it is listed in your directory. Describe the benefits of being listed.
5. Ask that a reciprocal link be provided to your site. Provide the necessary text and graphic logo with your recommendation for where you would like the link.
6. Visit the resources listed in this guidebook looking for more sites to add.
7. Search for more sites in the major search engines.
8. Register your super directory at search engines.
9. Announce in relevant discussion groups that you have the most complete super directory in the field and ask for additional sites to list.
10. Contact each new addition notifying them that they are being listed and request a reciprocal link.
11. Monitor sites in directory to verify they have added a link to your site.
12. Prepare a web marketing plan for your new super directory.

## **Exercise 5-8 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson**

A prime source of web traffic will be from sites which have a link to your site. Some sites find that these links are responsible for more visitors than searches. The more links you populate the Internet with, the more likely this will be true for your site too.

To successfully execute a linkage campaign, you must locate and approach many web sites. It's important that you develop a well-organized database of resources before you get inundated with book marked web sites. You should start grouping resources by:

Registration sites

Announcement locations

Classified Ads

Discussion forums: News groups, mailing lists, Web sites

Super directories

Complementary sites

Reciprocal link sites

Competitors

Valuable information

Promotional sites

Sites for web design ideas.

You learned that a "super directory" (or "mega directory") is a valuable resource for a targeted audience. It provides links to relevant sites of interest to this audience. It's important that you locate these directories and request that a link to your site be added to their list. Exercise 5-2 lists over 15 locations where you may find super directories for your field and tells you how to find others, namely:

Keyword searches in major search engines

Review list of links at AltaVista to sites similar to yours

Search ezine and newsletter archives for web resource articles

Review Internet Yellow Page publications and web sites.

Once super directories are located, draft a friendly, informal request. Establish a one-to-one relationship by complimenting the directory's features and the service performed for the targeted audience. Try to direct the request to an individual. If a name isn't published at the site, send the request to the Webmaster.

It's important that you keep track of the directories you e-mailed your request to and the person contacted. You should follow-up to see that your link was added and send a second request if it isn't.

After getting your link added to super directories, next tackle sites that offer a product or service that complements your site's. Request that these sites add a your link. Describe in your request how your link benefits visitors to their site. You can find many of these sites at super directories, in search engines, from signatures of participants in discussion groups, and under compatible headings in classified ad sites. Be prepared to offer a reciprocal link if that is what it takes for the complementary site to add your link.

The web offers a host of opportunities for joint partnerships with other sites – both complementary and non-related sites. Creativity and a willingness to experiment can produce a wealth of ideas for:

Cooperative advertising

Joint promotions

Shared content

Sales associate programs

Co-sponsored events.

If you are in a field or special area which doesn't have a quality super directory or could easily support another one, consider starting your own. Create a new web page and begin collecting links to related resources until you have the most comprehensive directory in your field. Actively promote your super directory in discussion groups, search engines, and with announcements and classified ads.

## **Lesson 6 – Developing a Database of Content-Rich Resources**

### **Lesson Objectives**

#### **Building an Information Database that Improves Your Internet Presence**

Exercise 6 -1 – Evaluating Other Sites for Useful Ideas

Worksheet for Exercise 6-1

Exercise 6-2 – Benefitting from Competitors' Internet Presence

Worksheet for Exercise 6-2

Exercise 6-3 – Adding Information-Rich Resources to Your Database

Worksheet for Exercise 6-3

Exercise 6-4 – Developing a Database of Promotion Resources

Worksheet for Exercise 6-4

Exercise 6-5 – Learning from "Cool" Sites

Worksheet for Exercise 6-5

Exercise 6-6 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson Objectives**

**Upon completion of this lesson, you will have:**

Learned the importance of a content-rich database for your "library"

Learned how to evaluate web sites and extracted valuable information from them

Located competitors to analyze and learn from

Analyzed competitors' net presence to improve your own

Located valuable information that will attract audiences and develop your skills.

Developed a valuable database of promotional resources to enhance your web traffic building skills

Learned what it takes to be a "cool" sit

## **Worksheets for Lesson 6**

### **Evaluation form for Exercise 6-1**

Worksheet for Exercise 6-2 -- Analyzing Competitors' Internet Presence

Worksheet for Exercise 6-3 -- Finding Information-Rich Resources

Worksheet for Exercise 6-4 -- Developing a Database of Promotion Resources

Worksheet for Exercise 6-5 -- Learning to Become a "Cool Site"

## **Building an Information Database that Improves Your Internet Presence**

So far in the development of your web marketing plan, you've developed a valuable database of net resources that are critical to your plan's success. So far, these resources are primarily services made available by others to use in promoting your web site (i.e.; registration, announcements, classified ads). Lesson 6 encourages you to add seek out and add to your database "passive" resources -- resources that you can learn from. You seek and learn from them lessons that will make you a better Web Marketing Expert.

Not sure what we mean? These are the types of "teaching" resources that you will add to your database in this lesson:

Competitor sites: What better way to learn how to build web traffic than to scope out your competitors - What are they doing? Where are they linked? Where are they interacting with their target audiences? What they are doing to generate web traffic? These are just some of the valuable lessons competitors can teach you.

"Cool" and "Hot" sites: What does it take to be a "cool" site. You can learn what characteristics cool sites have in common and plan to become one of them.

Information resources: The net has comprehensive and up-to-date how-to information, more than any textbook or how-to book. It also has the collective minds of thousands of "tutors" to advise you. You can learn anything you need to know about the Internet and much more from these experts.

Promotional resources: A bevy of web sites provides valuable information about promoting your site. Many cover the same subjects as this workbook only in a narrower, more focused approach. Mailing lists covering promotional topics such as web marketing and online sales are teeming with experts eager to share their advice and experiences (while simultaneously promoting their web sites).

Essential to achieving successful on the Internet is to be able to tap its resources, mine them for gems of valuable information and turn those gems into creative ideas.

Each of the previous lessons has taught you how to search the net's resources. Without the ability to search, you will find the net is a huge, chaotic jumble of mostly irrelevant data. Less than 10% of what the net offers is worthwhile to you but if you don't know how to search, the other 90% is going to discourage you from finding that 10%.

Once you find them, add the gems to your resource "library". Your library should be evolving nearly every day. The net's fast-changing nature forces you to continually add newer, better resources and drop older sites, or else you and your library get left far behind.

## **Exercise 6 -1 – Evaluating Other Sites for Useful Ideas**

Visiting a web site, giving it a cursory examination, and moving on is an easy trap to fall into. You don't fully exploit the lessons to be learned because there are so many sites -- -- and you have so little time. Too bad. So many sites offer valuable lessons and ideas that we can learn and profit from:

Competitive strategies

Candidates for reciprocal linking

Important how-to information

Web traffic promotion ideas

Web design tips

Ideas for generating revenues.

To properly evaluate what a site has to offer requires an organized approach, an analysis that consistently focuses on aspects of another web site that can improve your own site. Such an approach forces you to stay longer at each site but leave with important knowledge you can use.

We've developed a Site Evaluation form that helps you do just that. With it you can organize your analysis of a web site and enhance your database of web resources. Complete the form as a hard copy of your site evaluation or as a format for a data record on your computer in a word processing, spreadsheet, or database file.

### **Completing the Site Evaluation Form**

1. Title/URL: The title and URL for the site being evaluated.
2. Keywords: Keywords allow you to categorize and/or quickly find certain types of sites. These suggested keywords indicate categories you will find useful:

Complementary: Complementary sites are important for possible partnerships, cross-promotion events, etc.

Directory: Super directories you find should be evaluated and visited regularly. They are an important source of up-to-date information on other sites and may provide the basis for your own super directory someday.

Web design: These are sites that offer valuable design tips, and demonstrate latest technology and trends.

Resource: These sites are important information sources that help educate you and keep you abreast of latest Internet development. They can be more informative than any textbook or how-to book.

Link: You should monitor and visit periodically sites where you have a link or a reciprocal linking arrangement.

3. Objectives: Evaluating a site should taken into account what its primary objectives are. A site that primarily promotes a company's presence should be analyzed differently from one selling a product or service. It's important to determine when evaluating a site whether or not it has the same objectives as your site. A site's primary objectives could be one or more of these:

Sell a product or service

Promote the company name and/or Internet presence

Support ad revenues (by maximizing web traffic)

Compile a valuable database of prospect names and email addresses

Distribute product and service information

Service customers

Promote business relationships.

4. Revenues: It's important to note how the web site is generating income. Often selling a product or service, banner ads, user subscriptions, some form of sponsorship, or a combination of these may be providing financial support. Your evaluation should take this into account and look for ideas for promoting your own site's revenues.

5. Visits: Enter the date of your visit and estimate how often, if at all, you want to revisit this site. Possibly, entered a projected date for the next visit. This will help you set up a meaningful schedule for future visits and avoid returning to sites of limited value.

6. Reference: Note additional information such as whether or not the site is book marked, user ID and password required to access pages at the site, etc.

7. What Learned from This Site? Briefly described what you learned from this site and if it

has any potential for your own site.

8. How Promote Traffic: What is the site doing to promote traffic? Do the ideas have potential for your site.

9. Design Ideas: What interesting design ideas did you come away with at this site? Are they adaptable to your site?

10. Worthwhile Content: What meaningful content does the site have? This could be information that you will find useful in the future or could be the type of information that you want to add to your site.

## **Evaluation form for Exercise 6-1**

### **Site Evaluation Form**

Title/URL

Key Words

Objectives

Revenues

Visits

Reference

## **What Promotions Used to Increase Traffic?**

Worthwhile Content?

Design Ideas Worth Considering?

What I Learned from This Site?

## **For a crash course: Successfully Competing on the Internet 101.**

Your competitors are going to be your instructors.

Lessons that may have taken competitors years to learn, you are going to master in a fraction of that time – maybe in a matter of days. You will find target audiences where they did, promote web traffic in a similar manner, find the resources they found, participate in discussion groups where they participate, place links where they did, and be as active or more so on the net. With the help of this manual, you may soon be out-competing them no matter how long they have been around and how successful they are.

### **Finding Your Competitors**

The Internet offers a number of tools and techniques for finding competitors. You probably already found some in previous exercises. The first part of this exercise requires you to supplement known competitors with more names. You'll see that once you have the names of several competitors, it's easy to find others.

1. Known Competitors: Start with a list of known competitors – companies and/or individuals, off-line and on-line. List known competitors even if you don't know whether or not they have a presence on the web. You'll find out soon enough.

2. Super Directories: Return to the super directories where you requested your link be added in Exercise 5-2. They are sure to have links to competitors. That may be how you found the super directories initially. Follow the links until you find more competitors.

3. Yahoo: If you are in a field or specialty that warrants a page of related links in Yahoo!, that is a good place for finding competitors. Follow the links through Yahoo's sub-directories until you come to it. Once you find a competitor, search for more Yahoo pages where it is listed. Competitors are probably listed under different headings since they get to choose where they want to be listed and under which headings they want multiple listings.

4. Keyword Search: Using the same keywords you've been using since Lesson 2, search for more competitors. When you find them, check their web pages for keywords you hadn't thought of that may be used to find still more competitors.

5. Discussion Groups: Monitor discussion in groups related to your field or specialty. This is where you are most like to encounter competitors interacting with the same target audience you want to reach. Check signatures and other clues to competitor Web sites. The competitors you find here may be the ones that can teach you the most. They at least are aggressively building web traffic by actively participating in discussion groups, the subject of Lesson 7.

## **Learning from Your Competitors**

After steps 1-5, you have probably identified most of your major competitors on the Internet. The next step is to begin playing catch-up if their Internet presence is stronger than yours. Learn from them by analyzing what they are doing to generate web traffic. This should provide you with a better sense of what you can do to improve your own web marketing plan. The next set of steps describes how to analyze a competitor's Internet presence. Complete a Site Evaluation form (Exercise 6-1) at each competitor site. Summarize your findings in a consolidated report. This document will become an important part of your web marketing plan and for site development.

1. Primary Objectives: What are the primary objectives of the competitors' web sites? If they aren't the same as yours, maybe you need to reconsider your site's objectives. Any advantages or disadvantages of the competitors' approach? Consider what you would do differently if your objectives were the same as your competitors.

2. Revenues: Are your competitors generating any income from their Web site? How? Are these revenue sources practical for your site? Why or why not? What would you have to do differently to generate the same type of revenues your competitors are?

3. Web Marketing Promotions: What techniques do your competitors used to generate traffic? Any special promotions or events happening? How would you adapt similar promotions to your site? What promotion ideas occurred to you after studying competitors' promotions?

4. Interactions with Visitors: How are your competitors interacting with visitors to their site? Are they capturing names and email addresses? If visitors are asked to sign up for something or subscribe to a newsletter, be sure to do this. You want to be on the mailing list for anything competitors send out. This will help you monitor their activities. Any ideas for how you can increase the interactivity features at your site?

5. Encouraging Repeat Business: What are your competitors doing to encourage visitors to come back? What site features would give you incentive to return even if they weren't a competitor? Any effort being made to encourage visitor loyalty or build "community spirit"? Any ideas for how you can encourage visitors to return?

6. Valuable Contents: What contents are especially valuable to visitors? What links? Any ideas for what you could do to have more valuable contents?

7. Design Ideas: What features about your competitors' site design that especially appeals to you? Any ideas for how the design of your site could be improved?

8. General Impressions: What do you like most about your competitors' sites? Least? Is their web site better than yours? What would you have to do to make yours the best? What impact would those ideas have on web traffic (always an important consideration).

9. Links to Your Competitors: As you learned in the last lesson, an important part of any web marketing plan is the number and placement of links to your site that are scattered around the Internet. How better to eventually make sure that you have more links than your competitors than to find out who is linking to your competitors. Track down those sites and see if they are appropriate for linking to your site too. Eventually, you are sure

to have a greater number of links placed at other sites than each of your competitors. Remember from Lesson 4 how to see who is linking to your competitors: Type: link:[competitorURL] AND NOT [competitorURL]. Plug in the URL for the competitor beginning with "http://". (The "AND NOT" excludes that site's links to its own pages from the list.)

Do this for each major competitor you found in the first five steps of this exercise.

10. Discussion Groups: Finally, find out in which discussion groups your competitors are either participating or are being discussed. Go to DejaNews. Search the Usenet by typing in a competitor's name. Capitalize the first letter and put quotes around the name, otherwise if you type in Rick Jones with no quotes, for example, you'll get back of listing of all discussion groups in which a 'Rick' or a 'Jones' posted. Track down these postings to review the messages posted by your competitor or about your competitor.

11. Summarize Your Findings: Remember to bookmark all competitors' sites in a "Competitors" folder and summarize your findings on a consolidated "Competitor Report". Schedule periodic return visits to these sites to update the evaluation forms and consolidated report.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 6-2**

### **Analyzing Competitors' Internet Presence**

1) Known Competitors: List known competitors online and offline.

Competitor Name

URL

2) Super Directories: Look for competitors in Super directories (Exercise 5-2).

3) Yahoo: Either follow links through Yahoo sub-directories or search for a competitor by name to find others

4) Keyword Search: Search in major search engines by keywords used for registration or at competitor sites

5) Discussion Groups: Monitor discussion groups where your target audiences hang out (Exercise 3-7)

### **Evaluate Competitors' Internet Presence**

6) Primary Objectives: On an Evaluation Form for each competitor site visited, note its objectives, especially compared to your's. (Bookmark competitors' sites.)

7) Revenues: Note the competitors' source of revenues. Any potential for your site to do the same?

8) Web Promotions: How are your competitors promoting web traffic -- normally or special events?

9) Interactions with Visitors: How are competitors interacting with visitor? Are they capturing visitors' name and email address?

10) Encouraging Repeat Business: What are your competitors doing to encourage visitors to return again?

11) Valuable Contents: What valuable contents do competitors have that would improve the contents at your site?

12) Design Ideas: What site design ideas did you pick up from competitors' sites?

13) General Impressions: What did you like most about your competitors' sites. How can you make your site better based on what you saw?

14) Links to Your Competitors: Check out who is linking to your competitors to see if there are any link opportunities for you.

15) Discussion Groups: See where competitors participate or are discussed.

16) Summarize: Summarize your findings and ideas in a consolidated report.

### **Exercise 6-3 – Adding Information-Rich Resources to Your Database**

Every Internet resource that you encounter should be evaluated in terms of if the information will help you. If it will assist you directly or indirectly in developing your web marketing plan or improving your overall Internet skills, add it to your resources database. So much information is available that over time you will accumulate an incredibly useful library. It will be more detailed and more current than any Internet how-to book or textbook you could find at the local bookstore.

Two important sources for your information library are: Web sites with rich contents such as articles, FAQs, white papers, and instructional material; and discussions groups which have experienced experts in fields that interest you.

Many web sites go to great lengths to provide visitors with valuable content so that they will bookmark the site in order to return again and again. These sites are essential to your

efforts to build an information library. They can answer many of your questions and, hopefully, continue to add new content as the Internet evolves.

### **Discussion Groups Are Excellent Sources**

Newsgroups and mailing lists are probably the best sources for your information library. Not only do you get experts (bona fide and otherwise) describing their insight and experience, but you can actually manipulate the discussion (in relevant groups, of course) around to subjects in which you want to know more information.

The best way to capture and organize discussion group information is to copy informative messages into a simple database that you can create in a word processing, spreadsheet or database application. Arrange the messages by subject into as many folders or directories as necessary to keep the information organized and readily accessible.

### **Publishing Your Library at Your Web Site**

Eventually you may want to consider preparing and publishing reports, FAQs, or white papers based on information in your library. Supplement library resources with research at other locations to produce an original, valuable publication on a subject that interests target audiences. Then announce in discussion groups and at announcement sites that the free publication has been added to your web site. Watch traffic to your web site jump. Eventually, you will have an extensive library of self-published reports, each worth publicizing.

Note: Researching multiple subjects is important, not copying or plagiarizing. Stealing somebody else's work is illegal and unethical. Besides, with today's powerful search engines like AltaVista, plagiarizers are easy to find. Just type in a phrase from the original work with quotation marks around it. A list of where the work is published appears.

An advantage to publishing your own reports rather than linking to other sites is that visitors stay at your site rather than follow a link to another site from which they may not return. However you should supplement your reports with links to content-rich web sites. The combination of your reports and links to worthwhile sites will keep many visitors coming back repeatedly.

## **Completing the Worksheet for Finding Information-Rich Resources**

1. Most Important Content: Start by prioritizing the type of information you want in your "library". This should be both information of interest to your target audiences because that will help draw them to your site and information that will enhance your Internet skills. List the subjects in two columns – "For Target Audiences" and "For Self-Improvement".

2. Super Directories: Take another look at the super directories found in Lesson 5. These will include valuable resources for your target audiences that you will want in your library. You may have to find super directories for links to resources that satisfy your self-improvement desires. Follow the same steps for finding them that you did for finding the super directories in Exercise 5-2.

3. Keyword Searches: Look for information resources based on keywords used in previous lessons, by competitors (Exercise 6-2), at super directories looked at in the last step. Try phrasing what you want to know in the form of a question. Major search engines these days are getting good at intuitively figuring out what information you are searching for. Also, try supplementing keywords with "+FAQ", "+free report", "+white paper". This might narrow the search results to information content.

4. Ask Discussion Groups: Target the appropriate discussion groups for more information on subjects listed in step 1. Only post questions in the appropriate groups. Avoid the groups in which members have no interest in the subject. Ask for the URL of web sites where you can get more information in addition to answers to your questions. You may have to join a mailing list before posting a question. A number of mailing lists and newsgroups discuss the same or similar subjects. If your signature is attached to the question you posted, you will begin seeing an immediate increase in traffic at the same time you are getting valuable information for your library.

5. Add Group Responses to Database: Monitor these groups for a few days. Add to your information library any worthwhile information and links contained in responses to your questions.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 6-3**

### **Finding Information-Rich Resources**

1. Most Important Content: List subjects for your resource library in two columns:

For Target Audiences

For Self-Improvement

2. Super Directories: List information-rich resources in super directories:

Super Directory

Valuable Resource

3.Keyword Searches: Search for resources using keywords. Tips: try phrasing keywords in the form of questions. Also add "+FAQ", "+free report", "+white paper":

Keywords Used

Valuable Resource

4. Ask Discussion Groups: Post questions in the appropriate groups. Also ask for the URL of information-rich web sites.

Discussion Group

Valuable Resource

5. Add Group Responses to Database: Monitor discussion groups where posted questions. Add worthwhile responses to your database.

## **Exercise 6-4 – Developing a Database of Promotion Resources**

Promoting traffic to a Web site is an on-going project. To do it well, you should always be ready to check out new resources, research important topics, learn new tools, and try out new services.

Many web sites have a host of links to information and resources to help you promote your web site. Such a large audience exists for this type of information that numerous web marketers and promoters have compiled a super directory of promotion sites. You will be able to quickly build a substantial promotions resource database from these sites.

This Web Marketing Planning guidebook provides you with a well-rounded education on how to promote your site but don't overlook these valuable resources to supplement what you learn here.

### **Completing the Worksheet for Developing a Database of Promotion Resources**

1. Begin by deciding which aspects of web site promotions are most important to you. What subjects would you like to know more about? Prioritize the subject so that you start building your promotions resources database with subjects that are most important to you. It may help to review the exercises in this guidebook for suggested subjects.

2. This partial list of promotions super directories should provide links to valuable promotions information for your library but also to more super directories. The links at these sites should also suggest to your more subjects for your library:

1001 FREE Places to Promote Your Site—Another mega-site with a multitude of valuable stuff.

Website Promoters Resource Center.

All in One Promotions

Larry Chase's Web Digest for Marketers

Business Compass

Capture valuable information and links found at these sites into your promotion resources database. Create as many folders or directories, and files as necessary so that the library is well organized and information is easy to find.

Keyword Searches: Want still more promotions resources? Search using keywords relating to the subjects you listed in the first step. Tips: try phrasing promotion subjects in the form of questions. Also add "+FAQ", "+free report", "+white paper".

Continue to add to this database. New resources, new tools, new services are being offered every day.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 6-4**

### Developing a Database of Promotion Resources

- 1) List specific subjects relating to promotions that you want in your library:


- 2) Visit these promotion sites looking for links to specific information for the subjects in the previous step:

1001 FREE Places to Promote Your Site – <http://www.strutyourstuff.com/>. Another mega-site with a multitude of valuable resources.

Website Promoters Resource Center – <http://www.wprc.com>.

All in One Promotions – <http://www.erspros.com/internet-promotion/>

Larry Chase's Web Digest for Marketers – <http://wdfm.com>

Business Compass -- <http://www.abcompass.com>

- 3) Capture information and links found at these sites into a database of promotion resources. Create folders/directories and files for each subject.

- 4) Keyword Searches: Search for more promotional resources using keywords.

**Tips:** try phrasing promotion subjects in the form of questions. Also add "+FAQ", "+free report", "+white paper":


## **Exercise 6-5 – Learning from "Cool" Sites**

Under the heading of "Important Lessons to Be Learned" should be a study of what it takes to become a "cool site", to be singled out for special recognition. Every day many sites are picked as a "cool" or "hot" site. These sites are a fortunate few that get a lot of publicity and attention because of their selection. A significant, though temporary, increase in traffic results. If you can get your site selected by several of the myriad of "Cool Site" contests, the benefits aren't so fleeting. It's a small publicity coup and gives you bragging rights.

What do these sites have common? What do they teach us? Every wonder if your site will ever qualify as a "cool" site? Learning why cool sites are "cool" is an exercise in creativity. You can take that knowledge and use it to improve your site's chances.

The first step is to figure out why individual sites were selected. A review of selected sites gives you some idea of what it takes. Most of the sites have one or more of these characteristics in common:

Offered something unique. It's hard to imagine a web site developer, marketer or some other common type of site being selected unless they came up with an ultra-cool idea and that idea was the main emphasis of the web site and not the services offered.

Promote a good cause: If your site promotes a worthy cause, the odds are improved that it will be selected. We visited an "Anti-Telemarketer" site that provided both serious and humorous tips for combating that army of annoying telemarketers. Wouldn't you vote for this site too?

Show imagination and creativity: Okay, so you do have a unique angle and it is for a good cause, but does your site demonstrate creativity and imagination.

Make visitors want to return: Cleverness and gimmickry alone probably won't do it. It helps if you offer something memorable that makes visitors want to return.

Look professional, sophisticated: This characteristic alone won't get you selected but combined with one or both of the previous two definitely improves your chances.

### **Worksheet for Learning How to Become a Cool Site**

1. Research the shared characteristics of "cool sites". A good place to start is the cool sites listed at the Website Promoters Resource Center at <http://www.wprc.com/fldb/dbase/hot/dbhot.html>. Visit some of these sites and analyze why they were selected. It will improve the odds that your site will be the next "cool site". As long as you are visiting these sites, might as well nominate your site, or, at least, bookmark them to return when you feel your site is better positioned for being selected. Started with the biggest and best sites (e.g., Cool Site of the Day). They will have the most impact on traffic if your site is selected. We selected these as the best to visit:

Cool Site of the Day

CNets Best of the Web

PC Magazine Top 100 Websites

Project Cool

URL Spider's Best of the Web

WinMagWeb Hot Spots

Webnet Media's Cool Sites

What's New On The Internet

Yahoo

2. You may want to complete a Site Evaluation Form for the sites visited. Some of them will have instructional value. Evaluate the cool sites selected in terms of:

Why was it selected?

What is unique about it?

How does it exhibit creativity, imagination?

What about it makes visitors want to return?

What makes it more professional than most sites?

What design ideas have possibilities for your site.

3. This exercise offers both a learning and a creativity opportunity. After you've evaluated the "cool sites", brainstorm what you learned and how it applies to your site. What ideas did you come away with that might be applicable to your site?

After researching and getting a better understanding of what it takes to be a "cool site", plan how you will promote your site to the selecting sites. Make sure that your approach to them emphasizes exactly the characteristics that the "cool sites" share.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 6-5**

### **Learning to Become a "Cool Site"**

1) Study "cool" sites for ideas what you can do to improve the chances that your site will be selected.

2) Visit the list of cool site selectors at the Website Promoters Resource Center.

3) Starting with these well-known sites, begin your research by visiting and analyzing their selections. You may want to complete a Site Evaluation Form for each cool site visited:

Cool Site of the Day

CNets Best of the Web

PC Magazine Top 100 Websites

Project Cool

URL Spider's Best of the WebForm

WinMagWeb Hot Spots

Webnet Media's Cool Sites

What's New On The Internet

Yahoo.

4) Evaluate the cool sites selected in terms of:

Why was it selected?

What is unique about it?

How does it exhibit creativity, imagination?

What about it makes visitors want to return?

What makes it more professional than most sites?

5) What ideas do you have for your site to improve its chances of being selected:

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### **Exercise 6-6 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson**

In addition to a being a place of incredible opportunities, the Internet can be an amazing teaching instrument. Anything worth learning in your field or in any of life's challenges is there. Sometime, finding it though isn't easy. You have to know where to look and how to organize it into a useful resources database.

The first step is to learn how to evaluate a web site. This means subjecting each site visited to a detailed evaluation that is aimed at identifying lessons to be learned and ideas to be copied, and improved upon. A handy Site Evaluation Form guides you through the evaluation process.

One of the most instructional tools the Net has to offer is insight in what your competitors are doing. A number of techniques and tools are available to find out:

What your competitors' primary objectives are

How they are generating revenues

What techniques they use to increase traffic to their sites

How do they interact at their site with visitors

How do they encourage repeat visits

What valuable contents are at their site

What Web site design ideas might help your site

Who's linking to your competitors

In which discussion groups are competitors participating or being discussed.

You also learned how to use web sites and discussion groups to build a library of valuable information that is important to your web marketing plan and to your Internet skills in general.

Discussion groups are valuable sources of information because they are frequented by experienced experts eager to offer advice and answer questions. Not only can you learn by studying and capturing some of their valuable advice for your library, but you can steer discussion threads around to subjects you want covered. Many groups literally offer free tutoring by hundreds of the most-knowledgeable experts on nearly every subject imaginable.

In the process of gathering a wealth of information for your library, you may discover that much of it can be formatted into valuable contents at your Web site that will draw visitors and lend credibility. Free reports, FAQs, and white papers are especially appealing to Net users. Publishing valuable free information is a worthy event that you can announce in discussion groups and at announcement sites.

This planning guide offers a broad education in promoting in how to promote your web site, but you will find numerous web promotions-related sites offer a valuable supplement to what you learn here. These are worth adding to your information library. To jump start you, this lesson identified five such sites to visit and showed you how to find more.

Being selected as a "cool" or "hot" site causes a nice jump in web traffic. The special recognition increases awareness of your site and gives you bragging rights. By studying cool sites you will have a better feel for what you can do to your site to increase the chances of it also being selected. To help you analyze cool site characteristics this lesson told you where to find a list of sites that select cool sites and provided guidelines for what to look for.

# **Lesson 7 -- Participating In Internet Discussion Groups**

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **Requirements for Profitable Participation**

Exercise 7-1 – Listing Discussion Groups for Possible Participation

Worksheet for Exercise 7-1

Exercise 7-2 – Evaluating Which Discussion Groups to Join

Worksheet for Exercise 7-2

Exercise 7-3 – Planning to Participate in Selected Groups

Worksheet for Exercise 7-3

Exercise 7-4 – Joining in on Group Discussions

Worksheet for Exercise 7-4

Exercise 7-5 – Monitoring Discussion Groups for Responses

Worksheet for Exercise 7-5

Exercise 7-6 – Recapping Ideas in This Chapter

## **Lesson Objectives**

In this lesson you will:

Learn the value of active involvement in Internet's discussion groups

Compile a list of prospective groups for participation

Evaluate which groups deserve to be on your "priority" list

Choose the groups to participate in which offer maximize results for the time available

Learn how to post messages that are acceptable to group members

Combine your knowledge of acceptable messages with an analysis of the selected groups' current discussion threads to find numerous opportunities to post messages that will be well-received

Follow a simple list of guidelines for participating in discussions that will ensure you follow proper "netiquette".

Learn the difference between posting in a newsgroup and in a mailing list.

Maintain of record of groups posted to and what message was sent, verify that the message was published, and continue your evaluation of groups selected for participation.

## **Worksheets for Lesson 7**

Report for Exercise 7-1 -- Discussion Group Evaluation Report

Worksheet for Exercise 7-2 -- Discussion Group Evaluation Report

Worksheet for Exercise 7-3 -- Planning Acceptable Postings

Worksheet for Exercise 7-4 -- Guidelines for Posting in Discussion Groups

Worksheet for Exercise 7-5 -- Monitoring Discussion Group Report

## **Requirements for Profitable Participation**

Active involvement in the various communities on the Internet is essential to success of your web site. Many Net users find that participation in discussion groups – both newsgroups and mailing lists – are the primary source of traffic to their web site. They give you a perfect opportunity to go where target audiences hang out, establish your credibility, nurture one-to-one relationships, and generally assume a high profile. At no cost to you except your time thousands of net users become familiar with your name and your web site. The time invested in getting involved in on-going discussions usually pays big dividends, if done properly.

Of the estimated 15,000-20,000 discussion groups on the Internet, as many as a hundred or more might offer something of value in terms of reaching target audiences, enhancing a skill, keeping up on current events, following new technologies and trends, or just satisfying personal interests. Chances are though you simply don't have time to monitor and participate in this many groups.

Deciding which discussion groups to join and which to ignore should come after an organized evaluation of each group being considered. After the evaluation period, choose the "priority" groups for participation. This could be anywhere from three to twelve groups depending on how much time you have available.

The list of selected groups should undergo continuous review. New groups are being added every day. Old groups fall by the way as participants lose interest in the subject and move on to other discussions. Like a team manager, keep shuffling your "starting line-up" of priority groups to maximize the returns from time spent participating in group discussions.

Once you've decided on which groups to participate in, the next decision to make is how you are going to participate via a posting in a newsgroup or an email to members of a mailing list. Most discussion groups will not let you or will resent you posting a blatantly self-promotion message. So, you have to be more subtle. You have to post messages that lend something to the discussion and only indirectly promote your web site or product.

Certain types of postings are considered acceptable. They adhere to "netiquette". Your challenge is to make sure that your message to other group participants is within the context of what is considered acceptable. Exercises in this lesson describe what messages are acceptable and help you use current groups discussions to take advantage of opportunities for posting.

When you are ready to post, certain guidelines must be followed to make sure you don't offend group members in other ways. Improper posting is worse than no posting at all. The benefits from participating in group discussions is well worth your time to learn, do it right.

Once you posted your message to a group, you need to follow-up to make sure that it was published and to see what kind of a response it prompted. Responses to your message often offer excellent opportunities for more acceptable postings. The best way to monitor postings and responses is to prepare a report that provides a record of where you posted, what message was posted, date verified, and an evaluation of the discussion group for future postings.

### **Exercise 7-1 – Listing Discussion Groups for Possible Participation**

To this point in the development of your web marketing plan you have found discussion groups for posting your announcement and listed them on the Discussion Group Evaluation Report in Exercise 3-7. To this report, add additional groups found in the super directories (Exercise 5-2), and those where you found your competitors participating (Exercise 6-2).

In the next exercise you will evaluate the groups listed to select those most suitable for participating

#### **Discussion Group Evaluation Report**

Name of Group List

Date Posted

Members/Daily Messages

Discussion Threads

Relevancy/Evaluation

## **Exercise 7-2 -- Evaluating Which Discussion Groups to Join**

Discussion groups are like magazines: there are simply too many that interest you. You don't have time to read them all. You have to be choosy. The choices you make should come after careful evaluation.

Of the hundreds of possible discussion groups that might offer some benefit from participation, you want to narrow the list of candidates to a manageable number – say 12 groups. The groups you end up choosing should meet most of these criteria:

Group discussions cover topics of interest to your target audiences

The group has a large number of participants or members

The group is active with a sizeable number of postings each day

A high percentage of postings are relevant, on topic.

The discussion threads offer you numerous opportunities to join in.

The subject of the group concerns a skill you are anxious to learn, such as graphic arts.

### **Assessing High-Priority Discussion Groups**

When deciding in which groups you will participate in discussions by periodically posting messages, give the highest priority to the ones where you are most likely to find large numbers of your target audiences. You are most interested in this type of web traffic. Postings to other groups may also boost traffic but if the visitors don't belong to your target audiences, then you are less likely to benefit from the increase in traffic. You are less likely to see repeat traffic.

It's also important that the membership of a group be large and active. No matter how focused the discussion group is on subjects of interest to your target audiences, if few belong, then your participation will have minimum impact. The time it takes to monitor discussions, draft and post a message may not be worth the results. A discussion group that may not be quite as focused on target audiences but is larger may be more desirable.

A large number of postings each day is also a plus. Few daily postings mean offers fewer opportunities to make a meaningful contribution. Members are less likely to follow discussion threads in these groups because of a low interest level or get actively involved in current threads.

Another consideration is how many postings are relevant. A group may be extremely active because it is unmoderated or the moderator doesn't filter out off-topic postings. Many unmoderated newsgroups, such as those in Exercise 3-4 would require too much of your time with too little payback. So many postings are blatantly promotional and too frequently so far off topic as to be not worth your time. You have to scan hundreds of postings each day to find the occasional relevant one. Most of these groups are only suitable for posting occasional announcements or promotional messages but not for participating in discussions. A better use of your time is to participate in several less active groups where the relevancy factor is higher.

Generally moderated groups are preferred. A moderator makes sure that only relevant messages are posted and won't let members beat a dead horse with endless discussions that don't cover new ground. A moderator keeps the discussion on-topic and always moving on to new threads. It's the moderator's job to make sure discussions don't get bogged down on worn out threads.

### **Factor in Time Available**

A big factor in deciding in how many groups to choose for participation is how much time you have available. Participating in discussion groups is worth a considerable chunk of your time but you could spend all your waking hours participating. After the first 10 or 12 groups, depending on how many target audiences you want to reach and how many subjects interest you, results diminish rapidly. The time spent monitor and posting messages is no longer worth your time.

After you've ranked the discussion groups on the evaluation form by priority, keep track how much time you spend at each group starting with the groups at the top of your list. Initially, spend more time than is ordinarily available, so that you can evaluate more groups before paring down to a list of finalists for future participation. Delete ones from your list with the least potential.

### **Completing the Discussion Group Evaluation Form**

1. Assign Priority: Rearrange the list compiled in Exercise 7-1 to show priority based on initial impressions from previous exercises. Build on the list first compiled in Exercise 3-7.

2. Subscribe: Mailing lists require you to subscribe. In Exercise 3-8 you followed instructions for finding and subscribing to mailing lists. It recommended that you go to <http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html>. This is a good time to go back there so that you can subscribe to any mailing list that is a prospect for participating in group

discussions. A nice feature at this site is that it tells you how many members a mailing list has. Enter that information in the next column.

3.Daily Message /Members: Estimate the number of daily messages that are posted to each group or the number of members. This is important for deciding how much time you want to spend at each group and whether it is worth participating in discussions in the future. Obviously, a group with few relevant postings each day rates a lower priority than one with many. Another important consideration is how well the groups reaches a desirable the target audience. Note your assessment in the Relevancy / Evaluation column.

4.Discussion Threads: Summarize the types of discussions currently going on. Particularly note the ones which lend themselves to your participation. This will help you determine the relevancy of a group. In Exercise 7-3 you will compare current discussion threads with possible acceptable responses you post to each group.

5.Relevancy/Evaluation: Record any general observations you have about the nature and tone of the discussions. Assess how much potential the group has for future participation based on how well it reaches a target audience, the daily activity, and relevancy of the discussion threads.

6.After a reasonable evaluation period, choose the ones in which you want to begin participating. Be ready to add and delete groups from your list as you get a better feel for which are likely to produce the best results for the time spent.

## **Report for Exercise 7-2**

### Discussion Group Evaluation Report

Name of Group List

Date Posted

Members/Daily

Messages

Discussion Threads

Relevancy/Evaluation

### **Exercise 7-3 -- Planning to Participate in Selected Groups**

Now that you've selected which groups you want to participate in, the next step is to plan just how you are going to participate. Don't be in a hurry to jump right in without a plan of attack first. Too much is at stake to risk offending members with an indiscrete posting, such as one too blatantly self-promotional. You might find it difficult and involve a lengthy "rehabilitation" process to undo the damage caused. Remember, Internet users are a touchy bunch. They don't like their time and sense of "Netiquette" to be usurped by insensitive newcomers to the group. That's why it's important that you quickly become a respected member.

#### **Reviewing Acceptable Postings to Discussion Groups**

To help plan your participation campaign, review these acceptable types of postings:

Ask a question: One of the nifty things about posting a question in a discussion group is that you are getting information you desire while simultaneously promoting your web site. The self-promotion comes subtly in the body of the posting and/or in your attached signature. Just make sure you don't ask too stupid of a question, or one that has been recently answered. The group members won't like that and may have some chiding remarks for you. This is one reason why it's a good idea to monitor a mailing list a week or so before posting a message.

Answer a question: Answering a question provides an opportunity to contribute something meaningful to the group and demonstrate your knowledge while promoting your web site at the same time. Answering a question is such a good reason to post, consider researching the answer to a posted question just so you can post the answer. Taking that a step further: put together a report or white paper dealing with the subject of the question. Then post a reply inviting members to view the report at your web site. The increase in traffic is accompanied by an increase in the information content of your web site.

**Announce a Publication:** Net users love free reports, white papers, and FAQs (frequently asked questions). This is an excellent way to generate loyalty and repeat visits. Each new publishing event is worthy of announcing and increases the value of your site's content.

**Share a valuable resource:** If you come across important information that members of a group, such as a new web site or media article, would be interested in, tell them. The other members will appreciate it particularly if you aren't associated with the site and do not benefit from sharing the information (other than normal self-promotion in a signature).

**Newsworthy event:** If an event occurs that would be of interest to the group, let them know. A new product or government regulation that affects the groups are two examples. Consider putting your interpretation on the event and asking for their opinions. This kind of discussion is often good for several postings.

**Taking sides in a controversy:** If members in a discussion group take opposing viewpoints, join in. Add your opinion with supporting logical reasons for it. Don't post just a "me too" or "I agree/disagree" message that adds nothing to the discussion. Messages that are "content deficient" are annoying. Also consider playing the role of mediator by looking for a compromise position. You will come across as "judicious", "reasonable".

**Ask members for help:** Many net users are extremely helpful. If you are having a problem at your site, like a hard time generating interest, ask for advice: what you can do differently, how to promote the site, etc. Be careful about just asking members to visit your site and give you their feedback without a specific problem in mind. This has been overdone. Members are less inclined to take the time to visit your site unless you are having a problem. If they do, it's probably because they are eager to find an excuse to post a message. Some moderators no longer post "please visit my site" messages. Having explained your problem, solicit recommendations from members. Just remember that members won't take kindly to transparent excuses for getting them to visit your site. They may even complain to the other group members about your tactics.

**Solicit input for a new page:** If you are putting together a new page that will benefit members and they can help, this is a legitimate posting. Examples are a super directory or nominations for "best" contest. Many members are eager to participate in such joint projects and appreciate having the final results made available to them. Let them know when you publish the results at your web site and invite the members to come visit. This technique reflects favorably on you and increases your stature in the group.

**Comment on trends, problems in your field:** Initiating a discussion of current trends in your field or shared interests makes you seem knowledgeable and on top of current developments. Be sure and ask for others' responses to keep the discussion going longer and generate more opportunities for you to post more messages.

Offer something for free: Cater to the Net's "free" mentality by offering something of value to the members.

Sponsor a contest: Contests are a popular way to generate interests. Consider sponsoring a contest that corresponds to members' interests. You can post periodic reminders of the contest and its progress. At the end of the contest post the winners and why they were selected.

Review others' postings for more ideas: While monitoring the discussion threads, study the reasons others posted certain messages. If a type of message not discussed here doesn't prompt negative replies from other members, consider how you can adapt this type of posting for your own use.

**Caution:** No matter how careful you are about posting only acceptable messages, once in awhile you'll get "flamed". Somebody will take offense to your posting and chide you for it. This is only natural. It happens to everyone who is active on the net. Don't worry about a few flames. The potential benefits from significant increases in traffic outweigh a few negative responses. If you feel that your message is justified, be ready to defend yourself in a follow-up posting. Only if you receive what you consider to be too many negative responses and don't have a good defense, should you re-evaluate your approach, or at least, rethink the type of message that drew the negative attacks.

### **Completing the Planning Acceptable Postings Worksheet**

The worksheet is designed to help you brainstorm valid reasons for posting to the newsgroups on your priority list (Exercise 7-2).

1. Complete a worksheet for each discussion group on your priority list.
2. Record the current threads in the discussion group in the middle column.
3. Using the acceptable types of postings in column one and the current threads in column two, apply creative brainstorming to coming up with possible postings that you could make to each discussion group without violating "Netiquette".
4. Indicate the ideas in column three with the best potential in the most important discussion groups.

## **Exercise 7-3 -- Planning to Participate in Selected Groups**

Now that you've selected which groups you want to participate in, the next step is to plan just how you are going to participate. Don't be in a hurry to jump right in without a plan of attack first. Too much is at stake to risk offending members with an indiscrete posting, such as one too blatantly self-promotional. You might find it difficult and involve a lengthy "rehabilitation" process to undo the damage caused. Remember, Internet users are a touchy bunch. They don't like their time and sense of "Netiquette" to be usurped by insensitive newcomers to the group. That's why it's important that you quickly become a respected member.

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putting your interpretation on the event and asking for their opinions. This kind of discussion is often good for several postings.

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posting for your own use.

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### **Completing the Planning Acceptable Postings Worksheet**

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4. Indicate the ideas in column three with the best potential in the most important discussion groups.

### **Exercise 7-4 – Joining in on Group Discussions**

A plan for posting is now in place. After evaluating and choosing from a list of possible discussion groups to join and deciding on the types of messages to post in each, the next step is to draft the messages. Most messages should be slanted specifically for the group in which it is being posted rather than a generic message for all groups. This will improve the responses to your postings.

Fortunately, messages for posting in discussion groups aren't like novels. Not a lot of writing skill is required. You should, unlike too many posters, take minimum precautions to see that your messages are free of spelling errors, typos, and grammatical errors. Draft your message in a word processor that checks spell and grammatical errors. Then copy and paste it into your newsreader program if it's going to a newsgroup or in your email program if to a mailing list. Have someone else proofread it before posting.

Exercises 3-4 and 3-5 described how to find newsgroups and mailing lists for participating in discussion groups. Many of the ones that you will be posting to in this lesson were found in those exercises.

## **Posting to Newsgroups**

Newsgroups are a public forum where anybody can read and post a message, unlike mailing lists which are exclusive "members-only" forums. Newsgroups generally have more participants than mailing lists because they are open to anyone. Usually newsgroup participants aren't as dedicated or as helpful as mailing list members. They lack the same sense of "community spirit". For this reason, you may find that postings to newsgroups aren't as effective as ones to mailing lists.

Posting to a newsgroup is as easy as sending an email. The news module in your web browser application is perfectly adequate for managing your newsgroup communications although newsreader software, such as Forte's Agent, is more full-featured.

We recommend that generally you don't cross-post. "Cross-posting" is when you post the same message to more than one group at the same time. By putting each of the groups being cross-posted to, separated by commas, on the Newsgroup line, readers see that to save time you sent the same, impersonal message to all rather than personalize your message for their group. The advantage to readers is that they only see your message in one of the groups. The disadvantage is that responses to your posting appear in all cross-posted groups. Cross-posting saves time but a message is not as well received as one that reads like it was specifically intended for the group. If you do cross-post, it's probably a good idea to limit it to no more than five newsgroups. Don't cross-post to moderated groups. If one moderator rejects your message it won't show up in any of the groups.

## **Posting to Mailing Lists**

As noted previously, mailing lists are restricted to members. Anybody can join but only members can post. In mailing lists, your message is delivered via email to all members, generally after approval by a moderator.

Members are usually more sensitive to off-topic or blatant commercial postings than participants in newsgroups. On the other hand they are often more responsive to acceptable messages. Postings in mailing lists usually produce better results than similar ones in newsgroups. It is especially important that messages be customized to fit the particular mailing list.

To post your message in a mailing list, you must subscribe to it first. Do this at least a week in advance. That gives you time to follow the discussion threads and get a better feel for what is an acceptable posting. You can truthfully include in your message that you have been "lurking" (reading the discussions but not contributing) and are now ready to "de-lurk". While you are at it, compliment the moderator if there is one on doing a fine job of moderating. It doesn't hurt to butter up the moderator. It sits well with the person who decides whether to send your message to all members and with the members themselves.

Many of the active mailing lists will have several email addresses. Make sure you sent your message to the right one. Many mailing lists have addresses for:

One for posting to the list

One for sending comments to the moderator about the list

One for subscribing to the list in non-digest form

One for subscribing in the digest form

One for inquiries into sponsoring the list

### **Groups Guidelines for Posting to Discussion**

Follow these guidelines for posting:

1. Subscribe at least a week before posting to mailing lists.
2. Monitor all groups to get a feel for the tone of the group and what the current threads are. More information about newsgroups and where you can find FAQs for many of them are at the Usenet Info Center Launch Pad.
3. Draft acceptable messages based on guidelines and ideas in Exercise 7-3. Don't post worthless messages, such as a "me too" or "I agree".
4. Pick a meaning subject line that describes the message's contents.
5. Customize the message for the intended group.
6. Don't spam the net by posting numerous messages to irrelevant groups.
7. Proofread messages to make sure they are correct and read right.

8. Open software used for posting messages to newsgroups or email to mailing list.

9. Make sure that the appropriate signature is attached (Exercise 3-1).

10. Monitor the group for several days for responses and other opportunities to post (next exercise). Not all messages run right away so be patient. Avoid posting a duplicate message until you are sure the first one didn't run. It may take up to several days for a message to appear.

### **Exercise 7-5 – Monitoring Discussion Groups for Responses**

Your postings in discussion groups won't go unnoticed. You are sure to generate a number of responses. How many depends on the type of posting. Some elicit more responses than others. Certainly, the traffic to your web site will increase – probably dramatically.

Many of the responses will offer opportunities to post a follow-up message. In no time you are an active participant in numerous Internet communities, particularly in the most desirable ones where you are making contact with target audiences.

Pay particular attention to messages in the discussion groups for several days afterwards. Nearly all of the responses to your postings will appear in the next three days.

Monitoring results of your posting is important because it provides:

- A record of where you posted

- A record of what you posted

- Verification that your message was published

- Further information to evaluate effectiveness of priority discussion groups.

### **Completing the Monitoring Discussion Group Report**

1. List the names of the priority discussion groups in Exercise 7-2.

2. Note the date the message was sent to the group.

3. Record the subject of the message. Part of evaluating the effectiveness of your postings is to analyze the combination of discussion group and the message sent.

4.Note the date published. If after a few days your message wasn't published you may want to contact the moderator and ask why it wasn't. If the discussion group is unmoderated, resubmit your message.

5.Note the number of responses, additional posting opportunities and any other evaluation that will help participation efforts in the future.

6.The last step is to re-evaluate your priority discussion groups. Look to add or replace one or more groups with one not initially posted to. You may want to add or decrease the number of groups in which you are participating based on time available.

### **Exercise 7-6 -- Recapping Ideas in This Chapter**

Active, proper participation in Internet's discussion groups is probably the most effective way to generate higher web traffic. No where else can you reach such a large audience – particularly target audiences – at no cost to you except for your time. With over 20,000 Internet groups however, you have to decide which ones offer the best potential. Of the hundreds which could benefit you, you will probably only have time to participate in 5-10 groups.

The challenge is to figure out which ones. Even after you decide which groups to select for participation, you must continually evaluate your list, replacing some groups with other, better groups.

#### **Your evaluation of discussion groups will take into account:**

How well the group reaches your target audience

How many members (mailing list)

How many messages are posted daily

How well current discussion threads offer opportunities for posting

How much time it takes to monitor and participate in a group's discussion

Overall evaluation of the group's potential.

The next challenge is to develop opportunities for posting "acceptable" messages that won't offend the groups' sense of "Netiquette". These types of messages are generally considered acceptable:

- Ask a question
- Answer a question
- Announce a publication
- Share a resource
- Describe a newsworthy event
- Take sides in a controversy
- Ask members for help
- Solicit input for a new page
- Comment on a trend
- Offer something for free
- Sponsor a contest.

Even if you take precautions to post only acceptable messages, once in a while you are sure to get "flamed." Somebody is sure to object to your message and post a criticism. This happens to everybody who actively participates in a number of groups. Don't worry about it unless you are receiving numerous, apparently valid flames, in which case, you need to be extra diligent about following "Netiquette".

You'll be surprised at how many ideas you come up with for acceptable postings if you compare what's acceptable with on-going discussion in the selected groups. Plan which will be the most effective postings and begin drafting your messages.

You should recognize the difference ahead of time between newsgroups and mailing lists. Each requires different steps for posting a message. Both require that certain guidelines be met however:

- Subscribe at least a week before posting to mailing lists.
- Monitor all groups to get a feel for the tone of the group and what the current

threads are.

Draft acceptable messages based on guidelines in Exercise 7-3.

Pick a meaning subject line that describes the message's contents.

Customize the message for the intended group.

Don't spam the Net by posting to irrelevant groups.

Proofread messages to make sure they are correct and read right.

Open software used for posting messages to newsgroups or email to mailing list.

Make sure that the appropriate signature is attached (Exercise 3-1).

Monitor the group for several days for responses and other opportunities to post (next exercise).

Give your first message several days to run before considering re-posting it.

Participating in discussion groups is not something you do and forget about it. You must monitor those groups you posted in. Maintain a report of:

Where you posted

What message you posted

When your message ran

A follow-up assessment on the group's effectiveness.

Continue to evaluate the groups you selected for participation. Look for new groups to replace one that aren't producing the desired results or offer many opportunities for acceptable postings.

# **Lesson 8 – Using Email to Generate Web Traffic**

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **E-mail's Role as a Web Traffic Builder**

Exercise 8-1 – Building Your Email List

Worksheet for Exercise 8-1

Exercise 8-2 – Administering an Email List

Worksheet for Exercise 8-2

Exercise 8-3 – Guidelines for Proper Use of an Email List

Worksheet for Exercise 8-3

Exercise 8-4 – Preparing to Email Your List

Worksheet for Exercise 8-4

Exercise 8-5 – Promoting Traffic with Newsletters, Ezines, Bulletins

Worksheet for Exercise 8-5

Exercise 8-6 – Marketing with Direct Email

Worksheet for Exercise 8-6

Exercise 8-7 – Building Traffic with Automatic Emails

Worksheet for Exercise 8-7

Exercise 8-8 – Renting Somebody Else's Mailing Lists

Worksheet for Exercise 8-8

Exercise 8-9 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson you will:**

Understand the importance of an "active" email campaign to complement a "passive" web site.

Begin building your own mailing list of email address using various means for encouraging visitors to add their name to your list.

Be able to research and choose the mailing list management software that you will use to administer your list and begin contacting names on it.

Know how to use an email list properly so that you don't offend large numbers of Internet users.

Begin making preparations for a successful email campaign that is problem-free.

Develop a plan for publishing a quality newsletter or ezine that will dramatically improve web traffic and generate loyalty in your target audiences.

Learn how to effectively use direct email as a marketing tool.

Learn important uses for an autoresponder, how to maximize benefits from one, and how to decide which one is best suited for your needs.

Finally, you will learn what to watch out for when choosing to rent a mailing list and how to find the list that will produce the best results.

### **Email's Role as a Web Traffic Builder**

Much has been written about how the Internet, particularly the web, is rapidly developing into a powerful marketing tool. Increasingly, the importance of email is being recognized. Without email, a web site is passive. It sits there on the web with hundreds of thousands of other sites hoping to get noticed. Not only does a web site need to first get noticed but it also must generate enough interest to make net users want to visit. That's only part of the struggle. Studies show that only 5-10 sites visited by the average web surfer, get revisited.

Email has another advantage over a web site: sheer numbers. The vast majority -- as high as three out of four -- net users have email but not web access. An effective email marketing

campaign is likely to reach many more potential buyers. e-mail is such a powerful tool for delivering information, a sales pitch, reminders, it can have a major impact on the success of your Internet venture.

E-mail may take many forms. In this lesson you will learn how to use the different types of email to promote web traffic.

### **An Important Builder of Repeat Traffic**

Other portions of your web marketing plan are aimed at generating first-time visitors: i.e., registration, announcements, links, and participation in discussion groups. E-mail is an effective tool for promoting repeat visits.

A combination of valuable content and an aggressive e-mail campaign draws visitors to your site over and over again. E-mail brings them back, if, that is, you had in place the mechanism to capture a visitor's name and e-mail address in a database and the incentives for visitors to leave that information with you.

E-mailing your contacts databases results in an immediate boost in traffic. Events at your site are capable of generating a lot of interest if you have a sizeable mailing list to notify. The larger the list, the greater the interest. A large mailing list magnifies the success of each of event.

To use e-mail as an effective marketing tool however you need to know how to capture names and e-mail addresses of visitors to your site, how to develop a large mailing list, and how to get set up to administer the list.

A mailing list offers a number of excellent opportunities for building traffic and promoting a web site: newsletters and ezines, direct email, automatic email responses to name a few. Renting somebody else's list offers another opportunity for dramatically improving the success of your web site. Each opportunity however presents its own challenges and risks. This lesson shows you how to take advantage of those opportunities.

With the means in place to begin e-mailing names on your list, you need to be aware of proper email "Netiquette" so that you don't offend large numbers of your target audiences. Guidelines discussed in this lesson will help you avoid an e-mail campaign that does more harm than good.

Organizing an e-mail campaign begins with building a mailing list to send your e-mails to.

## **Exercise 8-1 -- Building Your Email List**

Getting greater number of visitors to your site by itself may not bring about the web success you had hoped for. Visitors who come, go, and don't return offer little benefit. Traffic stats may be impressive but they are having minimum impact on the success of your web site. These visitors aren't nearly as valuable as those who leave something behind: an order, a request, permission to be contacted.

Many web sites would be better off if they focused on establishing a long-term, one-to-one relationship with their visitors than trying for an immediate sale. The best way to begin striving for the personal relationship is to provide visitors with an incentive to leave their name, email address, and permission – explicit or implied – to contact them in the future.

Imagine how successful your web site will be if you have a contact database of 1000, 5000, 10,000 or more of people who want you to email them information, announcements, updates, etc. Building a large email list, certainly a long-term project, gives you a tremendous advantage over other web sites.

Most of the names on your list will come from visitors to your site who were encouraged to sign up, often in return for something of value. Other sources include people who e-mailed you to be added. They may not have web access but nevertheless want to take advantage of the incentive you gave visitors for visiting your site. They may have read about your offer in a posting to a discussion group or in your signature.

A third source is prospects that you added as a result of your web surfing activities or participation in discussion groups. With the intent of building relationships one at a time, capture names off the net that are likely prospects for the product or service offered at your web site. Email them a personal note, not junk e-mail. If contacting individuals found in a discussion group, tell them you noticed their message and wanted to introduce yourself. Invite them to visit your site for information that you feel they will be interested in.

If the results from prospecting in discussion groups warrant it, you could search in directories and search engines for likely places to find more prospects. This is a slow, day-by-day technique for building your email list but one that could be rewarding.

### **Getting Them to Sign Up**

Next, you need to figure out what incentive to use to encourage people to give you their name and email address. In keeping with the free mentality of the Internet, you almost certainly have to give something away or at least offer a chance to win something of value. It must have value to your target audiences, not necessarily to the general public.

**Free Reports:** Periodically publishing information of interest to a field or special interest usually generates interest. It's certainly worth giving up a name and e-mail address. The report can be about new products, industry trends, regulations, how-to instructions. People will gladly sign up to receive informative publications that interest them. By making the publications also available at your web site, future visitors are also encouraged to sign up or, at least, return for repeat visits.

**Newsletter or Ezine:** Free newsletters and magazines are a popular way to get people to add their names to a database. Until the Internet came along, most newsletters and magazines on subjects such as technical, investment, or self-improvement carried a subscription fee. The Internet changed that. Thousands of online publications on every subject imaginable are free. By asking visitors to subscribe, you have an open invitation to contact them regularly with worthwhile information, regular announcements regarding events at your site, news updates, etc. Eventually, when your database is large enough, you will find ready advertisers who will pay you to let them sponsor your newsletter. Publishing a newsletter or e-zine is such an effective way to build web traffic as well as an e-mail database, it is the subject of Exercise 8-5.

**Announcements:** Events at your web site or product changes is worth something to people who find something of value at your site or use your product.

**New Developments:** If your target audience is in a fast-changing field, regular updates on new developments are appreciated. To be kept informed without requiring any extra effort will be appreciated by your audience.

**Surveys:** Surveys are another way to get people to provide their name and email address. People liked to be asked for their opinion, especially if, by participating, they receive something of value or at least have a chance at winning something. Survey information is also appreciated by prospective advertisers. Announcing the results is a good reason for contacting participants and posting in discussion groups.

**Contests:** Contests are as popular on-line as they are off-line. By sponsoring a contest that would appeal to your target audience, you are sure to plenty of participants to show up at your web site and sign up. You may also want to provide participants in discussion groups with enough information for them to email their entry.

**Members Only:** Some sites offered two-tiered information or services. To have access to every page at your site, "members" have to join or subscribe. This works best if your site offers enough value for induce people to visit and even more value to provide their name and e-mail address to become a member.

**Guest Book:** In addition to providing excellent feedback about your site, what works and what doesn't, compliments that can be used as testimonials, and suggestions for improvements,

guest books also offer an innocuous way to add names to your database. Simply give signers an option to sign up, or rather, not to sign up. The default check box is "sign me up" or "subscribe me". Visitors can un-check the box if they don't want to be added to your mailing list.

Feedback form: Specifically invite visitors to offer their suggestions, criticisms, opinions. While they are taking this opportunity to interact, offer to sign them up for updates, etc. At least as much creativity and energy should be put into how to legitimately acquire an e-mail contacts database as into web design and promotions.

### **Completing the Planning How to Get Visitor Sign Ups**

This worksheet will help you plan how to encourage visitors to add their name, e-mail address, and whatever other information you want to your mailing list. The purpose of this exercise is to creatively consider how you would use each method for encouraging sign-ups. Also consider combinations of methods, such as surveys and contests. Upon completion of this worksheet, you should have many ideas for how to begin capturing names for your mailing list:

1. Free Reports: Offering free reports that interest your target audience is an effective way to get names for your list. Ideally, the subject of the report is one that you want to learn as well as your intended audience. The report should enhance the contents of your web site as well. Begin brainstorming ideas for a report that you are most interested in learning. Next, add to your list subjects that you think would interest your audience.
2. Newsletter or E-zine: Getting people to subscribe to a newsletter or e-zine is another technique for building a mailing list. Add a Web page to describe your newsletter. Encourage subscribers by promising that your newsletter will subjects as those listed on the Exercise 8-1 worksheet. Brainstorm which subjects would be suitable for your newsletters and for encouraging subscribers.
3. Announcements: If visitors are interested in activities at your web site, they will sign up to receive announcements regarding new products or services, new developments, updates, etc. Consider the types of announcements you could send to your mailing list for current and future events.
4. New Developments: Consider what new developments would be helpful for encouraging visitors to add their name to your mailing list.

5. Surveys: Surveys are an effective way to capture names and email addresses providing you offer something of value or a chance to win something of value for completing the survey.
6. Contests: Contests are popular on the Net. Make sure that any contest you consider appeals to your target audiences.
7. Members Only Section: Some Web sites encourage visitors to register to become a "member". Membership entitles these visitors to web pages where especially valuable information is located, pages that are not accessible by non-members.
8. Guest Book: Having a guest book for visitors to sign is an excellent source for names. Simply ask on the guest book page if the visitor wants to sign up to receive a newsletter, announcements, whatever. In addition to names, a guest book often provides valuable feedback on what works and doesn't work at your site, bad links, recommendations for improvement, testimonials, etc.
9. Feedback Form: Visitors are a helpful bunch. Specifically ask for their feedback on matters that are important to you. The feedback form should include the option of signing up to receive announcements, newsletters, etc.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 8-1**

### **Planning How to Get Visitor Sign Ups**

- 1) Free Reports: Plan possible subjects of reports:

Target Audiences

Possible Subjects

- 2) Newsletter or E-zine: Plan sections for online publication:

- Events at site
- Announcements
- Achievement recognition
- Special promotions
- Promote interactivity at Web site
- Share valuable resources
- Promote a contest
- Training/instructions
- Recruiting
- Discuss trade news or trends
- Progress on a project
- Encourage Web partnerships
- Take a survey

### 3) Announcements

### 4) New Developments

### 5) Surveys

### 6) Contests

### 7) Members Only Section

### 8) Guest Book:\_\_\_\_\_

9) Feedback Form:\_\_\_\_\_

## **Exercise 8-2 – Administering an E-mail List**

To manage and email a list of names you need mailing list management software which allows you to email each member, and automate subscriptions and un-subscriptions. If you ever decide to start your own discussion group, the same software could be used.

### Considerations for Mailing List Management Software

These are a few of the considerations when deciding on mailing list management software:

Price: Software is available from free (with operational limitations) to several hundred dollars.

Features: Do a comparison (see below) and check off features you feel you must have.

Hosting option: You don't have to set up a mail server and increase your hardware investment. Several of the software companies will host your mailing lists if you prefer using their software of course.

Technical: Make sure that the mailing list management software you choose is compatible with your technical skills and/or comes with adequate technical support.

Check with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) before making a decision. They may be able to handle your mailing list management needs for much less than buying the software, or having somebody else host and administer your list for you.

You have a number of mail list management programs to choose from:

Majordomo: This freeware is supported by a discussion group, an on-line manual, and a FAQ. Majordomo is probably more suitable for small to medium sized lists (under 1000 subscribers). It is available from most Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

ListServ: LSoft's program is full-featured and is considered one of the best available.

It is probably a better choice than majordomo for large, high-volume lists.

Listproc: Both freeware and commercial versions of this program are available. Listproc was developed by the Corporation for Research & Education Networking. A free, though unsupported, version is at <ftp://cs-ftp.bu.edu/pub/listserv/>. For more information about listproc, e-mail [listprocinfo@listproc.net](mailto:listprocinfo@listproc.net).

GroupMaster is a new web-based e-mail list management and information delivery system.

Consider starting out having somebody else, such as your ISP or mailing list management software company hosting your list for you. Later, when your list grows to several thousands, or you find yourself maintaining a number of lists, then look into the economic feasibility of buying the hardware and software and bringing the list management operation in-house.

Autoresponders play an important role in mailing list management (Exercise 8-7). Include one in your list management decision from the outset.

More information about mailing list software is <http://wbcom.com/impulse/list.html>. This web site contains valuable information and links to discussion groups, mailing lists, and related resources.

### **Don't Forget to Allocate Time**

While maintaining an email list and publishing a newsletter or e-zine periodically is an excellent way to boost traffic, it does involve a time commitment. As if drafting and polishing the newsletter or ezine aren't time-consuming enough, be prepared to handle frequent maintenance chores: clean up bad addresses, resolve email requests, etc.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 8-2**

### **Planning to Set Up Your Own Email Database**

## **Comparison Shopping for Mailing List Management Software**

Draft a charge of these considerations:

Price: Note the cost of each application and decide how much, if any, you want to spend.

Features: List features of one software, then add more as you review other programs.

Hosting option: Decide if you want to avoid the expense entirely by having somebody else provide the software and hosting services.

Technical: Make sure that the mailing list management software you choose is compatible with your technical skills and/or comes with adequate technical support.

Check with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) before making a decision. What is the charge? What is offered compared to a software purchase or having somebody else host your mailing list?

## **Mailing List Management Software to Consider**

Majordomo: <http://www.databack.com/major.htm>.

ListServ: LSoft's program at <http://www.lsoft.com/> is full-featured and is considered one of the best available.

Listproc: Both freeware and commercial versions of this program are available.

GroupMaster at <http://www.groupmaster.com> is a new Web-based email list management and information delivery system.

## **Additional Thoughts:**

Consider starting out having somebody else, such as your ISP or mailing list management software company hosting your list for you.

Bring list management in-house only when economically and technically feasible.

Find multiple uses for a autoresponder at the outset.

Allocate time for list management chores.

### **Exercise 8-3 -- Guidelines for Proper Use of an Email List**

Proper use of your e-mail list is important enough to warrant it's own section. If you don't use and maintain your list properly, you risk alienating a large portion of exacting the audience with which you are trying to establish a strong relationship.

#### **Guidelines:**

Get the individual's permission to add their name to your list.

Immediately remove a name when requested to

Send only to target audiences, not indiscriminately

Don't sell or rent your list to others. You'll get blamed for the resulting junk email.

Keep your list secure and confidential.

Don't use the list for any reason other how you induced a person to sign up.

### **Guidelines for Exercise 8-3**

#### **Proper Use of an Email List**

##### **Guidelines:**

Get the individual's permission to add their name to your list.

Immediately remove a name when requested to.

Send only to target audiences, not indiscriminately.

Don't sell or rent your list to others. You'll get blamed for the resulting junk email.

Keep your list secure and confidential.

Don't use the list for any reason other how you induced a person to sign up.

Don't be in a hurry to rush information to your mailing list. It's important that you make a good impression right away and that you take the necessary precautions to ensure that they will continue to appreciate what you send them.

### **Checklist Prior to E-mailing List**

Prior to e-mailing your list, compare it with this checklist to make sure there are no slip-ups. Any slip-up may cause an inordinate number of removal from list requests which is something you want to avoid. A mailing list is too valuable to allow it to suffer because of mistakes that could have been avoided:

**Right Message for the Right List:** Chances are over time you will be creating and maintaining several lists. Make sure that the right message is being sent to the right list. This kind of mistakes can squander a lot of goodwill. Also make sure that the message is suitably customized for the list. Customized messages for specific audiences do better than generic messages for general audiences.

**Valuable Content:** Take a final look to make sure that the content-to-promotion ratio is high. If you persistently send out promotional e-mails with little "meat", your list is sure to go into a tailspin. A high content factor justifies more frequent e-mail contacts than a high promotions factor. Creating events and improving contents not only improves the value of your web site, but it also improves the effectiveness of your e-mail.

**Spelling/Grammatical Errors:** Review your e-mail for spelling or grammatical errors. They reflect on your competence and credibility. Don't let any slip through if you can help it. You may find it worthwhile to have a second person look it over before releasing it to your list.

**Signature:** Make sure that you have the right signature attached and that it is adequately customized for the recipients. Is the one you chose to use due for an update? Take another look at others' signatures for ideas. The signature is such an important part of your web traffic plan, you should always be looking for ways to improve it.

**Active Links:** Make sure that links in your e-mail are properly formatted so that they are active or "hotlinks" if the recipient's e-mail program permits it. URLs, particularly to your web site, should be formatted beginning with "http://" and ending with the page where you want to direct the reader. E-mail addresses should begin with "mailto:" and the e-mail address (with no space). This makes it easier for the recipient to visit your site, any other web resource identified in your e-mail, and e-mail you.

Formatting: Test to see that your e-mail is formatted properly (see below). Send it to a friend or another email box. Have it reviewed for properly formatting, appearance.

## **Avoiding Formatting Snafus**

The effectiveness of your message to members of your list is reduced if your e-mail isn't formatted properly. You don't want it to be immediately disposed of because it "didn't look right." These are most common forms of formatting snafus:

**No line wrapping:** If you type an e-mail without using hard carriage returns at the end of a line, it may not look right if the recipient's e-mail program doesn't automatically line wrap. Paragraph appear as one long line. The recipient is forced to either insert hard carriage returns where line breaks should be or keep scrolling to the right to read your message. Chances are pretty good that the delete key will be used before the recipient does either of these two steps. To avoid this, insert a hard return at the end of each line, after say 65 characters.

**Non-Standard Characters:** The other major problem is the use of non-standard characters, especially curly quotations, apostrophes, and dashes. ASCII equivalents are nonsensical. Your e-mail loses goodwill in translation.

**Formatting Techniques:** Some of the formatting you might use for paper communications disappear when sent as an ASCII-text email. Tabs, italics, bold, difference in point sizes, unusual characters (e.g., dingbats), etc. vanish when e-mailed. Your e-mail is left without any of the emphasis, aesthetics, or attention getters you had hoped for.

**Non-Proportional Fonts:** Fonts used by different e-mail programs vary. Some use fixed pitch fonts (e.g., Courier). Some use proportional spaced fonts (e.g., AOL). Characters in a fixed pitch font line up directly above each other. Not so with proportional spaced fonts. Some letters, CAPS, spaces, and other characters are wider, so each line length is different. If you create an e-mail in one type of font and the recipient's e-mail program uses another type, your e-mail will look different – maybe not so hot. One solution is to insert hard carriage returns at the end of each line. Varying lines lengths are no longer a problem.

## **Checklist for Exercise 8-4**

### **Checklist Prior to E-mailing List**

1. Right Message for the Right List: Verify that the message is customized and the correct list is being used.
2. Valuable Content: Is the content-to-promotion ratio high? Will your recipients be glad they

received it? If not, pump up the e-mail's "meatiness".

3. Spelling/Grammatical Errors: Double check the spelling and grammar. Too much is at stake for you to look stupid or sloppy.
4. Signature: Verify the right signature is attached. Keep looking for ways to improve it.
5. Active Links: Make sure that URL links and e-mail addresses in your e-mail are formatted so that they are active if the recipient's e-mail software permits it.
6. Hard Carriage Returns: Insert hard returns after approximately 65 spaces on each line so that if the recipient's e-mail program doesn't recognize soft returns, paragraphs won't appear as one long line and non-proportional fonts don't adversely affect the appearance of your e-mail.
7. Non-Standard Characters: Avoid non-standard characters that might show up in the recipient's e-mail as gibberish. These include curly quotations, apostrophes, dashes.
8. Formatting Techniques: Watch out for formatting techniques that are lost in ASCII-text e-mails such as: tabs, italics, bold, differences in font point sizes, unusual characters (e.g., dingbats). Look for other ways to show organization, emphasis, aesthetics, attention-getters.

### **Exercise 8-5 – Promoting Traffic with Newsletters, Ezines, Bulletins**

Publishing a newsletter, magazine, or bulletin has never been easier – or cheaper. No printing, set-up charges, distribution costs. You have an audience ready and eager to receive it.

You also have plenty to write about. These are just some of the subjects you can cover in your newsletter or e-zine:

Describe new events and contents at your site

Announce new products and upgrades

Conduct special promotions

Promote contests

Provide training and helpful how-to instructions

Conduct surveys

Promote interactivity at web site

Share valuable resources

Encourage partnerships such as reciprocal links, banner exchanges, etc.

Recruit qualified employees or contractors

Recognize achievements (awards, nominations, etc).

Report of project progress

E-mail newsletters or e-zines weekly or monthly – more often if a lot is happening. Send update bulletins in the interim when you have something worthwhile to announce but not enough to prepare a full-blown newsletter.

Forget charging a subscription fee. The Internet isn't ready for a fee-based periodical. The number of publications that successfully charge subscribers are far fewer than the number that have failed. Too many benefits come from publishing a free periodical not to give it serious consideration.

#### Characteristics of a Good Newsletter or E-zine

Strives to be friendly and entertaining

Focuses on interests of target audiences

Delivers worthwhile content at audience's level of expertise

Gives recipients numerous reasons to visit your web site

Builds a sense of community

Promotes events which interest the readers.

Covers a number of topics

Avoids too much blatant self-promotion. A signature at the bottom is blatant enough.

Frequently includes the relevant URL where more information and participation is available.

Encourages feedback from readers and gives recognizes readers' contributions.

Is limited to less than 25k. Spreading out announcements and worthwhile information over several newsletters and/or updates generate more traffic than one large publication

Makes it perfectly clear how to subscribe and un-subscribe.

Copies good ideas from other publications

Is free (worth repeating).

### **Boost Readership with a New Web Marketing Plan**

A free newsletter or e-zine is welcome news to targeted audiences. It's an important way for net users to effortlessly receive worthwhile information. Interest in publications like this is high for targeted audiences, enough to justify announcing in discussion groups and other announcement locations. Instead of registering your newsletters in search engines, you'll register in super directories that lists new publications (see below).

A marketing plan will dramatically increase the number of visitors to your site and the number of subscribers for your newsletter or e-zine. Set aside a separate page to describe the newsletter and link to an archive of past issues. Register this page in search engines that allow a page other than the home page to be registered (Exercise 2-8).

Announce your newsletter your newsletter or e-zine the same as a new web site or page. The focus however is on places where the announcement of a new publication is acceptable and where targeted audiences hang out (Exercises 3-5, 3-8) .

These are a few to consider: comp.infosystems.www.announce: Announcement to this newsgroup. Stress the newsletter's value.

Net-Happenings: Announce at this popular site.

Yahoo: Look for places to announce a new newsletter here.

Comp.newprod: Announce a new publication at this newsgroup.

New Page List: Try here for your announcement.

"Announce" newsgroups: With all newsgroups showing in your newsreader, search for relevant discussion groups with "announce" in the name. Customize your announcement for a better "fit" if necessary.

NEW-List@LISTSERV.NODAK.EDU – sends out e-mail announcements. For more information about having them announce your newsletter, send an e-mail to this address with "info new-list" in the body of your message.

John Labowitz's e-zine list. Announces newsletters, moderated, and unmoderated e-mail.

Todd Kuiper's e-mail/-zines list.

Look for places to place links to your newsletter, particularly at super directories of newsletters and e-zine. Pages for newsletter and e-zines are good candidates for reciprocal linking (Exercise 5-6).

Add mention of your free newsletter in your signature before participating in discussion groups (Lesson 6).

Contact trade journals, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and other special interest media aimed at your target audiences. Inform them in a news release of your newsletter (Lesson 9).

It's a good idea to offer visitors a chance to subscribe to your newsletters from many different pages at your web site. Particularly if you include a comment how by subscribing to the newsletter, visitors can monitor updates and events at the part where they are at.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 8-5**

### **Newsletter Planning Worksheet**

Decide on sections or "articles" for your newsletter:

1. Welcome readers to your first newsletter and describe what you hope to accomplish with it.

2.List services or pages at your web site. Assign titles to articles about them:


3.List current or planned events or promotions at your web site:


4.Write about valuable content currently or planned for your web site:


5.Describe resources that you want to share with your readers:


6.Look for other sources for articles:

- Special promotions
- Contests
- Surveys
- Partnerships, exchanges
- Training, tips, how-to instructions
- Recruit help

Compare your newsletter to these guidelines:

- 1.The tone is friendly, informal and entertaining.
- 2.The focus is on subjects that interest your target audiences.
- 3.The content is worthwhile to make readers want to receive it.
- 4.It gives readers numerous reasons for visiting your web site.
- 5.It helps to build a sense of community between your site and your readers.
- 6.It covers a number of interesting subjects.
- 7.Blattant self-promotion is held to a minimum.
- 8.Valuable resources are shared with the readers.
- 9.Encourage feedback from readers
- 10.Clearly describe how to subscribe and un-subscribe.

**Work up a new Web Marketing Plan for your newsletter:**

1. Register the page describing the newsletter and linking to an archive of back issues. Review Lesson 2 for registration instructions.
2. Announce the newsletter in these locations:

comp.infosystems.www.announce  
Net-Happenings  
Yahoo -- <http://www.yahoo.com>  
Comp.newprod newsgroup.  
New Page List at  
<http://web-star.com/newpage/newpage.html>.  
"Announce" newsgroups -- search for relevant  
"announce" discussion groups to post a customized  
announcement.  
NEW-List@LISTSERV.NODAK.EDU

(Web Sites)

John Labovitz's e-zine-list - <http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list/submit.html>

Todd Kuipers' E-Mail Zine List - <http://propagandist.com/tkemzl/howto.htm>

e-zines Database - <http://www.dominis.com/Zines/add-howto.shtml>

Yahoo!: Magazines - <http://www.yahoo.com/docs/info/include.html>

DIY Search - <http://www.diysearch.com/addurl.cfm>

e-zine movement - <http://w3.nai.net/~alien/ezm/join.htm>

EZ Connect - <http://www.ezconnect.com/submit.htm>

New Journal Digest - <http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/submit.html>

Ultimate Zine List (print and online) -  
<http://www.sleazefest.com/sleaze/forms/newzine.html>

Virtual Libraries: E-Journals - <http://www.edoc.com/jrl-bin/wilma>

Zine Mart - <mailto:zinemart@argusig.com>

ZineRack - <http://www.ZineRack.com/enterurl.html> –

Directory of Electronic Journals and Newsletters -  
<http://arl.cni.org/scomm/template.html>

How To Web's Online Publications Directory -  
<http://www.howtoweb.com/ezines/addzine.htm>

Best E-Zines @ InfoTrek - <mailto:infotrek@infotrek.simplenet.com>

E3: E-mail E-zine Emporium - <http://www.apex.net/users/jyoung/e3/addzine.htm>

3. Announce in newsgroups and mailing lists where targeted audiences hang out (Lesson 3).
4. Look for suitable free classified ads with suitable headings (Lesson 4).
5. Populate the Internet with links to your newsletter subscription page (Lesson 5).
6. Look for reciprocal linking arrangements with other newsletters and ezines (Lesson Lesson 5).

7. Add your newsletter to super directories for online publications (Lesson 5).
8. Mention your newsletter in your signature before participating in discussion groups(Lesson 6).
9. Look for opportunities to promote your newsletter with an e-mail campaign.
10. Notify trade journals and other special interest media of your free newsletter (next lesson).

## **Exercise 8-6 – Marketing with Direct E-mail**

Direct e-mail is Internet's equivalent of direct mail. If you are going to try direct e-mail, you have to recognize nature of Internet and adapt your message to this medium. Also, understand that you have a proliferation of bulk e-mail making your e-mail campaign all that more difficult.. You have to interest your target audience immediately with an approach that clearly is not junk email. These guidelines will help you steer clear of major pitfalls:

### **Guidelines for a Successful Direct Email Campaign**

1. Target selective markets: There is no quicker way to get into trouble with Netizens than to use e-mail indiscriminately because it is so easy and so cheap to target tens of thousands of Net Users. Instead, direct e-mail requires selectivity and discretion. Target your niche market carefully and don't bombard them with flagrant hype. You may even want to reserve direct e-mail for rented lists (Exercise 8-8) of Net users who signed up to receive promotional e-mails. Save your own mailing lists for more meaningful e-mails such as newsletters, bulletins, etc. and discretely incorporate promotional text.
2. Personalize the Approach: Direct e-mail should be more personal as well as more targeted. A good beginning is to personalize the salutation (there's software that lets you do this on a large scale). A "Hi, I thought this might interest you" gets better results than something impersonal no matter how professionally well-written. Add a positive comment about the recipient's work or web site. Only then are you ready for your canned presentation. Mail these out individually not as a list.
3. Avoid Spam-like Techniques: Spam e-mails often use the same techniques to grab your attention and try to sell you a shortcut to riches. Avoid mimicking them: don't use all CAPS or a series of exclamation points, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!!!!. Watch out for incredible opening claims and a series of short, often incomplete, sentences. If your e-mail looks like and smells like spam, it will be deleted in a nano-second.
4. Direct, Concise, Short: Long, professional letters are fine for direct mail campaigns but they don't translate well to the Internet. Short, snappy e-mails work better. People don't

have the same patience reading long documents on a computer screen than they do in paper form. State your proposition immediately, succinctly, preferably in no more than a screen full. E-mails several screens long are usually trashed immediately.

5. Follow the Two-Step Approach: Don't try to close the sale through the e-mail. Instead try to lure them to your site where they will find more details and plenty of reasons for taking the desired course of action. Creating a one-to-one relationship and encouraging return visits pay off over a long term.
6. Keep It Simple (Stupid): Don't muddy your proposition with too many services or products options, rates, plans. Recipients will have a low tolerance for confusion.
7. Cleverness Helps: Hit them with a sound bite, a clever come-on to interest the reader. Preferably, start with snappy subject line. Politicians aren't the only ones who need sound bites to gain attention.
8. Give People an Incentive to Buy. You'll get better results if you use a compelling reason to inspire Internet users to act, such as a discount, prize, free sample, and/or limited-time offer.
9. Use Good Copy writing Techniques: Good copy writing techniques used for direct mail still apply to direct e-mail. These include:

- Use present tense, second person ("you")
- Use subheadings to give readers an overview and encourage reading the ad
- Write simply
- Use simple words
- Give away free information with sales pitch
- Arouse curiosity
- Be specific (e.g., give exact numbers rather than approximate numbers)
- Have others help you
- Urge readers to act,

## **Worksheet for Exercise 8-6**

### **Guidelines for a Successful Direct Email Campaign**

- 1) Target selective markets: Identify your target audiences:
- 2) Personalize the Approach: Direct e-mail should be more personal as well as more targeted.

Note your ideas for personalizing your direct e-mails:

- 3) Avoid Spam-like Techniques: Watch out for these spam indicators:

All CAPS

Exclamation points

Incredible opening claims

Short, often incomplete, sentences

- 4) Direct, Concise, Short: How will you state your proposition succinctly:

- 5) Follow the Two-Step Approach: How will you lure them to your site?

- 6) Keep It Simple (Stupid): Simply state your proposition:

- 7) Cleverness Helps: Practice clever leads:

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- 8) Give People an Incentive to Buy. What compelling reasons will you give to inspire action:

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- 9) Use Good Copy Writing Techniques: (where applicable, fill in the blank lines for your copy writing ideas)

Use present tense, second person ("you")

Use subheadings

Write simply

Use simple words

10) Give away free information with sales pitch. (What information can you give away?)

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11) Arouse curiosity (How will you arouse curiosity?)

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12) Be specific (What specific details can you include?)

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13) Have others help you

14) Urge readers to act (How will you?)

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### **Exercise 8-7 --Building Traffic with Automatic E-mails**

An autoresponder or Mailbot is a mail server that automatically compiles the names and addresses of people it receives e-mail from in a mailing list database. At the same time it sends back a pre-formatted message.

An autoresponder is an excellent tool not only for building a mailing list but also for taking

the first step toward establishing one-to-one relationships. It often is used to send a thank you note and/or valuable information.

Autoresponders have many uses. They can send instant e-mails to any database you have created. These are some of the more popular ones:

- Acknowledge that a newsletter was successfully subscribed to and provide information about un-subscribing, sending requests, etc.

- Send product or upgrade information whenever it receives an inquiry

- Distributing information such as articles, online brochures

- Publishing price lists and catalogs to customers and prospects

- Answers to Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs)

- Announce terms of special promotions

- Explain the rules of a contest

- Distribute press releases to media contacts

- Send financial data to investors, analysts

- Inventory availability

- Excerpts from a publication being sold

- Internal uses (intranet) such as status, policies, competitor information, etc.

Autoresponders are easy to update the message sent out since usually they are just text. It also gives people the luxury of being able to read them offline at their convenience.

Some autoresponders provide information in many kinds of format:

- Voice messages

- Graphics

- Word processing documents

Database

Spreadsheets

Any combinations of these.

#### Tips for Getting Maximum Benefits from an Autoresponder

Promote the hell out of your autoresponder's address(es)

Include the autoresponder's address in your signature

Include promotional text in your autoresponder messages including a link to your site

Update information often

Have a links at your site to an autoresponder web form

Offer choices from multiple documents available for e-mailing rather than overloading prospects with information

Include the autoresponder in off-line advertising and documents

Keep thinking up new uses for your autoresponder

Might as well register your autoresponder documents by subject at <http://www.autoresponders.com>. It's free.

#### **Limitations of Autoresponders**

To get any value from an autoresponder, their e-mail address still has to be promoted. Unlike a web site, an autoresponder address is "passive". Nobody will discover it in a search engine or a link at another site.

Autoresponders are no substitute when a personal e-mail is required. They are a good first step in establishing relationship, such as sending a thank you note, but they are not appropriate for when an inquirer wants information or has a request for which the autoresponder is not programmed. Be sure to include in your auto-message an e-mail address where a live human being can be reached.

#### **Where to Get an Autoresponder?**

Many types of autoresponders are available on the net. A keyword search for "autoresponder" or "mailbot" will turn up many sources. Also ask your Internet Service Provider.

The best place to find an autoresponder super directory is at the Autoresponder Directory and The Mall of the Autoresponders: <http://www.autoresponders.com>

From the information at this directory, compile your own comparison chart and decide, first, if an autoresponder is right for you, how you will use it, and what features you want.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 8-7**

### **Building Traffic with Automatic E-mails**

1. Plan how you would use an autoresponder:

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2. Brainstorm ideas for promoting your autoresponder address:

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3. Modify your signature to include promotion text with autoresponder address:

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4. Visit locations for obtaining an autoresponder. Compile list of features and prices:


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5. Decide on features you want in an autoresponder:

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6. List your top three choices and how to contact them:

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## **Exercise 8-8 – Renting Somebody Else’s Mailing Lists**

If you think you have an appealing product or service to promote, and are impatient at the rate it’s taking you to build web traffic and a mailing list for e-mail marketing, consider speeding up the process by renting large mailing lists of your target audiences from list owners. A targeted list gives you an opportunity to instantly reach large numbers of users – numbers that are beyond your reach using conventional promotional techniques.

The best approach is to test results on a relatively small targeted list. Do the math: percent of inquiries and sales versus numbers contacted. If you are pleased with the results, then you can confidently move on to much larger lists. With the right offer, you could be catapulted to overnight success.

### **Not All List Owners Are the Same**

Internet’s most heated controversy is over bulk e-mailing. In simplest possible terms, this is the unauthorized use of e-mail addresses for sending unwanted e-mail. The Internet and a simple software program that strips email addresses from postings in discussion groups make it possible for millions of names to be inexpensively compiled into a mailing list. It’s a direct marketer’s dream. For net users it can be a major annoyance to have their e-mail box

cluttered with unwanted e-mail. Some get very, very irate at the senders.

US Congressmen and a number of state legislatures are trying to pass laws to ban bulk e-mail. Net users are divided over whether or not the government should get involved.

That's the background. How it applies to whether you should rent a mailing list depends on how the list was obtained. You definitely do not want to rent a list of names obtained surreptitiously from unsuspecting net users. This is called an "opt-out" list. Members are involuntary. These lists will cause you major headaches. You will be inundated with e-mail from many irate people on the rented list.

Legitimate list owners offer what is called "opt-in" lists. People volunteered to be on these lists. Opt-in lists produce better results, better net community relations, and fewer headaches. You will still get a few flames because members don't remember giving their permission to be added to the list or they were signed up by somebody else. Nevertheless, these lists are usually worth a try, at least on a minimum, one-time basis to see if they're profitable.

### **Finding Reputable List Owners**

Renting only opt-in lists is important but also is finding a list that specifically reaches your target audience. These two list companies have hundreds of lists that reach every audience imaginable:

Netcreations

WebPromote

Before choosing a list, though spend time on research. This site offers a super directory of mailing list owners:

<http://catalog.com/vivian/mailing-list-providers.html>

Compare rates, provisions, restrictions, etc. before choosing a list to rent. Use this checklist to help you decide:

Has lists for targeted audiences

An "opt-in" list of voluntary names

Allows a small partial-list mailing for testing purposes

Has a reasonable minimum cost for test (\$200)

Testimonials available from satisfied customers

Offers geographical lists, if desired

Sends confirmation message

Offers credit for excessive "undeliverable e-mails".

### **Exercise 8-9 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson**

E-mail is rapidly gaining recognition as a powerful Internet marketing tool. Whereas a web site is passive, hoping somebody will notice, e-mail is active. It aggressively seeks out interested parties and encourages them to come visit a web site.

E-mail has another important advantage over a web site. The majority of Internet users have e-mail but not access to the web. Many of them represent potential customers that are accessible only with e-mail.

E-mail is an effective means of generating repeat web traffic. It reminds net users over and over that your web site exists and has valuable contents.

#### **The three primary sources for names for your mailing list are:**

Visitors to your site who voluntarily sign up to be added to your list.

People who e-mailed you requesting that their name be added.

Prospecting on the net for people who might be interested in what your site has to offer, reciprocal links, information you distribute, etc.

Successful web sites use a number of techniques to encourage people to add their names to the site's list:

Free reports

Subscription to a newsletter or e-zine

Receive important announcement

Notification of new developments or products

Surveys

Contests

Special members-only services

Guest book

Feedback form.

To be able to do something with a mailing list, you need a mail server and mailing list management software, or access to them.

Deciding whether to host your own list or out-source it, these factors should be taken into account:

Price of software versus hosting service

Features desired in software used

Options offered by outside host

Technical skills required

Technical support available

The choice of which mailing list management software to use includes:

Majordomo

ListServ

Listproc

GroupMaster

Others.

Follow these guidelines for proper use of an e-mail list or you risk angering large numbers

of Net users:

Get the individual's permission to add their name to your list.

Immediately remove a name when requested to

Send only to target audiences, not indiscriminately

Don't sell or rent your list to others. You'll get blamed for the resulting junk e-mail.

Keep your list secure and confidential.

Don't use the list for any reason other how you induced a person to sign up.

The necessary precautions should be taken before sending e-mails to your list or you risk doing more harm than good:

Make sure the right message is aimed at the right list

Include valuable information in your e-mail

Check carefully for spelling and grammatical errors

Be sure that the correct signature is attached

Make sure that links in your e-mail work for those users who have e-mail software that recognizes URLs and e-mail addresses.

Verify that there aren't any formatting snafus such as no line wrapping, non-standard characters, non-proportional fonts.

Publishing a newsletter or e-zine is an easy, effective way to generate a lot of interest in your web site. These can be supplemented with bulletins between issues that announce major events.

A newsletter can cover many different subjects all of which encourages web traffic and/or promotes your product or service:

Describe new events and contents at your site

Announce new products and upgrades

Conduct special promotions

Promote contests

Provide training and helpful how-to instructions

Conduct surveys

Promote interactivity at web site

Share valuable resources

Encourage partnerships such as reciprocal links, banner exchanges, etc.

Recruit qualified employees or contractors

Recognize achievements (awards, nominations, etc).

Report of project progress

To improve the quality of your newsletters, it should have most of these characteristics:

Strives to be friendly and entertaining

Focuses on interests of target audiences

Delivers worthwhile content at audience's level of expertise

Gives recipients numerous reasons to visit your web site

Builds a sense of community

Promotes events which interest the readers.

Covers a number of topics

Avoids too much blatant self-promotion. A signature at the bottom is blatant enough.

Frequently includes the relevant URL where more information and participation is available.

Encourages feedback from readers and gives recognizes readers' contributions.

Is limited to less than 25k. Spreading out announcements and worthwhile information over several newsletters and/or updates generates more traffic than one large publication.

Makes it perfectly clear how to subscribe and un-subscribe.

Copies good ideas from other publications

Is free (worth repeating).

A number of steps can be taken that will make others aware of your newsletter and promote the number of subscribers. These include announcing it at new publications sites and adding a link in super directories.

Direct e-mail is a method for reaching out to a target audience with a promotional message. Guidelines however will help prevent your direct e-mail campaign from being a disaster:

Target selective markets

Personalize your approach

Avoid spam-like techniques

Be direct, concise, succinct

Don't try to close the sale in your e-mail. Entice recipients to your web site.

Keep the options simple.

Strive to be clever

Give recipients a reason to buy

User good copy writing techniques.

Autoresponders, or mailbots, are an effective way to build a mailing list and web traffic by automating the distribution of information.

Autoresponders have an almost unlimited number of uses. These are some of the more popular ones:

Acknowledge that a newsletter was successfully subscribed to and provide

information about un-subscribing, sending requests, etc.

Send product or upgrade information whenever it receives an inquiry

Distributing information such as articles, online brochures

Publishing price lists and catalogs to customers and prospects

Answers to Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs)

Announce terms of special promotions

Explain the rules of a contest

Distribute press releases to media contacts

Send financial data to investors, analysts

Inventory availability

Excerpts from a publication being sold

Internal uses (intranet) such as status, policies, competitor information, etc.

An autoresponder without aggressive support is limited in its effectiveness. These techniques will improve its benefits:

Promote the heck out of your autoresponder's address(es)

Include the autoresponder's address in your signature

Include promotional text in your autoresponder messages including a link to your site

Update information often

Have a links at your site to an autoresponder web form

Offer choices from multiple documents available for e-mailing rather than overloading prospects with information

Include the autoresponder in off-line advertising and documents

Keep thinking up new uses for your autoresponder.

Renting somebody else's mailing list can be a shortcut to success if done properly. Test your offer on a small list first before a major e-mail campaign to large lists.

#### Checklist for Choosing a Mailing List to Rent

Has lists for targeted audiences

An "opt-in" list of voluntary names

Allows a small partial-list mailing for testing purposes

Has a reasonable minimum cost for test (\$200)

Testimonials available from satisfied customers

Offers geographical lists, if desired

Sends confirmation message

Offers credit for excessive "undeliverable e-mails".

## **Lesson 9 –Publicizing Your Site to the Media**

### **Lesson Objectives**

#### **Using the Internet to Approach the Media**

Exercise 9-1 – Planning Your Media Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 9-1

Exercise 9-2 – Making Your Site More "Media-Friendly"

Worksheet for Exercise 9-2

Exercise 9-3 – Writing Press Releases for Your Media Page

Worksheet for Exercise 9-3

Exercise 9-4 – Building a Media List

Worksheet for Exercise 9-4

Exercise 9-5 – Contacting the Media with E-mail News Releases

Worksheet for Exercise 9-5

Exercise 9-6 – Writing Effective News Releases

Worksheet for Exercise 9-6

Exercise 9-7 – Monitoring Results of Your Media Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 9-7

Exercise 9-8 – Improving Future Media Campaigns

Worksheet for Exercise 9-8

Exercise 9-9 – Getting Professional Help

Exercise 9-10 – Recapping Ideas in This Lesson

## **Lesson 9 Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson you will:**

- Recognize why media publicity is so important
- Understand how to use email as tool for obtaining free media publicity
- Understand what it takes to act as your own publicist
- Prepare for media campaign that improves your chances for success
- Create a media page at your web site that includes documents that the media relies on for its information sources
- Write an effective press release to publish on your media page based on the guidelines presented
- Begin building a media list that will target the media you most want to reach
- Learn where to look for names and email addresses for your media list
- Learn how best to approach the media
- Write an effective news release that will interest in the intended media
- Monitor the results of your media campaign so that you can make the necessary adjustments to improve future campaigns
- Learn the steps you can take to improve future media campaigns
- Learn where to go for professional help to supplement your media campaign.

## **Worksheets for Lesson 9**

Worksheet for Exercise 9-1 -- Planning Your Media Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 9-2 -- Planning Your Media Page

Worksheet for Exercise 9-3 -- Writing an Effective Press Release

Worksheet for Exercise 9-4 -- Building a Media List

Worksheet for Exercise 9-5 -- Guidelines for Contacting the Media with E-mail News Releases

Worksheet for Exercise 9-6 -- Writing Effective News Releases

Worksheet for Exercise 9-7 -- Monitoring the Results of Your Media Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 9-8 -- Improving Future Media Campaigns

## **Using the Internet to Approach the Media**

Getting free publicity from the media is an integral part of your Web Marketing Plan. The difference from other techniques is that getting the media to respond isn't like registration or announcing. There's no guarantee they will. It's frequently hard to get noticed by the media. The competition for their attention and page space is intense.

It used to be that just putting up a web site was news. Each day thousands of new sites join the hundreds of thousands already on the web. Increasingly, your site or product promoted at your site must be unique and that means newsworthy.

## **Benefits of Media Publicity**

A successful media campaign requires hard work. Even after diligently putting together a media campaign, you have no guarantee of success. Even if you do have some success, you had to give up control over placement, message, and timing. So why bother? Because:

The media's intervention gives your site or product more credibility. Readers don't view media content with the same skepticism that they do advertising.

The media can reach a huge market with your message.

It's free. No advertising expense.

Potential customers give you a closer look.

Tremendous satisfaction. Nothing is more satisfying than seeing your story picked up by the media and resulting spurt in web traffic. You can take pride that you won out over stiff competition from other "budding publicists" trying to get free publicity for their site.

Your expertise is assumed: Media coverage automatically confers on your "expert" status. The public has a tendency to think that people in the news are successful.

It's important to combine web marketing and public relations. They both build awareness and relationship.

## **Using E-mail as Your Primary Tool**

Just like the world population, each day more journalists are migrating to the Internet. As a result reaching them has become easier than before. Like Net users in general though, most editors and reporters aren't receptive to long, rambling e-mail, whether it be a press release, story pitch, or other request for publicity.

The traditional press release used by public relations professionals isn't well suited to the net. It's too long. It doesn't present its message succinctly, concisely. An editor or reporter can too easily press the Delete key if his or her interest isn't immediately piqued.

Instead, try a short e-mail news release. Just enough information is presented to give the recipient an idea of what the story is and where to find out more, or to request than additional information such as a press release be sent. In the meantime, publish a press release at your site for them to read or request depending on their preference.

Not all journalists however are receptive to this approach. You have to be ready to modify your approach to them in the future. They may prefer a mailed press release, an e-mail press release, a fax, or nothing at all. Being able to cater to their preferences is essential to getting the desired results.

In this lesson, we'll use the term "news release" to mean a short, e-mail intended to grab a journalist's attention. "Press release" will mean what it has always meant: a public relations document which provides enough information for a journalist to prepare a story.

## **Becoming a Publicist**

A primary difference between the publicity component of your Web Marketing Plan and the others you've mastered in previous lessons is that publicizing a web site requires you to go through the media to reach your target audiences. As an intermediary, the media filters, manipulates, or rejects your message.

To achieve results you have to think like a publicist and approach the media like a publicist. think of your web site as your client. You are promoting your site's uniqueness and strengths the same way a Hollywood publicist promotes her clients' assets.

Your approach has to be as well planned and professional as a publicist's. That means selecting the media most likely to be a suitable go-between, then turning them on to your story. The media wants your approach to be carefully crafted for their audience, which should also be yours.

Even if you have never publicized anything before, you can do it. It's not rocket science. It takes hard work and practice. You may have to go through an apprenticeship where you keep developing and executing a media plan only to have to modify it and try again, and again. You also will want to further your education beyond the scope of this guidebook. Study public relations materials and others' press releases. In the end you may opt to seek professional help (Exercise 9-9). Follow the guidelines in this lesson. Ask friends and family to review your work and make suggestions. Soon you'll become comfortable acting as your own publicist and will begin seeing results.

## **Exercise 9-1 – Planning Your Media Campaign**

A media campaign is like the other Web Marketing Plan components. To be successful it requires planning, creativity, an interesting web site or product, and a strong relationship with the media. Many of the ideas and strategies in your media campaign will have already been developed and used in previous lessons. For example, the subject of an announcement in Lesson 3 may also be suitable for your media approach. The primary difference may be that your message to the media focuses on being newsworthy, factual, interesting. A media campaign is pro-active. You must seek out media contacts and provide them with enough information about your site or product to induce them to visit your site or e-mail you requesting more information. Seldom will they come to you unsolicited unless you have already achieved some success in other media.

### **Take these steps to improve your on-line media campaign:**

Make your site more media friendly: Before approaching the media, you can improve the chances for media coverage by making your site more "media friendly" (Exercise 9-2). You can do this by adding a special media page and publishing the kinds of documents that the media uses:

Press releases

Prior media coverage

Background history

Biographies of key personnel

Competitive comparisons

Guide for reviewers

Target appropriate media: Rather than blanket all media with your message, target only those that reach your intended audiences, the users who you most want to visit your site. This requires that you identify which media reaches your audience. For general media, it may mean finding out who specifically covers your field or technology, and how he or she covers it.

Build a strong media list: A successful media campaign requires a good media list, either your own, or one you rent or buy (Exercise 9-9). Start with the media you are most anxious to run your story. Find the names of editors or reporters. Approach them with your release. Keep adding names and more media to your list over time.

Decide on the message: The message sent to the media is newsworthy, factual and interesting (Exercise 9-5). While emphasizing your site's or product's uniqueness, it appeals to the target audience.

Build a one-to-one relationship with the media: the message is an attempt to reach the editor or journalist on a personal level (Exercise 9-5). Rather than appearing to be "bulk e-mail", the message is customized to reflect who the recipient is, the medium being approached, and the medium's readership.

Use e-mail effectively: Most journalists are too busy to deal with long-winded press releases. They are more receptive to short news releases that give them just enough information to want to check out a site or request a full press release (Exercise 9-5).

Monitor results: It's important to keep track of which media ran your story (Exercise 9-7). This allows you to make adjustments in terms of message and type of media targeted. By publishing articles or reviews of your site on your media page, you also encourage others to write about your site.

## **Guidelines for Exercise 9-1**

### **Planning Your Media Campaign**

**Follow these guidelines for planning a media campaign:**

1. Plan your media page. Before approaching the media, create a page for them to use as an information resource. What will you include on it? See Exercise 9-2

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2. Target Appropriate Media: Plan to approach media where you are most likely to find your target audiences. Avoid blanketing the media indiscriminately with bulk news releases.

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3. Build a Strong Media List: Key to a successful media campaign is a good media list (Exercise 9-4). Plan to continue adding to it so that future media campaigns are improved.

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4. Send a Strong Message: The message sent to the media should be newsworthy, factual, and interesting. Avoid a lot of hype.

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5. Shoot for a One-to-One Relationship: Preferably, send a customized news release to an individual not a blind release to a medium.

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6. Use E-mail Effectively: Send short, attention-grabbing e-mails rather than long, rambling press releases. Don't try for media coverage with the e-mail. Entice the media to your web site or request more information after reading your release.

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7. Monitor Results: You may not know you received media coverage unless you periodically search the net or monitor the media sites.

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## **Exercise 9-2 – Making Your Site More "Media-Friendly"**

Before approaching the media make your site is more "media-friendly". Prepare beforehand information that the media will like to see when reviewing your site and in formats that demonstrate that you are "media-aware". It could mean the difference on whether or not they run a story about it. Fortunately, these steps will also enhance the professionalism of your site and improve its credibility in the eyes of visitors. A media page encourages visitors to linger longer at your site -- always a plus.

Assume you are vying for attention and space with hundreds, maybe thousands of other sites. So it's important that you make it as easy as possible for the media to give the nod to you.

### **Create a Media Page**

Start by creating a special media page at your site. It will be used to store the same kinds of material as a "press kit" in the off-line, public relations world. If you get into publicizing your site off-line as well as on-line, the media page information can be used for a press kit.

Add a "Media Center" or similar link to your home page. Any media that you invited to visit your site or that happen to find it on their own, will be particularly interested in this information. If they decide to run an article or review of your site, most of their information will come from your Media Center. The easier you make for them to collect the information they need, the more likely you will get the resulting publicity.

Your media page should include links to:

**Press Releases:** Link to press releases you've published. If you have a new site, write a "start-up" press release that announces your new site in a newsworthy manner (Exercise 9-3). Write a new press release each time another important event occurs at your site.

**Prior Media Coverage:** Members of the media like to know who else has covered your site. It takes a little less courage to review a site that has already been deemed newsworthy by other media. This is a good reason to initially approach media where you have the greatest chance for success (Exercise 9- 5). It doesn't hurt to add any "cool site" or other special recognition your site has earned. It's better than nothing and lends credibility.

**Background History:** The media will be interested in background information -- a history of the site, company, or product. Describe the sequence of events led to the present. Keep it concise, pertinent. Don't ramble endlessly causing the media representative to scroll and scroll.

Biography: A "bio" of key players may also be key to getting media coverage. Especially, local special interest or trade media may find this information particularly newsworthy. A condensed one-paragraph version of your bio ordinarily is a worthwhile edition to your press release. Never written a bio before? Here are "bio tips":

Write in a lively appealing style

Write in the third person

Write in complete sentences and paragraphs (not like a resume)

Start with a catchy first sentence identifying what you most want the reader to know about you.

Emphasize accomplishments, particularly the most recent ones. It's more important to list them in order of decreasing importance than chronological.

Include a graphic photo, preferably a headshot

Whatever else makes you sound even more interesting than you are. Not a resume — your aren't applying for a job -- but some of the information that ordinarily might be included in a resume and cover letter. A screenful ought to suffice.

Competitive Comparison: If your web site or product compares favorably with your competitors, or, with the proper spin, can be compared favorably, include a competitor comparison on your media page. Consider a comparison chart, checklist, or "benchmarks" to compare performance.

Reviewer's Guide: To improve the chances that your site will be reviewed and selected as a "cool" site (Exercise 6-5), discuss the technology, functionality, and features of your site or product.

In your approach to the media (Exercise 9-5) invite them to come visit your media page for more information or receive an e-mail press release. Be prepared to send a hard copy press release or press kit via "snail mail".

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-2**

### **Planning Your Media Page**

**Follow these guidelines and planning steps for assembling a media page:**

- 1.Heading/wording: Explain the purpose of the page. We recommend a welcome to the media, site reviewers, and other visitors. Ideas

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- 2.Press Release: Consider publishing the most recent release on the media page and linking to an archive of past releases.

- 3.Prior media coverage: The media page should include links to previous media coverage. It's important for journalists and reviewers to see that others deemed your site worthy of coverage.

- 4.Background History: The media page should link to page summarizing the background of the site or company, even product. Rather than describe the history in rambling paragraphs, assembly a chronology of events to the present:

Date

Event

Guidelines and planning ideas for your media page:

5. Biography: Identify the key players and describe, again in chronology format, how each acquired his or her competence and how they came to be involved with the site. Tips for a good bio:

Write in an entertaining style

Write in the third person

Give priority to what's most important for the reader to know about the subject. (Date, if applicable, and event or characteristic)

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Emphasize accomplishments

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Include a photo of the key players, preferably a head shot Include whatever else the public should know about the subjects.

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6. Competitive Comparison: If your site or product compares favorably with strong competitors, consider linking to a comparison chart. Competitors:

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7. Reviewer's Guide: You may be able to increase the chances that your site will be selected as "cool" site by describing the technology, functionality, and features of your site. Points to cover:

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### **Exercise 9-3 – Writing Press Releases for Your Media Page**

Your press release is most important document on your media page. It will be instrumental in determining how effective your media campaign is. The key ideas in the press release will be the basis for the e-mail news release used to initiate contact with the media (Exercise 9-5). As noted in the last exercise, the press release is the critical follow-up document to editors and reporters intrigued by your news release.

In addition to being published on your media page, the press release is available to send to editor who follow up your news release (Exercise 9-5) with a request for more information. The press release may also be used for off-line approaches to the media which either isn't on-line or prefers traditional, mailed-in or faxed press releases.

Although you may publish a generic press release at your site that is intended for the general public, be prepared to modify its appeal for specific audiences. For example, a press release to local or regional media would stress a local angle. Releases to special interest media, such as trade journals, newsletters, e-zines, etc. should slant their approach to account for the narrow interest of the readership.

#### **Guidelines for Writing an Effective Press Release**

Writing good press releases take practice. Even if you think you lack writing ability, you can still prepare a decent press release, one that stands a chance of interesting the media. These guidelines will help:

**What's Most Important?** The most important subject for your press release should be your site's most distinguishing aspect. What makes it unique? Does the Unique Selling Proposition you identified in Lesson 1 apply? Try your best to make your press release distinguishable from the other 100 on the editor's desk.

Newsworthy: What is most newsworthy about your site, your product or service? If you can combine most newsworthy with most important, you are well on your way to fashioning a pretty good press release with a decent chance of interesting the media. These "events" usually have high publicity value:

New technology with broad implications

Significant new product

Important new market

Dramatic pricing changes

Major product upgrades

Developing new trends

Strategic partnerships with well-known players.

Remember, the press release is not a brochure so avoid undisguised promotional wording and don't exaggerate. Editors have a nose for news and for hype. They reject immediately pushy hype.

Compelling Headline: If your headline doesn't intrigue an editor and make him or her want to know more, your media campaign will never get off the ground. Use active, colorful words – preferably 12 words or less. Chances are improved that your headline will be more effective if you draft six or more possible headlines from which to choose. Borrow ideas and words from several until you arrive at a headline that is better than the others.

Use the "Pyramid Style": this is the style preferred by editors and reporters. Lead off with your "news hook" in the first paragraph. Typically, in your lead you will want to include Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? The second paragraph provides supporting detail. End the press release with information about your company and who to contact. This is where you may want to include the URL along with other contact information such as; telephone number, fax number, e-mail address.

Be Concise: Keep your press release concise. Don't ramble. Editors are too busy to concentrate for long on a press release that doesn't get right to the point and state its case in less than a screenful or hard copy page.

How Benefit Target Audience: Media that reaches your target audiences are interested in how your site or product benefits the audiences. That's what their readers are interested in. If you have competition, describe how the benefits to the audience favor your product or competitors'.

**Quotes Are a Good Idea:** A good rule of thumb is to include a quote that fits the topic sentence in every other paragraph. This includes quotes from company officers, satisfied customers, other media. Look for interesting sound bites that support the ideas in the press release. A satisfied customer's favorable comments carry more weight than self-promotion.

**Summarize Contents of Your Web Site:** Before closing your press release, summarize what other contents or pages you have at your web site that may interest an editor or reader to visit.

**Include Essential Product Information:** If your press release is about a product or service, follow this simple checklist to ensure that you have included essential information:

Product name

Product version number

Earlier version being replaced

Product benefits for users

How does the product differ from competitors

Product cost

Product availability

Where it can be obtained

If the product is software, the minimum system requirements.

**Web Site's URL:** Don't forget to include the URL. You should show it early in the press release and again at the end when you tell where to check out the site for more information. If you put it on a line by itself, it will make it easier for the editor to copy and paste it into his or her browser.

**Use a Spell Checker:** Avoiding spelling or grammatical errors is critical. Use your word processor to spell and grammar check but still proofread carefully. A spell checker won't catch "there" or "their". Have others review the release too. This is too important not to take precaution.

**Nothing Newsworthy for Your Press Release?**

If nothing particularly important or newsworthy is going on at your web site, you have two options: cancel the media campaign or "manufacture" an event. You would be wasting your time and the media's to proceed with the campaign if it promotes nothing of interest. We hope you choose the latter. To be successful, web sites need to create and promote newsworthy events. Even events that aren't "media material" but still promotable, will generate traffic.

Need ideas for possible events? Spend "creative time" reviewing the Web Marketing Idea Generator in Appendix F. Brainstorm individual and combinations of ideas discussed. If you don't come up with several excellent event possibilities, you aren't in the right frame of mind.

Also check out press release services such as PR Newswire and Business Wire. Also check out Microsoft's media page. You may get ideas for your own press release after reviewing the subject of others'.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-3**

### **Writing an Effective Press Release**

1) What's Most Important: List what is most important about your site:

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2) Newsworthy: List several news angles that might interest the media:

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3) Combine What's Most Important and Newsworthy: If you can combine what your listed as most important and what you identified as newsworthy, you may have a pretty idea of the

subject for your press release. Try combining ideas:

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4) Compelling Headline: Write several possible headlines -- 12 words or less:

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5) Be Concise: Review each draft specifically for the purpose of eliminating unnecessary words and combining ideas into fewer sentences.

6) How Benefit Audience: Try to incorporate audience benefits in your release:

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7) Use Quotes: Round up positive quotes from officers and satisfied customers. Find likely candidates in each group and help them come up with something positive, interesting, and supports the paragraph's topic sentence.

8) Summarize Site Contents: What other site contents or features do you want to note in your

press release.

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- 9) Include Essential Product Information: If the subject of your press release is a product, check to see that the release has this product information:

Product name

Product version number

Earlier version being replaced

Product benefits for users

How does the product differ from competitors

Product cost

Product availability

Where it can be obtained

If the product is software, the minimum system requirements.

- 10) Use a Spell Checker: Consider drafting your press release in a word processor that has a spelling checker and grammar checker. You still need to proofread it carefully for errors not picked up by these checkers. Have others proof it too.

11) Where to Study Other Releases for Ideas: If you feel you need more ideas for your press release, go to sites that have a database of releases:

PR Newswire at <http://prnewswire.com>

Business Wire at <http://www.businesswire.com>

Microsoft's media page at <http://www.microsoft.com>.

Since there are literally thousands to choose from you need be selective in choosing which media to add to your database. Obviously, not all of them are candidates for your media campaign.

Set aside a folder or address group in your e-mail program for media contacts. You should start from the beginning categorizing the media contacts on your mailing list according to the sources below.

### **Information for Your Media List**

Ideally, each media entry will this information:

**Person's Name:** Just having the name of the medium isn't good enough. Initially some media sources won't have the name of an individual associated with it. Eventually, however, you want the name of an editor or reporter who is the appropriate person to contact. A name permits a personalized approach which produces better results than a impersonal, no-name approach.

**Address:** You need either an e-mail address, a fax number, or a street address to make contact. If you have a name but no address you can search for the address. Media Web sites often include addresses. Several large search engines like Infoseek link to a directory of net users' e-mail addresses. Other links are to White Pages directories where you can find street addresses. Search by the editor's or reporter's name.

**URL:** Record the medium's URL. You will want to visit the medium's site periodically to see if your story has been picked up, or to check on current and future content.

**Description of content:** Oftentimes the medium will publish a guide to the type of content they desire. Make a note of it. If it doesn't, summarize the typical article.

**Editorial calendar:** If the medium, particularly an e-zine, publishes an editorial calendar of upcoming issues, note any that are particularly applicable to your web site or product.

**Deadlines for submissions, if applicable:** If the medium publishes a deadline for submissions, such as an e-zine, note the deadline so that your submissions are timely.

### **Sources for Your Media List**

Finding media and individual's names for your mailing list requires both on-line and off-line research.

#### On-Line Sources:

The searching techniques you learned in previous lessons will come in handy.

**Visit Sites of Known Media:** You probably have media already in mind that you would like to approach. Visit their sites and search out appropriate names and e-mail addresses.

**Search for Media:** Use keyword searches such as those used in previous lessons, plus individual types of media such as "newspaper", "magazine", "newsletter", "ezine" (e.g., accounting+newsletter). This will often turn up appropriate media.

**Super Directories:** Chances are pretty good that some of the super directories found in Lesson 5 contain links to relevant media. Revisit these sites for media contacts.

**Regional Directories:** The web also has numerous regional directories such as Yahoo!

**Public Relations Sites:** A number of web sites for public relations professionals provide links to media.

Business Journals

Debra A. Osborne's Home Page

Editor and Publisher

Starting Point – Magazines

Editpro's Business News Media Directory

Newspapers Online!

Public Relations organization

Taxi's Electronic Newspapers

Top 100 Computer Magazines

Wire Services.

**Free-Lance Writers:** Another source of names for your media list is free-lance writers. In

addition to the media, compile a list of writers. Look for free-lancers' bylines, in writing-related discussion groups, and at web sites that cater to writers. They often contribute to a number of publications. If you interest them in your release, they may write the story for a suitable publication, or direct it to the appropriate editor or another writer.

### **Off-Line Sources:**

Visit your bookstore or newsstand. Pick out names and e-mail addresses in relevant magazines. If you find an editor's or reporter's name but no email address, you can look it up online or call the medium.

Look in the masthead or staff listing in newspapers and magazines for names of appropriate editors and reporters. Even if you only have a name and no e-mail address, you can look up the address in "white page" directories at <http://www.four11.com> or <http://www.infoseek.com>, and other major search engines. You can also search discussion groups by the individual's name at <http://www.dejanews.com> or <http://infoseek.com>. If the journalist is active on-line, such as in discussion groups for journalists, his or her name will show up in your searches. Caution: don't post news releases to journalism groups. They don't like that and will surely flame you.

For especially high-priority media, you may want to call them and ask for the e-mail address of individuals you want to contact.

When is the last time you visited your public library? It has a wealth of information for your media list:

Bacon's Newspaper/Magazine Directory (2 volumes)

Bacon's Radio/TV/Cable Directory (2 volumes)

Directories in Print

Editor and Publisher International Yearbook

Encyclopedia of Associations

Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media (3 volumes)

Literary Market Place

Newsletters in Print

Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters

Standard Periodical Directory

Standard Rate and Data Service (2 volumes)

Urich's International Periodicals Directory (3 volumes)

Working Press of the Nation (4 volumes).

### **Prioritize Media Contacts**

With such a large body of media to contact, it's important that you categorize media on your list into priority groups. Distinguish high priority from low priority based on these criteria:

Possibility of success: Trade journals, newsletters, local media, etc. are easier to get results and may have a more immediate impact on traffic to your site. Also success with small, more targeted media may improve the odds of getting picked up by larger, more well-known media.

How well it reaches your target audience: Specific interest media are often easier to reach and more effective than general media depending on how broad your audience is.

Personalized approach. A one-to-one relationship with an individual usually produces more results than a nameless e-mail to a magazine or newspaper. So, other things being equal, give a higher priority to media in which you have a name to contact over those with no name.

How large a readership: Don't overlook the number of readers if other factors are equal. Media that reaches the largest audience may have the most dramatic affect on traffic to your site.

When drafting and preparing to send a news release, concentrate on top priority media first. Work your way to the lowest priority list. Add and move media around depending on additional input such a positive response, a name to contact, or some other factor that increases or decreases the likelihood of success.

### **Long-Term, Continuous Project**

Building an effective media mailing list is a long-term, on-going project. Keep adding media and contact names. If you are starting from scratch on you media campaign, chances are you don't have many names and don't have the time or resources to contact hundreds of names. See Exercise 9-9 for hiring a service to send your press release to hundreds or thousands of media for you.

Also, continue to maintain your list. The larger it gets the more time you will have to spend correcting addresses and deleting names. Like everyone else, journalists regularly change jobs and/or e-mail addresses. A good media list is critical to media campaigns so it's important that you keep your list up to date.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-4**

### **Building a Media List**

- 1) Create a media database that includes these fields:

Editor or reporter name: (You may not have a name at first but add it later. )  
E-mail address  
URL  
Description of Content  
Editorial calendar (if applicable)  
Deadline for submissions (magazines, trade journals)

- 2) Sources for your Media List:

#### On-Line Sources:

Visit sites of priority media Search for media using a major search engine  
Look for super directories found in Lesson 5  
Look in regional directories like Yahoo!  
Visit public relations or media sites such as:

Business Journals -- <http://www.amcity.com/journals.html>  
Debra A. Osborne's Home Page --  
<http://www2.vivid.net/~josborne/daosborne.html>  
Editor and Publisher -- <http://www.mediainfo.com/edpub/>  
Starting Point – Magazines --  
<http://www.stpt.com/magazine.html>  
Editpro's Business News Media Directory --  
<http://www.editpros.com/media.html>  
Newspapers Online! -- <http://www.newspapers.com/>  
Public Relations organization -- <http://www.prsa-ncc.org/>  
Taxi's Electronic Newspapers --  
[http://www.deltanet.com/users/taxicat/e\\_papers.html](http://www.deltanet.com/users/taxicat/e_papers.html)  
Top 100 Computer Magazines --  
<http://www.netvalley.com/netvalley/top100mag.html>  
Wire Services -- <http://www1.trib.com/NEWS/APwire.html>.

Free-Lance Writers: Another on-line source for your media list is free-lance writers.

Off-Line Sources: Your library is a tremendous source of media names:

Bacon's Newspaper/Magazine Directory (2 volumes)  
Bacon's Radio/TV/Cable Directory (2 volumes)  
Directories in Print  
Editor and Publisher International Yearbook  
Encyclopedia of Associations  
Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media (3 volumes)  
Literary Market Place  
Newsletters in Print  
Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters  
Standard Periodical Directory  
Standard Rate and Data Service (2 volumes)  
Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory (3 volumes)  
Working Press of the Nation (4 volumes).

- 3) Keep building your media list. It is a long-term project.

## **Exercise 9-5 – Contacting the Media with Email News Releases**

Journalists have their own preferences as to how they like to be approached: short e-mail notice, e-mail full press release, faxed the press release, or releases sent regular mail. As soon as you find out, make a note of it in your contacts mailing lists. Adjust future approaches accordingly.

Increasingly, journalists are finding e-mail the quickest and easiest way to receive, decide, and dispose of requests for publicity. If they are intrigued by your story all they have to do is hit the return button in their e-mail program. They don't have to place a call or send a fax. The delete key also works faster than tossing trash. However, all journalists are not e-mail-savvy yet so you have to make allowances by being ready to contact them in other ways.

## **Customizing Your Approach for Each Media Category**

Your approach to the media will vary depending on the type of media. These will be your primary categories and the approach to follow:

**Regional Media:** Oftentimes local newspapers and magazines eagerly seek news with a local angle. Some of your initial successes in getting media publicity will come from local media.

**Trade Press:** Special interest trade journals, e-zines, newsletters, etc. that reach your targeted audiences should be a top priority.

**General Media:** these are generally the ones with the largest circulation but the most difficult to act on your news release. Your event has to be truly significant or interesting for it to interest editors. The payoff though if you are successful is worth it.

**Industry Analysts:** Establishing a one-to-one relationship with industry analysts is especially critical. It's important to get them well acquainted with the features, technology, and specifications of your site or product.

**Associations:** Generally associations have a newsletter or other publication. It generally reaches a narrowly defined audience. News releases should be specifically aimed at this market. This could be an important category of contacts in your media list.

### **Recommended Method of Contacting the Media**

The short, e-mail news release is most likely to sit well with media contacts. Follow these guidelines in your approach to the media:

**Short e-mail releases:** The e-mail news release you send to the media should be a short and concise description of your web event. The reason for the shortness is the nature of e-mail and the safe assumption that the recipient is busy, working on deadline and inundated with press releases. Provide just enough information to pique the recipient's interest and encourage a request for more information, such as a full press release, or visit to your web site.

**Use the Two-Step Approach:** Don't try to convince the media to give you coverage on first contact. Instead, your objective should be to entice them to visit your site for more information or to request a full press release. It's too difficult to fully present your case for coverage in a short e-mail, which is generally the only kind that gets read.

**Target Your Media:** It's especially important if you plan to regularly contact the media to exercise care in targeting which ones to approach. Mail only to media which is likely to have a strong interest. Modify your release if necessary to increase the chances of hitting your target. If you send an inappropriate release to a medium contact, the damage done may prevent an appropriate one at a future date from being considered. Get off on the right

foot. Don't squander an opportunity to establish goodwill.

**Personalize the Approach:** Too bad if we mentioned this before. Here it goes again: add a personal touch to the news release. Editors and reporters are real people. Address them as individuals. They don't want a "spam" press release with numerous other media names on the "To" line and a generic, impersonal approach that includes no indication that the sender knows or cares who or what organization received it. If you plan to send a bulk e-mail to your media list, at least obtain a software program like Alpha Software's Net Mailer which e-mail-merges your message with customized fields to each name on your media list. The program allow you to send new releases simultaneously to your list that appear to be personalized because you can insert customized fields into your release such as name of the medium, editor's name, etc. to avoid the bulk e-mail look.

**Review Contents in Advance:** Use advance research to check out what stories each media outlet is interested in. You aren't being very professional if you pitch a totally inappropriate story. Search for the publication's web site or visit your library, or bookstore to get an idea of the kind of stories it is mostly likely to run.

**Know the Editorial Schedule:** Know your lead times. Nothing looks more amateurish than submitting a news release for consideration after a deadline has passed. A rough guideline to follow is to give newspapers and newsletters one to two weeks advance notice, and magazines three to four months. Keep track of editorial calendars. Many web sites maintain editorial calendars. Save these dates to a composite calendar file. Customize your release to these calendar subjects. Send away for editorial calendars for media that aren't on line. When responding to a calendar event, be sure to let the editor know that you have something for that issue.

**Build Long-Term Relationships:** Strive to develop a long-term relationship. If you didn't pitch your story to the right person ask who should have received it. With the proper name, begin trying to build a one-to-one relationship with that individual.

If you receive indication that the recipient prefers an approach other than e-mail, make a note of this in your media list and adjust accordingly in future media campaigns.

On-line approaches to the media should be supplemented by off-line ones as well. It is beyond the scope of this guidebook to delve into off-line public relations. You'll find plenty of information at your local library or bookstore.

## **Exercise 9-6 -- Writing Effective News Releases**

**To write a good news release, first consider its parts:**

1. **Subject Lines:** Catching a journalist's attention begins with the subject line. Be descriptive. Avoid nondescript ones like "Press Release", "Visit My New Site", etc. It determines whether the e-mail gets opened or goes straight into the trash. Take another look at the subject used for the press release on your media page. Will it work? If not, consider these tips for improving the chances that your news release will get noticed:

Think of the subject line as the headline for a news story. Try to frame it in news headline format. Informative and concise is better than clever and cute.

"New" is a power word that works but it has to apply to something more interesting than a "new site". Can it be used with the site's unique characteristics?

Find the angle or hook that will make your release stand out from the others.

For ideas on effective subject lines revisit PR Newswire and Business Wire in Exercise 9-4 or some of the newsgroups in Exercise 3-4.

2. **Body of the News Release:** You may want to start with the press release on your media page and pare it down to a maximum of three paragraphs — less than a screenful. The first paragraph hooks the editor. The second pitches the story. The third summarizes contact information.

Sending an e-mail news release to your media list is similar to sending e-mail to your contacts list. For this reason, we've repeating warnings from Exercise 8-4:

**Spelling/Grammatical Errors:** Review your e-mail for spelling or grammatical errors. They reflect on your competence and credibility. Don't let any slip through if you can help it. You may find it worthwhile to have a second person look it over before releasing it to your list.

**Signature:** Make sure that you have the right signature attached and that it is adequately customized for the recipients. Is the one you chose to use due for an update? Take another look at others' signatures for ideas. The signature is such an important part of your Web Marketing Plan, you should always be looking for ways to improve it.

**Active Links:** Make sure that links in your e-mail are properly formatted so that they are active or "hotlinks" if the recipient's e-mail program permits it. URLs, particularly to your web site, should be formatted beginning with "http://" and ending with the page where you want to direct the reader. E-mail addresses should begin with "mailto:" and the e-mail address (with no space). This makes it easier for the recipient to visit your site, any other web resource identified in your e-mail, and e-mail you.

**Formatting:** Test to see that your e-mail is formatted properly (see below). Send it to a friend or another e-mail box. Have it reviewed for properly formatting, appearance.

No line wrapping: If you type an e-mail without using hard carriage returns at the end of a line, it may not look right if the recipient's e-mail program doesn't automatically line wrap. Paragraph appear as one long line. The recipient is forced to either insert hard carriage returns where line breaks should be or keep scrolling to the right to read your message. Chances are pretty good that the Delete key will be used before the recipient does either of these two steps. To avoid this, insert a hard return at the end of each line, after say 65 characters.

Non-Standard Characters: The other major problem is the use of non-standard characters, especially curly quotations, apostrophes, and dashes. ASCII equivalents are nonsensical. Your e-mail loses goodwill in translation.

Formatting Techniques: Some of the formatting you might use for paper communications disappear when sent as an ASCII-text email. Tabs, italics, bold, difference in point sizes, unusual characters (e.g., dingbats), etc. vanish when e-mailed. Your e-mail is left without any of the emphasis, aesthetics, or attention getters you had hoped for.

Non-Proportional Fonts: Fonts used by different e-mail programs vary. Some use fixed pitch fonts (e.g., Courier). Some use proportional spaced fonts (e.g., AOL). Characters in a fixed pitch font line up directly above each other. Not so with proportional spaced fonts. Some letters, CAPS, spaces, and other characters are wider, so each line length is different. If you create an e-mail in one type of font and the recipient's e-mail program uses another type, your e-mail will look different – maybe not so hot. One solution is to insert hard carriage returns at the end of each line. Varying lines lengths are no longer a problem.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-6**

### **Writing Effective News Releases**

- 1) Subject Line: Write several descriptive subject lines 12 words or less that is sure to catch an editor's attention. Start with the headline of your press release:

Press release headline

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Other possibilities:

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- 2) Draft a hook for the first paragraph:

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3) Pitch the story with support information in the second paragraph:

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4) Summarize contact information in the third paragraph.

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5) Decide how you want the editor to be able to contact you.

Checklist for a Perfect News Release:

Check for spelling and grammatical errors. Proof read carefully.

Make sure the right signature is attached to your news release

Check to see that the links are active

Send a test release to yourself or a friend to verify that it looks okay.

Insert hard carriage returns after approximately 65 characters.

All non-standard characters are replaced.

Emphasis formatting such as bold, italics, underlining, is replaced with ASCII-compatible formatting.

A proportional font such as Courier is used.

## **Exercise 9-7 – Monitoring Results of Your Media Campaign**

How will you know which media on your list is interested in your news releases and decides to run a story about your site? They may visit your site, get the information they need, and run the story without ever telling you. Simple, you need to monitor them so that you'll know. Don't worry about it for the first month or so. The media doesn't move that quickly. After that, though, begin checking to see who's acted on your news release.

Your first clue will be a dramatic uptick in traffic. Nothing like media attention to cause the number of visitors to your site to suddenly take off.

The first step to monitoring the results is to prepare a report of who in your media lists you contacted. If you e-mail customized news releases, you also need to record which message was sent to each. Your report should have these headings:

- 1.Name of Medium: Name of the newspaper, magazine, etc. contacted.
- 2.Individual Contacted: Name of editor or reporter to whom your news release was directed.
- 3.Date Contacted: Date the release was sent.
- 4.Subject Line Used: If the subject changed each time you modified the release for the recipient, enter the subject line. This will allow you to track which medium received which release. This is especially important if you are testing the effectiveness of different release versions.
- 5.Follow-up Date(s): The date you checked to see if the media ran your story. You should continue to follow-up periodically – monthly, if a monthly publication, etc. -- if you don't find a reference to your site.
- 6.Comments: Review the media's new contents since you visited them last. See if the sites mentioned give you any ideas for how to approach them the next time. Check to see if the editorial calendar was updated. Summarize your findings in this column.

After a reasonable period of time has elapsed, follow these steps for monitoring the results of your media campaign:

- 1.Search the Web: Go to one of the large search engines (AltaVista, Excite, InfoSeek) and enter your URL in the search field. If your web site is mentioned at a medium's on-line publication, it will often show up. You will also see a list of other sites which

mention your site and/or link to it.

2.Search Archives: Visit each medium or the ones you are most interested in and search their archives by your site's name. Bookmark the archive page into a Media Archives folder so that in the future this won't be so time consuming.

3.Tracking Service: Consider a tracking service to monitor the media for you.

Excite News Tracker:. Excite offers a free service that scans over 300 online news sources for free on-line articles. You can select subjects and keywords for a personal sub-menu.

NewsPage:. This interactive news service scans more than 630 sources to find the most relevant articles on 2,500 topics.

Electric Library: The Electric Library has archives of more than 150 full-text newspapers, 1,000 full-text magazines and nine international newswires. It's a valuable research tool. You may want to take advantage of their free two-week trial period. After that the charge is \$9.95 per month.

Dow Jones News/Retrieval: It's CustomClips(r) feature scans more than 2600 media outlets for \$29.95 set-up fee; \$19.95 per month, and \$2.95 per article. Headlines are free.

Markwatch:. Perhaps overkill, this service not only monitors the web but all newsgroup posts, and the InterNIC domain registration database for references to brands, products, trademarks and other properties. \$895 per year.

Luce Online: This service accesses full text stories from over 125 newspapers, 22 wire services and 350 magazines for \$195 per month plus clipping fees.

EWatch: Got the budget for a major monitoring job? This service offers comprehensive tracking of what is being said in cyberspace about your company or product. The cost is \$295 per month plus clipping fees.

Luce Press Clippings. For a monthly charge plus clipping fees, this off-line clipping service covers over 15,000 media outlets including; U.S. daily and weekly newspapers, trade and consumer magazines, major wire services and affiliate coverage of major press in 81 foreign countries.

Bacon's Clipping Bureau: This traditional off-line clipping service claims to monitor "virtually everything in print" for \$219 per month plus clipping fees. That includes daily and weekly newspapers, business, trade and consumer magazines and wire services.

LEXUS-NEXUS Communication Center: Its Company Quick-Check(tm) service accesses over 5,000 newspapers, magazines, newswires, broadcast transcripts, and industry newsletters. Its Eclipse(tm) electronic clipping service is also available. You have to contact a sales representative for pricing information.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-7**

### **Monitoring the Results of Your Media Campaign**

- 1) Prepare a report of the medium contacted.
- 2) Include this information on your media report:

Name of medium  
Individual contacted  
Date contacted  
Subject line of release  
Follow up dates  
Comments.

- 3) After several weeks follow up weekly to see which media picked up your story. Consider these follow-up techniques:

Search the Web: Go to a large search engine and enter the name of your web site or URL. Visit priority media and search their current issue and archives. Consider a tracking service to monitor the media for you. For example, check out Excite's free News Tracker.

## **Exercise 9-8 – Improving Future Media Campaigns**

Not every media campaign is going to produce results. Don't get discouraged. It's take time and persistence to get results. The key is to continually improve your media list in terms of more and better contacts, and to improve the quality of your news releases. Writing good

releases takes practice.

Persistence means fine tuning your campaign and trying again the next month. Think of a media campaign as a monthly event. Either fine-tune the message or develop another web event to promote.

Before fine-tuning the previous campaign or planning the next one, evaluate the one just completed:

Who picked up your story and who didn't? Those that did run your story should get top priority in your next campaign.

Look for quantifiable differences in results for different messages. Always test different messages so that you know what works and what doesn't.

Media has a tendency to copy each other. That's one reason you see the same web sites getting reviewed or selected as "cool" site over and over again. As soon as you become aware that a medium has published an article on your site, add the article to your media page. Media coverage has built-in momentum: coverage begets more coverage.

#### Steps You Can Take to Improve Future Publicity Campaigns

Keep adding to your media lists. Look for new media and new names. Increase the degree of "personalization" as you strive to build relationships with media contacts.

Concentrate more on media where you had the best luck. If, for example trade journals ran your story, look for more journals to approach.

Keep improving the message. Try another angle or hook to get editors interested in your story. Study what is working for others.

Keep a file of your press releases. Review them periodically. You may come to see where you could have improved your message. Past releases, especially successful ones, will give you a starting point for writing future releases.

Document your campaign strategies. Summarize how you approached each media type, evaluate your approach, and plan how to approach each the next time.

Think of yourself as a budding publicist. It's an exciting field with rich rewards but one that requires practice and experience. Continually strive to improve your skills.

Develop a PR resource database. Add PR-related sites to the resources database that you began developing in Lesson 6. Just about everything there is to know about

public relations or being a publicist is somewhere on the Internet. A lot of PR people are on the net and ready to help you learn their profession.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 9-8**

### **Improving Future Media Campaigns**

Every media campaign should be stronger and more polished than the previous one. To ensure that happens, follow these steps:

- 1) Evaluate the results of your previous campaign. Who ran the story? Who didn't? What adjustments should be made?

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- 2) Which releases were the most effective? Which type of media should those releases be sent to in the next campaign?

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- 3) Where can you get more names for your media list?

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- 4) What other angles or hooks can you use?

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5) How can you improve your message? Periodically review a file of your releases.

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6) Document your campaign strategy. Provide an overview of the campaign strategy:

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7) Ideas for improving your publicity skills:

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8) Plans for developing a PR resource database.

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9) Recommendations for improving the next media campaign.

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## **Exercise 9-9 – Getting Professional Help**

In Lesson 2 we recommended that you hire an automatic service to register your site at hundreds of search engines but to register manually at the search engines that were most important. Publishing or sending a press release to the media offers a similar choice. Several of the services summarized below will email your release to hundreds – even thousands – of editors and reporters. They probably won't reach the local media or the special interest media that are aimed at your target audiences.

If you aren't satisfied with how your media campaign is progressing or feel that you would rather spend the money to have a PR service perform this function for you, you have several from which to choose. They will even write your release for you if you want. This is a way to instantly reach large numbers of the media. Just like your own media campaign, their success hinges on how good their media list is and if they followed the same steps putting together their media list that you were told to do in this lesson. These services also need to have the right contacts and a relationship with the recipients that won't get their releases deleted because they appear to be impersonal "bulk releases".

A study of these services was recently done (<http://www.urlwire.com/email-releases.html>) by one of the services so it might be a little self-serving. Nevertheless, it gives you insight into whether or not hiring a service to conduct your media campaign is feasible for you. Here is a summary of that study:

**URLwire:** Sends e-mail releases to 300 editors by name who cover the web. It also publishes an abstract of the release at its web site and enters it at "key Web-based press release databases". It is most suitable for announcing significant, web-based events. Content of the release is matched exactly to editor interest profiles so it is "totally customized, non-automated." Cost is \$400-\$1000.

**PRNewsTarget:** this service is suppose to be better for technical or computer-related announcements than it is for new web sites. It uses an e-mail merge program to send a "personalized" press release (500 word maximum) to what it considers the best 200 media outlets for your product. The cost is \$395.

**Gina – Internet Wire:** Better for technical or industry announcements than for web specific products or services, or non-technical announcements. Your release is e-mailed to thousands of editors, reporters, and broadcast media for \$179. It is also published on the

web.

Internet News Bureau: Best for web-related announcements but your release is not fine-tuned for the recipient. It reaches thousands of editors, reports, and broadcast media for \$225. The release is also published at its web site. It will also write your press release for you for a reasonable amount.

Xpress Press: Best used for announcements from companies with a web site such as product announcements, but not best for web-specific news. Releases not customizable for recipients. Sent to 800 print editors, radio and TV producers, trade publications and the Internet community. They will write your release for \$150.

One last consideration before choosing one of these services: make sure your web event is newsworthy, such as a new site offering a unique service. If it isn't, then none of these services will be able to get you much publicity.

### **Putting up a new site is no longer newsworthy.**

On the other hand, as more media goes online, reaching them becomes easier. E-mail news releases are an effective way preferred by many journalists. A short, concise message designed to catch a journalist's attention is often better than the traditional press release when first making contact. Benefits of media publicity include:

A media story has more credibility than advertising.

The media can instantly reach a much larger audience than other web marketing techniques

Media coverage is free.

Potential customers are impressed when the media covers your site or product

You are sure to experience tremendous satisfaction from "making the news"

People automatically assume that you are an expert in your field when you've received coverage.

By following guidelines for approaching the media, anyone can be their own publicist. Becoming good at it requires practice and experience.

A successful media campaign requires careful planning, creativity, an interesting site or product, and a one-to-one relationship with the media. These steps will improve your media campaign:

Add a media page to your web site and use it to publish "media friendly" documents.

Target appropriate media with your news release rather than blanketing media indiscriminately

Continue building a strong media list over time Decide on a message that is newsworthy, factual, and interesting

Use e-mail effectively

Monitor results of your media campaign and make adjustments to improve future campaigns

Your media page will improve the chances that the media will run your story. Publish on your media page: press releases, stories run by other media, background history on your site or company, a biography of key personnel, a competitive comparison if you compare favorably with strong competition, a reviewer's guide for those sites that select "cool" sites.

A press release is a good first document for your media page. Not only will it contain the kind of information that the media looks for but it is available should your news release encourage the media to request more information.

These guidelines will help you write an effective press release:

Write about what's most important about your site or product

Write what's most newsworthy about your site or product

Draft a compelling headline designed to interest an editor

Use a "pyramid style" for your press release by leading off with a "hook" in the first paragraph, supporting information in the second paragraph, and contact information in the third.

Be concise and to the point

Describe how your site or product benefits your target audience

Includes quotes to give your press release more credibility

Summarize what other pages or features can be found at your web site

Include essential product information

Don't forget to include your site's URL

Use a spell checker and proof carefully to catch all silly errors.

If you are having a hard time deciding what's newsworthy about your site, visit sites that maintain a database of press releases. Review them for ideas.

Begin building your media list of newspapers, magazines, newsletters, trade journals, even TV and radios that you want to approach in your media campaign. You need to be selective because there are thousands of media that you could include on your list.

Ideally, each entry on your list include name of the medium, a contact person and e-mail address, URL, a description of the contents, an editorial calendar, and published submission deadlines.

There are numerous sources on-line and off-line where you can get names for your media list. Searching the web and the library will turn up more names than you can handle.

Rather than sending an impersonal bulk e-mail to all the media on your list, you should customize your approach to each. Your message should at least show that it recognizes the name of the medium and the contact person.

Target your e-mail news releases to the appropriate media. Use the two-step approach: rather than trying to convince the media to write about your site in the release, encourage them to visit or request more information.

A good news release includes:

A catchy subject line

A lead in that is immediately interesting to an editor

Information that supports the lead

Monitor the results of your media campaign on a report showing media contacted, individuals, date, subject of release, follow-up date, comments.

After a reasonable period of time search the Internet for possible stories about your site or

product because some media won't automatically notify you that they ran a story about your site.

A media campaign is not a one-shot affair. Keep fine-tuning your approach and try again. Shoot for at least a month campaign, all the while increasing your media list and honing your release-writing skills.

If you decide to hire a professional press release service to conduct your media campaign for you, or supplement your campaign, the web offers a number of such services from which to choose.

# **Lesson 10 -- Advertising Online**

## **Lesson Objectives**

### **The Basics of Advertising Online**

Exercise 10-1 – Planning Your Advertising Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 10-1

Exercise 10-2 – Creating Banner Ads That Work

Worksheet for Exercise 10-2

Exercise 10-3 – Finding Suitable Locations for Banner Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 10-3

Exercise 10-4 – Minimizing Advertising Costs

Worksheet for Exercise 10-4

Exercise 10-5 – Tracking the Effectiveness of Banner Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 10-5

Exercise 10-6 –Preparing Your Site to Sell Advertising

Worksheet for Exercise 10-6

Exercise 10-7 – Trying Banner Ad Exchanges, Networks and Auctions

Worksheet for Exercise 10-7

Exercise 10-8 – Sponsoring Newsletters and Mailing Lists

Worksheet for Exercise 10-8

Exercise 10-9 – Using Off-Line Advertising to Boost Traffic

Exercise 10-10 – Recapping Ideas in This Chapter

## **Lesson Objectives**

**Upon completion of this lesson, you will have learned:**

The differences between on-line advertising and off-line

The similarities between on-line advertising and other Web Marketing Techniques

The two primary methods of advertising on-line

Common on-line advertising terminology

The importance of adapting to the future of on-line advertising

Guidelines to follow when developing an on-line advertising campaign

The characteristics of effective banner ads

A selection criteria for finding suitable locations for your banner ads

Three ways to find Web sites that meet your selection criteria

Guidelines for deciding to purchase a key word at search engines.

Feasible non-cash alternatives to buying ad space

The importance of testing early in your advertising campaign

How to negotiate an affordable click-through rate.

How to track the effectiveness of your banner ads

The concept of using jump or bridge pages to track ad effectiveness.

How to prepare your own site for accepting advertising

Guidelines for when to consider ad exchanges, networks, and auctions to find locations for your banner ads.

Why sponsoring content such as mailing lists and newsletters is gaining popularity.

Tips for improving the responsiveness of sponsored content ads

The importance of off-line advertising to complement on-line advertising.

## **Worksheets for Lesson 10**

Worksheet for Exercise 10-1 -- Guidelines for Planning Your Advertising Campaign

Worksheet for Exercise 10-2 -- Guidelines for More Effective Banner Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 10-3 -- Finding Suitable Sites for Your Banner Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 10-4 -- Guidelines for Minimizing Advertising Costs

Worksheet for Exercise 10-5 -- Guidelines for Tracking the Effectiveness of Banner Ads

Worksheet for Exercise 10-6 -- Preparing Your Site to Sell Advertising Space

Worksheet for Exercise 10-7 -- Considering Banner Ad Exchanges, Networks, Auctions

Worksheet for Exercise 10-8 -- Sponsoring Newsletters and Mailing Lists

## **The Basics of Advertising Online**

On-line advertising is rapidly becoming big business. Ad revenues jumped three-fold from first quarter 1996 to first quarter 1997 and 1998 is going to be another record year according to a report issued by the Internet Advertising Bureau.

### **On-line Advertising Compared to Off-Line**

In addition to being in a fast-forward growth stage, on-line advertising in some ways offers more potential than traditional off-line advertising. This is particularly true if your primary objective is to sell a product or service as opposed to improving awareness and exposure.

On-line advertising can be directed to a specific niche market, you know how many viewers see the advertisement, how many click on it, how many visit your site. This important information is all quantifiable as opposed to most forms of off-line advertising (magazine ads, radio and TV, etc.).

### **On-Line Advertising Compared to Other Marketing Techniques**

On-line advertising is similar in many ways to other web traffic techniques discussed in this planning guide. Your banner ads at other sites are similar to, and perform the same function, as links to your site (Lesson 5). A banner ad is basically a graphic link in a more prominent position than normal text links.

Posting messages in discussion groups with your signature attached is similar to sponsoring e-mail contents of mailing lists and newsletters. Many of the guidelines followed and resources used in previous lessons also apply to on-line advertising.

Unlike placing links at other sites and posting to discussion groups, online advertising is more involved and can be very expensive -- two good reasons to start out with small test. Don't commit major cash outlays until you gained some experience and insight into what's involved in on-line advertising.

### **Types of Online Advertising**

This lesson discusses the two primary types of online advertising: banner ads and sponsored content. As online advertising continues to evolve and as new forms of advertising appear, future versions of this lesson will include more than these two forms.

The most popular by far of these two is banner ads. Banners are graphical, usually colorful and sometimes animated, "billboards" appearing on a host site's page and linking to the advertiser's web site or to a special page created to promote the advertiser's product or

service, and monitor number of visitors from the host site. Banners often appear at the top of a web page, but can also be at the bottom and elsewhere. Although a movement is underway to standardize banner ads, they come in all sizes. Most are approximately 468X60 pixels.

To understand banner advertising better, you need to be familiar with these terms:

**Impressions:** (same as page view) The number of times visitors sees an advertiser's banner ad.

Host sites generally like to charge per impression. All they have to do is display the ad to visitors. Whether or not the visitor notices and acts is the advertiser's responsibility.

**Cost per thousand or CPM:** the cost to the advertiser per 1000 impressions. If the CPM cost is \$30, the advertiser pays the host site \$30 for every 1000 times the banner ad appears. A variation is CPTM, which is the cost per targeted thousand impressions.

**Ad Clicks:** The number of times visitors click on a banner ad.

**Click-Through Rate or Ad Click Rate:** The percent of impressions that result in ad clicks. For example if 100 visitors see a banner ad and five click-through to the advertiser's site, the click-through rate is 5%.

**Unique Visitors:** the number of different or unique visitors, or computer terminals, which visited a web site.

The other primary method of advertising online is sponsored content (Exercise 10-8). The advertiser pays the publisher of a newsletter or owner of a mailing list to insert a text message about the advertiser's site or product in the e-mail publication. The cost of advertising is usually based on the number of subscribers and the number of times the advertiser's message was "exposed" to subscribers.

### **Future of Online Advertising**

Of all the lessons covered so far for your Web Marketing Plan, this is the one that is changing the fastest. According to some signs, the effectiveness of banner ads is waning. More viewers are tuning them out the way TV viewers tune out commercials. If they continue to lose their appeal to advertisers, other, more effective means of advertising are sure to crop up. Too much money is at stake for there not to be.

Online advertising is an area that you will need to keep on top of and be ready to adapt to new methods. Future advertising models such as online advertorials and infomercials promise to be much different than today. These are just two of the new techniques starting to emerge. Eventually, these new models will no doubt become part of your Web Marketing Plan.

## **Exercise 10-1 – Planning Your Advertising Campaign**

An online advertising campaign is similar to an e-mail marketing campaign (Lesson 8). It must be carefully planned and executed. These guidelines will help you in planning your campaign to improve the chances for success:

Evaluate the marketability of your product or service before launching an extensive advertising campaign. Not all offerings are equally saleable on the net.

Know what your objectives are: sales leads, exposure, brand awareness, etc.

Identify where you are most likely to reach your target audiences, particularly web sites and e-mail publications such as mailing lists and newsletters. Such focus produces quality traffic which is more desirable than strictly quantity.

Take a systematic, creative approach to developing your advertising campaign.

Prepare several banner ads and sponsorship ads to test. Keep testing ad and location. Be prepared to replace "burned out" banners with fresh ones.

Know what your current traffic pattern is, then measure traffic before and after the launching of your advertising campaign.

Try to secure favorable placements for your ads. For banner ads this means at the top of a popular page or part way down the page next to the scroll bar. For e-mail publications, this usually means interspersed with text contents, preferably near the top.

Be selective on the pages where your ad appears. Ads do better on pages that are popular and have meaningful content.

Plan special offers or inducements for net users visit your site. Test different offers to see which works the best.

Review resources gathered so far in your Web Marketing Generator to see which ones can be used for your advertising campaign.

Start modestly until you become familiar with online advertising. The Internet offers a multitude of free advertising opportunities before considering spending significant sums for advertising.

Be ready to adapt to changing conditions, environment, techniques, employ new tools.

One of the biggest advantages of online advertising is adaptability. You can try an unlimited number of combinations: target audiences, banner ads, Web sites, placements, etc. But much of your testing will go to waste unless you are systematic. That means keeping track of combinations tried and results. The more you test variables the better understanding you have of what works and why.

Fortunately, most outlets for online advertising are still pretty inexpensive. Many are free. Take full advantage of non-cash arrangements such as banner exchanges before committing a large amount of advertising.

Eventually, only after you are confident in your offer and your approach, and you have test results that clearly indicate the effectiveness of your ads, consider buying advertising space. When you are ready to move beyond the non-cash advertising alternatives, paid advertising is often the only way to reach sizeable audiences.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 10-1**

### **Guidelines for Planning Your Advertising Campaign**

**Consider these guidelines:**

1. Evaluate the marketability of your product or service first. Why do you think your product or service can be effectively advertised on the Net?
  
2. Know what your objectives are: sales leads, exposure, brand awareness, etc. what are your primary objectives? How should this impact your on-line advertising campaign?
  
3. Identify where you are most likely to reach your target audiences. List sites that you've found that might be perfect candidates for advertising:

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4. Take a systematic, creative approach to developing your advertising campaign. (Notes on getting organized):

5. Prepare several banner ads and sponsorship ads to test. Notes on testing ads:

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6. Know what your current traffic pattern is. (Notes on what you'll do with this data.)

7. Secure favorable ad placements. Make a note to request a specific location.

8. Get data from possible host sites showing traffic to each page. Select from most popular the pages most likely to interest target audiences. Notes on what to request:

9. Plan and test special offers or inducements for Net users visit your site. (Ideas)

10. Review resources from other lessons for possible advertising: (list)

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11. Plan for free, non-cash advertising arrangements to start out with (ideas)

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12. Be ready to adapt to changing conditions, environment, techniques, employ new tools.

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## **Exercise 10-2 – Creating Banner Ads That Work**

To begin your online advertising campaign, you need banner ads – preferably several to rotate and test for effectiveness. It's nearly impossible to predict which banner ads will work and which won't so you should have several to test. Generally, the preferred ad will be the one that results in the most click-throughs, if generating web traffic is your primary objective.

If creating banner ads is beyond your capabilities or cannot be done in-house, the net is home to a slew of graphic designers who stand ready to help. Graphic design work is perfect for contracting out. It's a skill needed on a per project basis, you don't have to meet face to face, and it's easy to view samples to judge competency. You can find them by searching the web and in discussion groups.

Banner ads are like any newspaper and magazine ad, or TV commercials. How effective they are depends largely on its appearance, message, and offer. If an ad isn't designed properly, then nothing else matters – not audience, not placement, not product.

### **Characteristics of Effective Banner Ads**

Fortunately, these guidelines will help you improve the effectiveness of your banner ads. They have been proven to work in numerous studies.

**Appeal to the Target Audience:** Targeting the audience is critical. Only display your banner ad where will be seen by exactly the target audiences you want to reach. You probably already know from the previous lessons which web sites are good for reaching target audiences.

**Highlight a Specific Product or Service:** It helps if you have a unique or interesting product or service to promote.

**Call to Action:** Like printed advertisements, a call to action works. For banner ads, "Click Here!" or "Visit Now" improves click-throughs – as much as 15% according to some studies. Locating the call to action on the right side of the ad or immediately below it seems to work best.

**Instill a Sense of Urgency:** Giving the viewer a reason to act quickly actually encourages viewers to act. Something like "Offer expires soon!" works.

**Pose a Question:** Instead of making a statement, ask a question. A question, such as "Want free Internet tools?", can teaser a viewer into clicking on a banner. One study attributed a 16% increase in click-throughs to the question posed in the banner.

**Cryptic Message:** Did you ever click on a banner ad because you were intrigued? Curious? A clever, cryptic message can increase click-throughs.

**Bright Colors:** Bright colors, particularly blue, green, and yellow produce the best results. They especially compare favorably with white, red, and black.

**Animation:** Animation can help catch even the most jaded Web surfer's eye. It's hard to ignore. According to a recent study, a simple Java or GIF animation can improve click-throughs by 25%.

**Clickable Look:** A banner that looks clickable such as one with a blue border around it also works.

**Change Banners Frequently:** By having several banners that are consistent in appearance, you can rotate them to test for effectiveness and to prolong the effectiveness of each. One study found that after being viewed a fourth time, a banner ad significantly loses its effectiveness.

When you have the banner ads you plan to use for your advertising campaign and can show those ads to candidates for hosting your ad, you are ready to begin seeking locations for your ads.

## **Worksheets for Exercise 10-2**

### **Guidelines for More Effective Banner Ads**

1. Appeal to the Target Audience: List target audiences and what sites most likely appeal to them:

Target Audience Desirable Sites

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2. Specific Product or Service: What unique or interesting product do you have to promote?
3. Call to Action: For banner ads, "Click Here!" or "Visit Now" improves click-throughs.
4. Instill a Sense of Urgency: Giving the viewer a reason to act quickly. (Ideas)
5. Pose a Question: Possible questions asked in banner ads:
6. Cryptic Message: Did you ever click on a banner ad because you were intrigued? Curious? A clever, cryptic message can increase click-throughs.
7. Bright Colors: Bright colors, particularly blue, green, and yellow produce the best results. Consider possible color schemes for ads:
8. Animation: Animation is attention-getting. Ideas for possible banner animation:
9. Clickable Look: A banner that looks clickable such as one with a blue border around it also works.

10. Change Banners Frequently: Having several banners that you can rotate for freshness.

Additional Ideas:

### **Exercise 10-3 – Finding Suitable Locations For Banner Ads**

Finding suitable host sites for your banner ads involves a systematic screening process. Over 900 sites have expressed a willingness to accept banner ads. Probably many more that would be happy to if asked. You quickly see how important the screening process is.

#### **Selection Criteria:**

Many factors are involved in determining which sites are suitable and which aren't. To simplify the process, we developed this selection criteria to help you zero in on the best candidates to host your site:

1. **Reach Your Target Audience:** Like tradition print advertisements, your banner ads have to reach target audiences. Look for sites or specific pages at sites that do this.
2. **Barter Arrangement:** Sites that are willing to exchange banners or engage in another non-cash arrangement should also be given considerations. This is an excellent way to gain valuable online advertising experience and test ads before spending money to place your ads.
3. **Advertising Rate:** Especially at first, until you have a better idea how effective your banner ads are and how appealing your offer is to target audiences, a reasonable advertising rate is important. What kind of advertising arrangement will a prospective site accept: CPM, CTR, percent of sales, or a combination? The difference between choosing a site for your banner ads or not could be how willing the site owner is to negotiate a rate agreeable to your needs.
4. **Traffic:** A site that aggressively promotes itself and, as a result, has generated high traffic flows is obviously more desirable than a less active site. Preferably, you are able to receive reliable traffic statistics.

5. Space Available: Another factor is how much space is available, or how many advertisers the site already has. Few advertisers generally means that your ads will have more exposure and won't be rotated with a multitude of other sites' ads. You are less likely to negotiate favorable terms if a site owner already has a number of sponsors.

6. Placement of Ad: Some control over the placement of an ad is important too. Top of page banners generally generate more interest than bottom of page ones. Exposure on the home page or on more popular pages is desirable. If you can negotiate the placement of your ad, a recent study <http://www.webreference.com>) found that:

Banner ads in the lower, right-side of the page, next to the scroll bar, produced a 228% higher click-through rate than ads at the more traditional top of the page.

Ads one-third of the way down the page had a 77% higher rate of click-throughs than ads at the top.

This study not only identifies the most desirable location at a web site but it's also a reminder how much the effectiveness of an ad depends on its position on a page. A site hungry for your ad may give you more say over where your ad will appear.

7. Performance of current and past advertisers: Although not always a reliable Indicator because each ad campaign is different, you may find that the experience of current and past advertisers is an indicator of how you will do. You may want to consider contacting current advertisers to ask them how they are doing. Even more important, see if you can get the URLs for previous advertisers. They may have sound reasons for no longer advertising at the site being considered.

8. Willingness to Work with You: How willing the host site is to be flexible and work with you is important. For example, what are the host site's policies and lead time regarding ad changes? For multiple ads? This is important if you wanted to change ads every 150,000 impressions.

9. Independent Audit: When you start paying for ads, it's important that the site being considered is able to provide independent audit of traffic statistics. You don't want to depend solely on the traffic information provided by the web owner. With third-party audits you can be confident of reliability.

In Exercise 11-1, you'll learn the importance of analyzing traffic patterns. You'll gain a

better understanding of how to read traffic logs.

### **Finding Qualified Sites:**

Basically, there are three ways to find suitable sites for your banner ads. The third way, registering at advertising sites, is more like letting suitable sites find you.

1. Search for Sites: Use search engines to find sites, such as Excite, AltaVista, or InfoSeek. Try keyword searches combined with "+advertising". You may find many quality sites that aren't listed anywhere else. Another method is to return to sites you've visited before as part of previous lessons. Specifically, consider for hosting your banner ad:

Super directories from Lesson 5 that perform a service for your target audience. A banner ad there may give you an advantage over the other listed sites for attracting visitors.

Individual sites listed in the directories may be receptive to hosting your ad.

Sites with whom you have reciprocal linking arrangements. See if you can replace or supplement a link to your site with a banner ad.

2. Directories of Advertising Sites: Plenty of advertising-related sites will help you find sites to host your banner ads, many of them searchable so that you can narrow your search to targeted sites:

Webtrack Adspace Locator. It offers an Ad Rate Guide which lists over advertising 800 sites.

Interactive Publishing Alert's Online Advertising Index. Ad Rate Database has over 400 listings

Directrix Advertising. A directory of several hundred web sites that have advertising and sponsorship opportunities.

The Web Ad Space Registry. A free listing of over 300 sites of buyers and sellers of web ad space.

Free Click-Through Banner Advertising Exchange. They will register your site as a hosting site or an advertiser while focusing on the niche segment interested click-through model.

Ad Juggler. About 100 listings in a searchable database of available banner ad

space.

AdCENTRAL. Lists banner ad-supported sites, including target audience, content summary, traffic information, and rates.

Vidya's Guide to Internet Advertising. Purchasable Ad Space.

Internet Ad Source. A free service that matches buyers and sellers of ad space.

3. Register as an Advertiser: Register your site as at these directories as an a buyer of ad space. Some suitable host sites are sure to find you. While you are registering as a buyer you might as well also register as a seller. As both a buyer and seller of ad space, you will be able to take advantage of free link exchanges and someday could beginning realizing significant revenues after your Web Marketing Plan starts driving large number of visitors your way. Exercise 10-6 provides tips for getting your site ready to sell ad space.

### **Purchasing a Key Word at a Search Engine**

A popular option for banner ad placement is to purchase a key word at a search engine. Every time a user searches on that key word your banner ad pops up. The effectiveness of buying a key word depends how applicable your key word is to your target audience.

Chances are however that there are not many good key words left at the major search engines. Only the majors attract enough traffic to do you much good. Buying key words has been popular for web advertisers for some time now so many of the favorable situations have already been taken.

That doesn't mean that you should rule it out. It may still be practical if you can find out from a search engine how many times a particular key words was searched over a month's time. To give you a better idea of its potential, a URL lists the top 200 keywords searched at Yahoo!: <http://www.eyescream.com/yahootop200.html>

The advantage of buying a key word is that you are able to pinpoint the target audience. A directory like Yahoo! might charge double the amount per impression for keywords than the normal CPM for banner ads on category pages

Another option is to track which keywords drive traffic to your site from search engines where you have a favorable ranking. Buy those keywords in other search engines where your ranking isn't as favorable and isn't driving significant traffic your way.

Another option to consider is to buy keywords at secondary search engines, such as other

four-star search engines at <http://www.mmgco.com/4-star.html> (Exercise 2-6) where you may be able to buy keywords for a minimum commitment, such as 100,000. The keywords may cost you from \$18 to \$25 CPM. While not as popular as the major search engines, the secondary search engines could still deliver your target audience although fewer of them for less advertising costs.

## Worksheet for Exercise 10-3

### **Finding Suitable Sites for Your Banner Ads**

#### Selection Criteria

1. Reach Your Target Audience: Only consider sites or specific pages that do this.
2. Barter Arrangement: Look for sites willing to exchange banners or another non-cash arrangement.
3. Advertising Rate: Or look for sites willing to negotiate a favorable click-through rate.
4. Traffic: Only consider sites that aggressively promotes themselves and have high traffic. You want traffic statistics to confirm this.
5. Space Available: Avoid sites that have many other advertisers. You want a site owner who is anxious for your banners and they will get maximum exposure.
6. Placement of Ad: Sites that let you exercise some control over banner placement are preferable.
7. Success of Other Advertisers: Although each ad campaign is different, you would like to

know how other advertisers have done at a site being considered.

8.Willingness to Work with You: Ideally, a prospective host site is agreeable and willing to work with you to improve results.

9.Independent Audit: Especially if you are paying to advertise, you would like verification of the host site's traffic claims.

#### How to Find Site That Meet Your Criteria

1.Use search engines to find sites. Add "advertising" to keyword searches.

2.Look in super directories found in Exercise 5-2 for prospective sites.

3.Contact sites with links to your site. (Exercise 5-5)

4.Review directories that list sites willing to accept banner ads and evaluate:

Webtrack Adspace Locator -- <http://www.webtrack.com/>.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Interactive Publishing Alert's Online Advertising Index with over 400 listings  
-- <http://www.netcreations.com/ipa/adindex/>.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Directrix Advertising -- <http://www.directrix.com/>.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Web Ad Space Registry -- <http://www.fwy.com/>. List of over 300 sites.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Free Click-Through Banner Advertising Exchange --  
<http://www.workingsmarter.com/click-through.html>.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ad Juggler -- <http://www.ad juggler.com/resources.shtml>. About 100 listings in a searchable database of available banner ad space.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

AdCENTRAL -- <http://www.adcentral.com/>. Lists banner ad-supported sites, including target audience, content summary, traffic information, and rates.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Vidya's Guide to Internet Advertising - <http://www.vidya.com/add-lib/listings/paid-listing>.  
Purchasable Ad Space.

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Exercise 10-4 – Minimizing Advertising Costs

Once you've narrowed your selection to potential sites for your banner ads, the next step is to work on your approach to them. The most common form of paying for banner ads is by impression, expressed as a rate per thousand of impressions (CPM). This is how most site owners want to be paid. Naturally, they feel they should only be responsible for rounding up viewers and not for the ad's effectiveness. CPM is in keeping with traditional forms of advertising costs based, for example, on readership (magazines, newspapers) or viewers (TV).

As an online advertiser interested in increasing web traffic, your choice of banner ad payment method should be on a click-through basis. The click-through rate (CTR) is usually more expensive than per impression but your risk is reduced. You pay only for traffic to your site and not for uninterested viewers at the host site.

Before making your pitch to possible sites, add a page for the banner ads you plan to use to your web site. Site owners should have the right to inspect your ads in advance. They are risking ad revenues and space. If your ads aren't producing click-throughs, they lose.

A third payment method is to pay a percent of sales to the host site for each click-through visitor who buys. Depending on the appeal and product pricing, this can be very appealing to the host site. It is especially appealing to the advertiser because it requires no out-of-pocket expense. Payments for the ad are generated from sales.

It shouldn't be that hard to find sites willing to host your banner ads on a click-through or percent of sales basis. Hundreds of sites have signed up to host ads and still have space available for more ads. Probably hundreds more would gladly accept ads if approached.

Site owners who want to start generating significant ad revenues someday know that you have to start somewhere. They hope that by displaying your banner ad at their site, even if it is on a non-cash basis, other advertisers will be encouraged to inquire about placing their ads too.

Someday, when you feel you are ready to approach larger, more popular sites, don't be surprised if you have to pay on a CPM basis, or a combination of CPM and CTR to advertise. Large sites that can deliver many sets of eyes insist on being paid for the large numbers.

## **Early Testing Stages of Your Advertising Campaign**

If you are new to the online advertising game, consider focusing your advertising campaign initially on no-risk arrangements with other sites, such as banner exchanges, commissions on sales, etc. You'll find many sites eager to work with you.

They will provide you with ample opportunity to experiment with your target audience, banner ads, placement, and offer. Test different advertising models and fine-tune your ad campaign.

While these "freebies" offer excellent testing opportunities are they generally won't deliver a large number of visitors and/or increased sales. You'll want to gradually progress your campaign to the point where you can confidently buy ad space at larger web sites that do attract large numbers.

## **Negotiating a Click-Through Rate**

Hopefully, your testing has indicated what kind of click-through rate your best banner ads generate. You hopefully have an idea how much each visitor is worth to you. If your banner ads are generating a 2.11 % click-through rate (the average according to I/PRO, you have an idea how much you want to pay based on the profit margins of the product or service you are selling. The click-through rate is calculated by dividing the number of click-throughs by the number of impressions.

How well the host site targets your audience is important. You should expect to pay more, and want to pay more, for click-throughs by a targeted audience rather than a mass market.

If a potential host site doesn't have published advertising rates, such as a rate page, seek out an e-mail contact at the site. Identify yourself as a potential advertiser and ask for a quote to host your banner ad. Consider making an offer that is well below prevailing click-through rates. It doesn't hurt to ask for a discount off stated rates and a short-term trial period for testing purposes.

A trial period will give you a chance to compute your advertising cost per click-through and/or per sale. To help get a handle on advertising costs, Larry Chase's Web Digest for Marketers includes a free calculator that will compute your online advertising cost.

## Exercise 10-4

### **Guidelines for Minimizing Advertising Costs**

1. Prepare a web page for displaying your banner ads to potential host sites.
2. Decide whether you would prefer a click-through method of payment or a percent of sales, or a combination of both.
3. What you should know to calculate a click-through rate (CTR) you are willing to pay a host site:

What is the industry standard?

What the percent of the target audience that visits your site actually accepts your offer?

What is your profit margin on sales?

What is your cost per visitor?

Calculate advertising costs at <http://www.wdfm.com/>.

4. What you should know to calculate a percent of sales you are willing to pay:

What is your profit margin on sales?

What percent or dollar amount will you give up to the host site?

5. If a prospective site doesn't publish an advertising rate, e-mail the owner quoting a low rate and request a trial period.

## Exercise 10-5 – Tracking the Effectiveness of Banner Ads

Even more important than counting how many visitors drop by your web site (Exercise 11-1), is tracking where they come from. How else will you know which banner ads are the most effective. Using traffic stats to evaluate effectiveness is also true for other techniques used to increase web traffic: registration, announcements, reciprocal links, participating in discussion groups, etc.

It's important that you know the best (and worse) sources of traffic to your site. With unlimited opportunities for enhancing traffic available on the net, how you allocate your time and advertising money has a major impact on how successful your site is.

The reason this subject is discussed in this exercise is because, unlike other web marketing techniques, creating and placing banner ads (and sponsoring newsletters/mailling lists discussed in Exercise 10-8) can be a major expense. It also represents the largest potential return if done properly. So being able to gauge the effectiveness of banner ads is critical.

### **Suggestions for Obtaining Traffic Data**

1. Some Web servers can track where the visitor was immediately before landing on your page (with some limitations). See if your ISP or other web host can provide you with this information.
2. Ask the host site to provide you with data identifying the number of impressions and click-throughs on pages with your banner ad.
3. See if the hosting site will create a "jump" or "bridge" page on its server that is accessed each time a visitor clicks on your banner (see below).
4. Look into obtaining commercial software that will provide comprehensive data that will help you judge banner ad effectiveness:

If you are first starting out with low traffic, consider web traffic software such as:

Market Wave. Hit List is a free, simple program that is suitable for low traffic sites.

More robust programs include:

<http://www.webtrends.com> (An excellent program)

<http://www.interse.com>

<http://www.netgen.com>

Even more robust ones for when your traffic really takes off include:

<http://www.andromedia.com>

<http://www.accrue.com>

If you have a very busy site and are interested in reaching out to big advertisers, you may have to consider third party auditors:

<http://www.ipro.com>

<http://www.netcount.com>

Once you know the effective of each banner ad, each location, the target audience responses, placement, etc, then you are in a better position to make your overall online advertising better effective by concentrating the best ads at the best locations that will reach the most responsive target audience.

### **Creating Jump Pages to Measure Effectiveness**

If you need a method to help you track traffic from a multitude of sources and have spare web space, consider creating "jump" or "bridge" pages. A jump page can be a separate page between the visitor's location and your home page, or it can be a duplicate of your index page that has an identifying code which identifies where the visitor came from. Create a bridge page for each promotional effort – banner ads, newsletter sponsorships, discussion groups, etc. The unique, coded URL of the bridge page matches the promotion effort. For example, an "/index.html" page is duplicated and coded "/news-index.html".

A separate counter with a corresponding code can be maintained for each bridge page to let you know how much traffic each page receives. The counters help you keep close track of what's working and what isn't. By the way, want to know where to find counters? Check out <http://www.ca-probate.com/counter.htm>. (Don't display one on any of your pages. That's too tacky.)

## **Worksheet for Exercise 10-5**

## **Guidelines for Tracking the Effectiveness of Banner Ads**

Where your visitors are coming from so that you can evaluate the effectiveness of your banner ads is essential. To do this you need traffic data.

Possible Sources for Traffic Data:

1. See if your ISP or other web host can provide you with web server data that shows where visitors were before coming to your site.
2. Ask the host site to provide you with data showing the number of impressions and click-throughs on pages with your banner ad.
3. See if the hosting site will create a "jump" or "bridge" page on its server that is accessed each time a visitor clicks on your banner (see below).
4. Look into obtaining commercial software that will provide comprehensive data that will help you judge banner ad effectiveness:

Market Wave – <http://www.marketwave.com>. Hit List is a free, simple program that is suitable for low traffic sites.

<http://www.webtrends.com>

<http://www.interse.com>

<http://www.netgen.com>

<http://www.andromedia.com>

<http://www.accrue.com>

5. Consider a "jump" or "bridge" page to measure traffic from many sources. Either the page can be an interim page between the host site or can be a duplicate home page at your site that is coded to track the traffic source.

## **Exercise 10-6 –Preparing Your Site to Sell Advertising**

You may think that only large, active sites host banner ads and receive ad revenues but as you learned in Exercise 10-4, many opportunities currently exist for banner exchanges and non-cash arrangements. To take advantage of these opportunities and to prepare for the day when you are selling ad space, you should start immediately making your site "banner-ready". Your banner exchange partners will appreciate it and when you are ready to sell ad space, experience in maintaining a "banner-ready" site will help your presentation to prospective advertisers.

Someday when traffic to your site qualifies it for advertising revenues, you'll have the experience and know-how to be a player in the Ad Game. If you execute your Web Marketing Plan and follow the recommendations throughout this planning guide, particularly in Lesson 11, you may reach that goal sooner than you think.

### **Looking to the Future**

As your site grows bigger and busier, continually upgrade your link exchanges and other advertising arrangements. If you are aggressively implementing a web marketing plan, eventually your site will outgrow most of your link partners. In other words, you'll be driving much more traffic their way than they are driving to your site. Look for better and more active sites that reach your target audiences to exchange links with. Replace weak links with strong ones.

The more successful your site becomes, the more likely you will get approached to exchange ads, host an ad, or advertise at another site. Be selective. Avoid any long-term relationships that you could soon grow out of or command more favorable terms elsewhere.

Eventually, sooner than you think, you may find it feasible to replace link exchanges with paid advertising. This is a leap that requires some preparation though.

### **Steps for Preparing Your Site to Sell Ad Space**

These steps will better position your site for the day you can start generating ad revenues:

1. **Offer Compelling Content:** Be able to show potential advertisers that your site has what it take to generate large numbers of first-time and repeat visitors, particularly a targeted audience. The advertisers who will be attracted to your site are interest in reaching the same target audience you are. Consider working up advertising packages for popular pages. You might be more successful finding sponsors for targeted pages than rotating an advertiser's banners throughout your site.

2. Install Auditing Tools: Be ready to provide extensive traffic data (Exercise 11-1). Potential advertisers want to know how many visitors your site receives.
3. Follow Industry Standards: Don't deviate far from industry standards in banner sizes and formatting. Non-standard sizes are likely to chase away advertisers.
4. Sign Up in Ad Registries: When you feel your site is ready for banner ads from big advertisers, sign up at major registries such as Focalink Communication's MarketMatch and FlyCast's AdAgent. In fact, sign up with all of the best that you can find. This will improve the chances that your site will get noticed.
5. Get Sales Help: To reach out to large advertisers you probably are going to have to hire an ad rep firm or salesperson with contacts. As a newcomer to the Ad Game, you might have trouble making contact yourself so an ad rep might be the way to go. Reputable ad reps charge from 30-50% commission. Watch out though for long-term contracts (one year), a large up-front retainer, and costly termination clauses. Another alternative is to join an ad network (Exercise 10-7).
6. Commission Independent Auditors: Increasingly, large advertisers look to independent auditors to prepare reports using industry standards to verify a site's traffic for a specific period. They are more likely to buy ad space from sites that can provide these independent reports. So eventually you may have to commission an auditing firm to prepare these reports for you. Two well-known firms are:  
  
I/Pro  
  
Netcount
7. Survey Visitors: The more you know about your visitors, the more appealing your site will be to potential advertisers. It helps to have some proof that you are attracting the kind of visitors a particular advertiser wants to reach. For example, many large advertisers would like to know: sex, marital status, family, profession, influence over hardware and software purchases. Before making your pitch to a large advertiser – or more likely, the advertiser's ad agency – plan how you can conduct a user survey. Check out what other sites are doing to encourage visitors to participate.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 10-6**

### **Preparing Your Site to Sell Advertising Space**

Begin making your site "banner-ready" so that you can participate in free banner exchanges and someday sell advertising space. Take these steps:

1. Offer Compelling Content: Advertisers like to see content that encourages heavy traffic and repeat visits.
2. Install Auditing Tools: Prepare to provide extensive traffic data about how many visitors your site receives.
3. Follow Industry Standards: Don't deviate far from industry standards in banner sizes and formatting.
4. Sign Up in Ad Registries: When you feel your site is ready for banner ads from big advertisers, sign up at major registries such as Focalink Communication's MarketMatch and FlyCast's AdAgent.
5. Get Sales Help: Consider hiring an ad rep firm or salesperson with contacts if you want to reach large advertisers.
6. Commission Independent Auditors: You may have to hire independent auditors to prepare reports using industry standards to verify a site's traffic for a specific period.
7. Survey Visitors: Advertisers like to see profiles of visitors to your site. It helps them make ad space buying decisions.

## **Exercise 10-7 – Trying Banner Ad Exchanges, Networks and Auctions**

Banner ad exchanges, networks, and auctions are generally for web owners who either aren't confident that they can handle their own online advertising campaign, or they don't have the time to find and place banner ads at host sites. Just in case you feel that you might want to try one of these banner companies, we've included information on how to use them (if you must).

They are a convenience but you may end up paying a stiff penalty for using one of them in lieu of placing your own banner ads. Some of them are scams. Others lock you into an arrangement that benefits them more than it does you. To minimize either risk, you should know in advance what questions to ask before signing on with one of these banner companies:

### **Resources for Possible Link Exchanges**

The biggest and best place to start if you want to exchange links with other sites is the LinkExchange.

These Web resources list ad cooperatives include other links exchanges, ad networks, and auctions:

<http://www.netrus.net/users/victoria/banners>.

<http://www.adresource.com/silink2.htm>

<http://www.ca-probate.com/filelist.htm>

### **Questions to Ask Before Committing**

Now you know where to find them. These are some of the questions you should ask before choosing which one or ones you will sign with:

- 1.Can you choose which sites will host your banner? If the banner company chooses a site that isn't reaching your target audience, then expect dismal results. The same is true for sites whose banners you host as part of an organized exchange. If you can't choose sites based on their ability to reach your target audience, then your banners won't produce nearly the response as those you placed yourself at host site visited by target audiences.
- 2.Do you get veto power over banner ads that will be placed at your site? Ask the company if they have rules about content. You don't want to get in an embarrassing situation where a banner at your site promotes a product or service that you are repulsed by.

3. How many clients does the company serve? The more clients, the more sites will host your banner ad.
4. Who administers the rotation of ads and sees that your ad is delivered to the right host sites. This is a headache you don't need. The more active your participation is required, the less appealing working with a company should be.
5. Will you get any help your banner ads design? Some banner companies will help with ad design by providing valuable, experienced feedback, and worthwhile suggestions. This can be a big help in avoiding disastrous results. It also minimizes the risk that your site won't be saddled with somebody else's poorly-designed banner.
6. Will you get meaningful traffic reports? It's important that you get accurate information about how effective your banner ads are so that you can make intelligent decisions in the future.

## **Worksheet for Exercise 10-7**

### **Considering Banner Ad Exchanges, Networks, Auctions**

1. If you feel you must turn seek help placing your banner ads, check this source for link exchanges:
2. These sites link to plenty of help organizations anxious to help you with banner advertising:

LinkExchange the biggest and most popular.

These are super directories of organized banner programs:

<http://www.netrus.net/users/victoria/banners>.

<http://www.adresource.com/silink2.htm>

<http://www.ca-probate.com/filelist.htm>

## Questions to Ask Before Committing

- 1.Can you choose which sites will host your banner?
- 2.Do you get veto power over banner ads that will be placed at your site?
- 3.How many clients does the company serve?
- 4.Who administers the rotation of ads and sees that your ad is delivered to the right host sites.
- 5.Will you get any help your banner ads design?
- 6.Will you get meaningful traffic reports?
- 7.What other questions do you have?

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## **Exercise 10-8 – Sponsoring Newsletters and Mailing Lists**

Generally, discussions of online advertising center around banner ads because they are the most prevalent form. This is what most Net users think of when they think of online advertising. A new form of online advertising is rapidly becoming popular – sponsoring contents such as mailing lists and newsletters.

Compared to banner ads, sponsoring newsletters, mailing lists, and other forms of information distribution is still pretty new. Some advertisers report excellent results and so the word is rapidly spreading.

### **Why Sponsored Content Is Effective**

The advantage of sponsoring content over banner ads is that your text promotional message has an e-mail quality to it that makes it more likely to get noticed than most banner ads. Consider:

Promotional messages look nearly the same as the contents being sponsored. Some newsletter publishers and mailing list owners have even taken to inserting the sponsor's message more than once, often somewhere in the middle, not necessarily at the beginning or end.

Mailing lists and newsletters are proactive. They reach out and grab attention, not like a banner ad which sits passively waiting for someone to visit a site and notice it, and hopefully act.

Sponsored content comes as close as you can get to guaranteed multiple exposure unlike banner ads which require multiple visits to a site(s) for the benefit of multiple exposure to occur.

People who go to the trouble of reading a discussion list or newsletter are generally very interested in the subject.

With the rapid advancement of "push" technology where net users can direct exactly what kind of information they want delivered to their e-mail address, you will see sponsored content really take off in the next few years.

### **How Much Does It Cost?**

The more targeted a list, the more desirable it is for you even though you will probably be paying more than for a less targeted or un-targeted list. Average cost for sponsorship of a targeted mailing can range from \$10 for 10000 subscribers. It varies widely depending on the list. Some targeted lists fall in the 25-65 cents per subscriber range.

For larger mailings to general audiences you can expect to pay much less.

If, for example, you are sponsoring a mailing list digest with 5000 subscribers that is published each business day, or five times a week, the cost is:

5 issues per week x 5,000 subscribers = 25,000 exposures.

\$20 CPM x 25,000 exposures = \$500 per week.

### **Where to Look for Sponsorship Opportunities**

Finding a newsletter or mailing list digest to sponsoring requires similar consideration to finding a site to hosting your banner ad:

1. Target Audience: First, you have to find your target audience. What are they subscribing to? What's available to them?
2. Mailing List Directories: search these directories for ones that reach your target audiences and possibly sell sponsorships:

Liszt Site for 71,618 newsletter mailing lists which may be searched

L-Soft's CataList also allows you to search by target audience.

3. Search "newsletter" plus key words (e.g., "newsletter+[key word]") at major search engines.
4. Other sources where advertising may be targeted to an audience:

E-zines by subject/keyword at <http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine> includes newsletters

A short list of targeted mailing list for low-cost advertising --  
<http://www.avenue.com/about/ads.html>

A directory of sponsorable newsletters and mailing lists at  
<http://www.o-a.com/adlists.html>

Lists at <http://netcreations.com/ipa/adindex/>

## Tips for Improving Responses

These tips will help you improve responses from sponsored content:

1. Test effectiveness by tracking visitors from the mailing lists and newsletters.
2. Run an ad for at least thirty days.
3. Include a deadline for a discount/special offer.
4. Describe your product in "story form". Remember you generally have much more space than a banner ad and you want your ad to resemble the text around it.
5. Watch out for publications that already have numerous sponsors. Your message may easily get overlooked.
6. Push for a combination sponsorship ad and banner ad at the publisher's web site.

## Worksheet for Exercise 10-8

### Sponsoring Newsletters and Mailing Lists

Sponsoring contents of e-mail to subscribers such as newsletters and mailing list is rapidly gaining in popularity. Here are some reasons:

#### Reasons Why Sponsored Content Is Popular

1. Ad in sponsored content look like the text around it
2. Some content publishers insert the sponsor's message more than once, often somewhere in the middle, not necessarily at the beginning or end.
3. Mailing lists and newsletters grab attention not sit passively like a banner ad.
4. Sponsored content can practically guaranteed multiple exposure. Subscribers receive your ad with each e-mailed issue.
5. People who read sponsored content are generally very interested in the subject.

The industry standard for sponsored advertising cost? .05-65 cents per targeted subscriber with 20 cents, or \$20 CPM, being average. **Note: I have found some great list that cost less than a penny per subscriber searching is the key.**

## Where to Find Sponsorship Opportunities

1.Target audiences: You should be familiar with where your target audiences hang out. What are they subscribing to?

2.Search lists of mailing lists by keywords.

Liszt Site at for 71,618 newsletter mailing lists which may be searched

L-Soft's CataList also allows you to search by target audience.

Search "newsletter" plus key words (e.g., "newsletter+[key word]") at search engines.

Other sources where advertising may be targeted for an audience:

E-zines by subject/keyword at <http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine> includes newsletters

A short list of targeted mailing list for low-cost advertising --  
<http://www.avenue.com/about/ads.html>

A directory of sponsorable newsletters and mailing lists at  
<http://www.o-a.com/adlists.html>.

Lists at <http://netcreations.com/ipa/adindex/>.

## Tips for Improving Responses

1.Test effectiveness by tracking visitors from the mailing lists and newsletters. How will you do this? This data may be available from the same source of banner ad traffic.

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2.Run an ad for at least thirty days.

3.Include a deadline for a discount/special offer. What offers did you considered for banner ads that might apply to sponsored content (exercise 10-2)?

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4.Describe your product in "story form". Remember you generally have much more space than a banner ad and you want your ad to resemble the text around it. Copy the format of current sponsors, if any:

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5.Watch out for publications that already have numerous sponsors. Your message may easily get overlooked.

6.Push for a combination sponsorship ad and banner ad at the publisher's web site.

## **Exercise 10-9 -- Using Off-Line Advertising to Boost Traffic**

The subject of this lesson may be about online advertising but that doesn't mean that you should overlook off-line advertising. Traditional off-line nicely complement on-line ones. They too will increase traffic to your site.

Your URL should be added to off-line methods used to promote your company. These include:

Product catalogs

Business cards

Letterhead stationery

Brochures

Financial statements

Investor information

Product information

Product manuals

Company newsletters

Trade journals articles

Print, radio, TV advertisements

Notice how finally companies are starting to realize the benefits of mentioning their web sites off-line. You see URLs in TV commercials, cereal boxes, magazine ads, etc. Don't overlook every opportunity to put your URL out before the public, particularly off-line locations for your target audiences. Many of the web traffic techniques described here have an off-line counterpart that should also be used.

Necessary experience to position yourself to create a successful campaign.

The two most common methods of advertising on-line are:

Graphic banner ads

Sponsored content such as mailing lists and newsletters

### Guidelines for an effective on-line advertising campaign:

Evaluate the marketability of your product first.

Know what your objectives are: sales leads, exposure, brand awareness, etc.

Identify where your target audiences are.

Take a systematic, creative approach to developing your advertising campaign.

Continue to test the effectiveness of banner ads and sponsorship ads.

Learn traffic patterns at your site before and after your advertising campaign.

Try to secure favorable placements for your ads.

Be selective on the pages where your ad appears.

Plan special offers or inducements for net users visit your site. Test different offers.

Review resources from Lesson 5 for opportunities to use in your advertising campaign.

Start modestly with a multitude of free advertising opportunities before buying advertising.

Be ready to adapt to changing conditions, environment, techniques, employ new tools.

Banner ads are by far the most popular. These usually colorful, sometimes animated, "billboards" appear on host sites where they can be seen and clicked on by thousands of web users. For banner ads to be effective, they should adhere to most of these guidelines:

Targeting the audience is critical.

It helps if you have a unique or interesting product or service to promote.

A call to action works like "Click Here!" or "Visit Now" improves click-throughs

Instill a sense of urgency

Ask a question instead of making a statement

A clever, cryptic message can increase click-throughs.

Bright colors, particularly blue, green, and yellow produce the best results.

Animation can help catch visitors' attention.

A banner should look clickable such as with a blue border around it.

Change banners frequently.

Choosing from possibly thousands of web sites for locations to place your banner ad can be a daunting challenge. These selection criteria should help:

Possible sites have to appeal to your target audiences.

Because you are starting modestly, sites have to be willing to exchange banners or engage in other non-cash arrangements.

A reasonable advertising rate is important at least until you know how effective your advertising campaign is.

Possible sites should be aggressive about promoting themselves and be experiencing high traffic.

How much space is available, or how many advertisers the site already has, is important.

Some control over the placement of an ad is important too.

There are three ways to find sites for hosting your banner ads:

Search for sites in search engines, super directories, and other sites you have had contact with such as for reciprocal links.

Visit sites that publish directories of other sites willing to accept banner ads.

Register as an advertiser at these directories. Some sites anxious to accept banner ads will probably approach you.

Consider purchasing a search word at a major search engine. Every time searchers enter the key word(s) you purchased, your banner ad appears on the search results page.

The most common method of paying for ad space is by impression (CPM). To hold down your cost in the early stages of your on-line advertising campaign, try to negotiate the click-through method so that you only pay for visitors to your site. Consider even a percent-of-sale method so advertising costs are generated from sales.

Many sites are eager to accept banner ads so you should be able to negotiate a rate that is favorable. Make sure you are familiar with standard advertising costs before agreeing to a quote from a possible hosting site.

It is nearly impossible to develop a truly on-line advertising campaign unless you are able to accurately measure the effectiveness of your banner ads. It's therefore important to learn where traffic to your site is coming from. When you have this data you can begin comparing different ads, web sites, locations, etc. You should then be able to fine-tune your campaign until you are getting maximum results.

Where is this data going to come from:

- Some Web servers can tell you where visitors came from

- The host site ought to be able to tell you the number of impressions and click-throughs

- See if the host site will create a "jump" or "bridge" page that counts click-throughs

- Look into obtaining commercial software that will supply this data.

To take advantage of free link exchanges and to prepare for when you are ready to begin selling ad space, consider preparing your site to host others' banner ads. Take these steps:

- Offer compelling content that will make your site appealing to visitors and potential advertisers

- Install auditing tools that will provide advertisers with traffic data that they will insist on receiving

- Stick close to industry standards in banner ad sizes and formatting.

- Sign up at ad directories as a site willing to accept banner ads

- Look to sales reps or firms to contact major advertisers for you.

- Consider commissioning independent auditors to prepare traffic reports to pass along to major advertisers.

Survey visitors to your site. Major advertisers like to see visitor profiles so that they have a better idea who your audience is.

If you want help placing your banners at other locations, there are a host of exchanges, networks, and auctions to assist you but be careful before making a long-term commitment to one of these companies. They should only be used as a last resort.

Questions to ask them before deciding if that is the route you want to take:

Can you choose which sites will host your ad?

Do you have veto power over ads at your site?

How many clients does the company have?

Who administers ad rotations?

Will they help you design your banner ad?

Will you get meaningful traffic statistics?

Sponsoring content in mailing lists and newsletters is becoming popular. Sponsoring content has some advantages over banner ads:

Promotional messages look nearly the same as the contents being sponsored so they aren't as easily overlooked as banner ads by subscribers.

Your ad may be inserted more than once, often somewhere in the middle, not necessarily at the beginning or end.

Mailing lists and newsletters are proactive e-mail, not passively like a banner ad.

Sponsored content comes as close as you can get to guaranteed multiple exposure.

People who read a discussion list or newsletter are generally more interested in the subject than web visitors.

Obviously you should considering sponsoring only content that interest your target audiences. Several methods may be used to find these mailing lists and newsletters:

Visit sites that maintain a list of mailing lists

Search major search engines using "newsletter" or "mailing list" plus keywords that apply to target audiences.

Visit web sites that maintain directories of sponsorable mailing lists and newsletters.

These tips will help you improve the effectiveness of sponsored content:

Test effectiveness by tracking visitors from the mailing lists and newsletters.

Run an ad for at least thirty days.

Include a deadline for a discount/special offer.

Describe your product in "story form". Remember you generally have much more space than a banner ad and you want your ad to resemble the text around it.

Watch out for publications that already have numerous sponsors. Your message may easily get overlooked.

Push for a combination sponsorship ad and banner ad at the publisher's web site.

Traditional off-line advertising should complement your on-line advertising campaign. Start by adding your URL to:

Product catalogs

Business cards

Letterhead stationery

Brochures

Financial statements

Investor information

Product information

Product manuals

Company newsletters

Trade journal articles

Print, radio, TV advertisements

# **Lesson 11 – Achieving Long-Term Success**

## **Lesson Objectives**

Exercise 11-1 – Analyzing Traffic Patterns

Exercise 11-2 – Finding New Niches and New Target Audiences

Exercise 11-3 – Leveraging Popular Web Pages

Exercise 11-4 – Creating "Events" to Generate Web Traffic

Exercise 11-5 – Leveraging New Web Content for Maximum Results

Exercise 11-6 – Generating Repeat Visits

Exercise 11-7 – Keeping Pace with Technology

Exercise 11-8 – Achieving "Resource" Status for Your Site

Exercise 11-9 – Allocating Time for Maintaining the Status Quo

Exercise 11-10 – Reviewing This Guide Regularly

## **Lesson 11 Objectives**

### **Upon completion of this lesson you will:**

Understand the importance of tracking where your visitors come from and which of your pages are most popular

Understand the importance of seeking out new niches and audiences for promoting your web site

Learn how to leverage your popular pages by creating new pages and new products that benefit from their popularity

Understand the importance of creating a succession of web "events" to increase traffic over the long term

Learn what you can do to leverage new content in order to reap maximum benefit from your efforts

Learn what you can do to encourage repeat visitors

Understand the importance of keeping up with the latest technology and trends

Learn the importance of evolving your site into a "resource" site that will be appreciated by target audiences

Understand the importance of allocating a portion of your time to preserve the value of what you've accomplished so far

Understand the benefits from reviewing this planning guide periodically for more ideas for increasing web traffic.

## **Exercise 11-1 – Analyzing Traffic Patterns**

As soon as you register (Lesson 2) and announce your web site (Lesson 3), you'll start to see visitors. More will trickle in from directories where you asked that your link be added. Classified ads generate a few more. Participation in discussion groups should cause traffic to take a major jump.

How will you know where visitors are coming from unless you capture this information? Where do visitors go when they reach your site? What are your most popular pages? You should make sure that you know this information. It will play an important part in the future success of your site.

If you ever hope to sell banner ads on your web pages sponsors are going to want to know what your traffic figures are.

## **Exercise 11-2 – Finding New Niches and New Target Audiences**

It's important to know what your site's niche is and who are your most important target audiences. When you feel that you've done a good job of tapping the potential in those areas, it's time to look for a new niche and new audiences to broaden your site's appeal.

Often a new audience will have interests or skills in common with current audiences. Seldom will you be able to attract a completely different audience with completely different interests or skill set. So the focus of your search should be "close to home".

Continually looking for new pages or services to add so that your web site will appeal to new audiences. Each new audience represents new opportunities for Web Marketing Plans to promote your site with more registrations, announcements, links, discussion groups participation, advertising, etc.

## **Exercise 11-3 -- Leveraging Popular Web Pages**

If your site has a content or product page, or a feature, that generates more traffic than the other pages, consider ways to "leverage" this popularity. Simply create new "spin-off" pages linked from the popular page to take advantage of visitors' interest in the popular page.

For example: "spin-off" pages which is an attempt to exploit visitors' interest in other pages of your web site. When you finish reviewing this list of add-on pages you'll have a pretty good idea of what is meant by leveraging popular pages:

A quick search page to find software by title or file name

An advanced search page

A personalized page that automatically identifies new additions that may interest you the next time you visit the Download Center

An alphabetical index of software in the center

A new additions page

The most popular downloads

The top vote-getters (visitors are able to "vote" for their favorite software with "tokens")

Software reviews submitted by visitors

Help and FAQ for visitors.

Notice how each page appeals to visitors' interest in downloading software. You can see why visitors are interested in these pages and are likely to click on their links. These add-on pages can count for a significant portion of traffic.

Take another look at your popular pages. See if you can come up with any ideas for leveraging their popularity? Then link to them from your popular pages.

Eventually, expand your site to where it's feasible to convert popular pages and their add-on pages into their own Web site with a new domain name.

Then prepare a Web Marketing Plan for the new site. The total traffic to several sites are sure to exceed traffic to one, especially after you've implemented your marketing plan.

## **Exercise 11-4 – Creating "Events" to Generate Web Traffic**

It used to be that making cosmetic changes was considered important for increasing traffic. The line of reasoning went like this: visitors like a fresh look. They tire quickly of a stale site and won't come back. This no longer seems true. A "fresh look" means a lot more than what it used to.

The reason is simple: over a million web sites compete for net users' attention. Competition is brutal. A new page layout, nifty new graphics, or different colored buttons aren't enough to lure visitors to your site. You've got to do better than that.

Although the look and feel of a site should be revamped periodically, it should be done within the context of regular, major enhancements to your site – new web events implemented at regular intervals. This is where you should be channeling your creative powers and energies.

To score well in the competition for visitors, keep adding value to your site not cosmetic changes. Then develop a Web Marketing Plan let your target audiences know about it.

### **Sources for New Web Event Ideas**

In Lesson 1 we listed common types of web events that are meaningful and promotable. Here they are again:

- A new product or service offered
- A new product release or upgrade
- A new Web page with important contents
- A new or expanded directory of valuable resources
- A contest
- An FAQ
- A report or white paper
- A published interview
- Local announcements.

Coming up with ideas for web events isn't that difficult. A good place to start is to check out what events other sites, particularly competitors, are promoting. Thousands of new events spring up each day. Review some of them to see how they can be reworked to fit your site's objectives. If you still need help, review Appendix F, the Web Event Ideas Generator. It's a tool that is sure to rev up your creative juices. If you don't come up with several excellent possibilities for web events, you weren't in the right frame of mind.

Also try to monitor contestants in best-designed site competition. Check them out for new trends in web site design that could improve the functionality and aesthetics of your site, and show that it is on the cutting edge.

## **View Possible Events as Subject for a Web Marketing Plan**

Any time your web event substantially enhances your site's contents, it opens up a host of new opportunities for promoting your web site: registration, announcements, postings to discussion groups, email marketing, etc. Every change – implemented or contemplated – should be evaluated in terms of "is it worthy of widespread announcements?"

If you have two changes under consideration but one seems easier to promote, generally, that event should have a higher priority. Promotability is the key.

When you find yourself evaluating possible web events in terms of how effectively can they be promoted, you will have taken a major step in developing the right attitude for Internet success.

## **Exercise 11-5 – Leveraging New Web Content for Maximum Results**

Exercise 11-4 discussed the importance of creating periodic web events to promote traffic to your site. Exercise 11-6 emphasizes the importance of generating repeat business. Few web events are able to consistently attract visitors and keeps them coming back as valuable content, the subject of this exercise.

Just about anybody who's been on the net for at least a few days has probably heard the expression, "Content is King." It means, of course, that the best way to get visitors to your site repeatedly is to offer valuable free information – content.

That doesn't mean thinly-disguised promotional pitch masquerading as meaningful information. That play only works once. It quickly sends visitors fleeing for more meaty fare and annoyed that you wasted their time. Getting them to return is extremely difficult.

### **Popular Formats for Content**

The most popular forms of content are usually in one or more of these formats:

Report

White paper

Compilation of tips

How-to steps

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

List of guidelines

Checklist

List of dos/don'ts.

Ideally, content is a combination of formats, such as narrative paragraph supplemented with numbered how-to steps, lists of guidelines, a checklist, specially-formatted tips, etc.

### **Sources for New Content**

Stymied for possible subjects for your new content? With proper stimulation, it's easy to prepare a list of possible subjects. Good starting places are:

Your own expertise: Start with what you know about your field that others, less knowledgeable would like to know. What better way to show off your knowledge and build credibility than to prepare valuable content based on your expertise for large net audiences?

Existing information in your files or databases. Often companies and professionals have a wealth of information accumulated in their files. This is a good place to start your search for meaningful content.

Competitors: Chances are your competitors — the aggressive ones anyhow -- are already on to this "content is king" axiom. They are busy stocking their site with worthwhile information to strengthen their competitive position. Don't copy their content just look for ideas. Content at competitors' sites may inspire you to cover similar ground but with a new twist that is more in line with your background or an entirely new angle. You may find a hot topic is inadequately covered by several competitors, and, after researching the subject, you are able to prepare a better treatment than did each of the competitors.

Current Topics in Your Field: Trends or developments in your industry are an excellent source of new content for your site. Ideally, you will be able to turn your site into the premier source for information about the new trend or development, and one that will rank high when your target audience searches for information by keywords.

Hot Topics in Discussion Groups: If you aren't a subscriber to mailing lists (or listservs) where your target audiences hang out, or a participant in newsgroups, you are missing an excellent opportunity to monitor important issues, interact with your target audiences, and promote your web site.

Note: For those of you to whom it is inconceivable that you have it in you to prepare reports and other important content for your site, no problem. Borrow other sites' content. Not "borrow", like "steal" but borrow with permission and publish others' content at your web. Accompany the borrowed contents with proper attribution, a link to the author's site or e-mail address, and maybe provide a short biography about the author. (Authors like bios, so much that they'll even write one for you). How quickly you can assemble a content-laden site when you borrow the best the net has to offer and give credit where credit is due. The net has such a wealth of information, you will not have a lack of content from which to choose.

### **Promoting Your New Content**

You've added meaningful content to your site, now what? Content without promotional punch behind it isn't so meaningful. How meaningful can it be if few see it? So, promote it just as if you were promoting a new site. Similar steps, same intensity.

This means developing and implementing a Web Marketing Plan for the new content which includes:

- Registering it at major search engines

- Announcing it

- Devoting a line in your signature about it

- Asking other sites to link to it

- Discussing it in discussion groups

### **How Else You Can Leverage New Content**

Fortunately, what you can do with new content isn't limited to creating and promoting a new page. New content can be leveraged in order to achieve maximum traffic results:

- E-mail Your Contacts Database:** Every time you publish new contents, e-mail your contacts database and notify them. If you did a good job of selecting the subject, you will get an immediate spurt in traffic from an appreciative audience.

- Publish a newsletter or e-zine:** Publish a newsletter and fill it with your site's contents. Web contents are passive. They sit there and wait for readers to come. A newsletter takes the same content and actively seeks out readers. Visitors readily sign up for free newsletters about subjects which interest them and like to receive them.

**Marketable Contents:** Shop your content around to somebody else's newsletter or e-zine. Just as an option for you was to borrow content from another site, so too are others interested in borrowing yours. So shop it around to other publishers who cater to the same target audiences you do. Look for e-zine or newsletter publishers, or sites that maintain a library of valuable content. If you pick more active sites than yours with larger followings, offering content enables you to reach a much larger audience than if you had just published it at your site.

Note, however, that you are not likely to get anybody to pay you for your content. So much free information is available and many writers will gladly let others use their content in exchange for recognition and a link.

**Increase Links to Your Site:** Some of the bigger, more successful sites won't consider linking to your home page but they just might link to a page with valuable contents as a service to their visitors, even direct competitors. You'll settle for that. To have visitors come to any page at your site from a popular site is a plus.

**Publish a Publication:** Your content might be suitable for a booklet, audio tape, video tape, lecture, workshop, seminar, etc. Take another look at it and see what possibilities exist for an offline publication or other product.

You will have a much easier time achieving long-term Internet success if, when planning future projects, you give serious consideration to regularly adding new content and promoting it as a major event worthy of a web marketing.

## **Exercise 11-6 – Generating Repeat Visits**

You've got a strong basis for a good plan to increase traffic to your web site but now you need to be thinking how you are going to keep visitors coming back. Like any business, the future success of your web site means repeat business.

One way to do this is to provide valuable content and keep adding to it. Visitors who come because of valuable content will return when you add new content. Preferably you captured their names and e-mail addresses (Lesson 8) so that you can notify them when you add something of value to your site.

Another way to build loyalty is to increase the level of interactivity, such as a guest book. A guest book not only allows visitors to communicate with you and with each other but it is an excellent source of information that will help you maintain your site and build traffic at the same time. Help information you will see in the guest book:

Compliments and complaints guide you in site design and contents

Marketing ideas sometimes from compliments or complaints.

Chance to answer questions, be helpful

Source for guest books (free one, search also)

Create forums for discussions between visitors such as chat rooms and bulletin boards. Each participant becomes an agent for building loyalty and repeat traffic.

Newsletters and other forms of communication also help build loyalty. Regularly publish a newsletter that is informal, personal, newsy with valuable content.

### **Exercise 11-7 -- Keeping Pace with Technology**

Internet keeps changing and you must keep up with it so that you know what others are doing that works and so that your site reflects a commitment to change with technology.

When you learn new tools you can help out others. This provides excellent opportunities for participating in discussion groups and establishing your credentials and credibility with various Internet communities.

### **Exercise 11- 8 -- Achieving "Resource" Status for Your Site**

Another important key to achieving long-term success for your site is to elevate it to "resource" status. This means to make it a popular, significant site that your target audiences will want to visit regularly because of it's important.

The best way – admittedly easier said than done – is to strive to become one or more of these types of important resources:

Super directory: Nearly every field has "super directories" (see Lesson 5). By offering a comprehensive list of links to related sites, not only would you be providing a valuable service to your audiences, but other sites would be considerably more eager to link to you. As a super directory administrator, you have leverage when approaching other sites to link to you in return for their link in your directory. What would it take to become a super directory? Merely duplicate the good links at all existing super directories you can find. It's not difficult, only time-consuming. They've already done the legwork for you by finding sites in your field. By weeding out the bad links, ignoring the weak sites, and adding new sites, you could in a matter of days have a fresh "resource" site that surpasses existing directories.

Information Resource: You could turn your site into a valuable information resource by compiling a wealth of contents (e.g., articles, reports, FAQs, tips, etc.) in your field. This could also include pictures, illustrations, graphs and charts, etc. You don't have to actually develop the content yourself. You could find the best that's out there and organize links into logical categories for your visitors. Add one of the free search engines available so that visitors could search your links for desired information and you have a valuable information resource for your visitors. It's certain to be more current than existing information resources.

Technical support: Many users in your field are probably desperate for technical help. The value of many discussion groups as a technical resource has suffered declined dramatically. Annoying messages have overwhelmed meaningful exchanges. If you provide technical support to others in your field -- a help desk, bulletin board, chat room, technical documentation, mailing list -- your site would soon become a resource that is appreciated by your audiences.

Download source: Another type of resource is a download page stocked with programs, utilities, and macros for people in your field. Visitors would bookmark your site and return whenever they are looking for an application or update.

Turning your site into a resource is half the battle. The other half is an aggressive Web Marketing Plan to promote it. You'll find that a new resource is easy to promote -- registration, announcements, participating in discussion groups, linkage campaign, etc. It's an important event that your audiences definitely want to know about.

## **Exercise 11- 9 -- Allocating Time for Maintaining the Status Quo**

Unfortunately the Internet doesn't stand still. You can't cling to the status quo because status quo is measured in nanoseconds. Rapid, evolutionary changes occur every day. New sites, new technology, new tools appear overnight. In this type of environment, your competitive position continually erodes. The value of previous promotion efforts decreases over time.

Consider: Time works against your ranking in search engines. Unless you work to improve your site's standing and re-register regularly, your ranking inexorably slips. Even worse, inexplicably, search engines drops sites from their database. We recommend that you check your ranking weekly and re-register at least twice a monthly.

Competition intensifies. New competitors are popping up every day. Existing competitors keep adding new content, and trying new ideas to lure your target audiences to their site instead of yours. What you're using to attract audiences today probably won't be good enough tomorrow. Like Satchel Paige and Andrew Grove (Intel), keep looking over your shoulder to see who's

gaining on you.

Reputations can be trashed overnight in discussion groups. While continuing to round up new visitors, make sure that previously ones (or competitors) aren't undercutting you behind your back. Set aside time weekly to check what's being said about you in discussion groups. You want to counter derogatory comments with timely "damage control" postings. Deja News is a convenient way to monitor what's being said about you in over 20,000 newsgroups. To monitor comments in mailing lists, bookmark the archives page of the most important ones and periodically search them for your name, your site, or your product.

While monitoring what's being said about you, also check out what's being said about competitors. Negative comments may suggest opportunities to improve your relative standing with target audiences. Conversely, positive comments may warn you that a competitor is trying something new to attract your target audiences.

Monitor reciprocal link agreements. If reciprocal links provide a significant portion of your web traffic, it's important that you make sure your partners aren't fudging on your agreement. If they move your link to a less accessible page or drop it altogether, you'll want to respond quickly or you'll lose more visitors than you gain. Search for your URL at least weekly at one or more major search engines. Print the results and save so that you can compare with the findings the next time you search. Also look for new links to your site that point to potential new partnerships.

Update links. If you're maintaining a list of resources for your visitors, periodically validate existing links and add new ones. The rapid turnover in Web sites makes lists of resources quickly obsolete. More up-to-date lists will lure visitors away from your site.

Regularly check to see that your contents or ideas haven't been copied by others. Intellectual property is easier to steal online than offline. It's also tougher enforcing copyright laws. The stealing of ideas, content, and graphics is rampant. Periodically visit a major search engine like AltaVista that indexes an entire site. Search for terms, strings of text, etc. that only your site should have.

### **Schedule for Maintaining the Status Quo**

1. Weekly – check your search engine ranking.
2. Bi-weekly – Register again at major search engines.
3. Weekly – Monitor your toughest competitors.
4. Weekly – Monitor what's being said about you in discussion groups.
5. Weekly – Monitor what's being said about your competitors.
6. Weekly – Monitor compliance of reciprocal link partners by searching to see who's linking to you.
7. Bi-weekly – Validate links in your resource directory.

8.Bi-weekly – Check to see that your intellectual properties haven't been stolen by another site.

### **Exercise 11-10 -- Reviewing This Guide Regularly**

Keep reviewing this planning guide. Continue to implement and increase the scope of your Web Marketing Plan.

Don't forget to customize this guide with your own resources, ideas, and techniques. Continue to build this guide into a stronger, more powerful tool for increasing web traffic.

You are certain to have some web pages that are more popular than others. Look to see what new pages can be created. Then link to them from your popular pages. If for example, a popular page is one that contains software for downloading, consider adding pages that allow users to discuss and rate the software they downloaded. By creating extra pages, traffic stats increase and visitors spend more time at your site.

Eventually, expand your site to where you spin off popular sections into their own web site with a new domain name. Then prepare a Web Marketing Plan for the new site. The total traffic to several sites are sure to exceed traffic to one.

# **Appendices**

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Appendix B – Additional Resources

Appendix C – Media List and Site Reviewers

Appendix D – Search Tips

Appendix E – Web Traffic Plan Presentation

Appendix F – Web Event Ideas Generator

## **Appendix A -- Glossary**

### **Ad Clicks**

The number of times visitors to a site click on the advertiser's banner ad.

### **Autoresponder**

A mail server that automatically compiles the names and addresses of people it receives e-mail from in a mailing list database. At the same time it responds automatically with a pre-formatted message. Also called "Mailbot."

### **Bandwidth**

Quantity of data that can be transmitted through a medium. Usually measured in bits per second (BPS).

### **Banner Ad**

A graphical ad at a web site that links to the advertiser's web site or a page specifically created for the ad. A banner ad is usually rectangular in shape and colorful. It may include animation and other multimedia features to induce visitors to click on it.

### **Baud**

Rate at which data is transmitted over a communications medium such as over a telephone line. Also referred to as bits per second or BPS (example, 28,800 bits per second).

### **Chat Room**

A service or area in an online service or BBS where several users can meet simultaneously and exchange typed messages.

### **Click-Through Rate**

The percent of banner impressions that results in ad clicks. For example if 100 visitors see a banner ad and five click-through to the advertiser's site, the click-through rate is 5%.

### **Clickstream**

The route a visitor navigates around your web site.

CPM also Cost per thousand

The cost to the advertiser per 1000 banner impressions. If the CPM cost is \$30, the advertiser pays the host site \$30 for every 1000 times the banner ad appears. A variation is "CPTM", which is the cost per targeted thousand impressions.

Dial-up

A connection to a computer made by calling it up over a telephone line.

Discussion Group

As used in this planning guide, an electronic forum or message board where members of an online community exchange views, ask and answer questions on a specific topic. Two types of discussion groups: newsgroups (see "Newsgroups") and mailing lists (see "Mailing Lists").

Download

Transfer of a file from a remote or distant computer to yours, most commonly via the World Wide Web or File Transfer Protocol ("FTP").

Event

An occurrence at your web site that you hope is significant enough to interest target audiences in visiting.

E-zine

An electronic magazine, usually published on the Internet's World Wide Web or e-mailed to subscribers. Also called "Zine".

FAQ

A list of frequently asked questions and their answers. Many newsgroups and mailing lists maintain FAQs to describe what is an acceptable posting.

Flame

A hostile, often personal attack, against the writer of a newsgroup posting, usually someone who has violated "Netiquette". Flames are a too-common occurrence on the Internet. People who post flames are often called "flamers".

## FTP

File Transfer Protocol defines how to transfer files from one computer to another.

## Home Page

A web site's opening or menu page. Usually displays the site's title and a directory of its contents.

## HTML

Hypertext markup language in which most World Wide Web documents are written.

## Image Map

A graphic image at a Web site that contains several hypertext links in different areas of the image.

## Impressions (same as page view)

The number of times visitors sees an advertiser's banner ad. Host sites generally like to charge per impression.

## Internet

A world wide network comprised of tens of thousands of computer networks linked together. Also call the "Net."

## Listserv

The most common software used to maintain an e-mail list of subscribers and send messages from one subscriber to all names on the list. (see also "Mailing List")

## Mailbot

Another term for autoresponder.

## Mailing List

A message sent by one subscriber to a topic-oriented discussion group is automatically e-mailed to all. A moderator usually filters out off-topic and blatantly commercial messages.

## Majordomo

A popular list server that is available for free on the Net.

## Netiquette

Acceptable behavior or etiquette for Netizens.

## Netizen

An Internet user.

## Newbies

New, inexperienced Internet users.

## Newsgroup

Also called "Usenet", an electronic board where Net users post and reply to messages from other users on a specific topic.

## Newsreader

A software program that lets you access Internet newsgroups, and read and post messages.

## Posting

Message sent to a newsgroup or mailing list.

## Signature

A file typically inserted at the end of an email message or discussion group posting. The file can be used as an electronic business card with the same type of information on it or as a "mini-billboard" with promotional information in it. Also called ".sig."

## Spam

The posting or e-mailing of undesired, unsolicited messages to many recipients.

## "Spin"

An angle or way to describe an event that makes it more interesting, more newsworthy to an audience and to the media. Much as a newspaper's headline and news story are meant to catch the public's eye, the objective of the "spin" put on a Web event is to catch the attention of Net users and the media.

## Sponsored Content

Usually, a text ad included with messages sent to subscribers to a mailing list or newsletter.

## Target Audience

An online community based on a common interest, skill, beliefs, etc. Online communities that you want to let know about your Web site, product or service are your "target audiences".

## Thread

A series of messages on the same subject. Also a "discussion thread."

## URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

An unique address for a site, page or document on the World Wide Web.

## Usenet

A term applied to thousands of newsgroups (bulletin boards) on the Internet.

## Visitor

A Net user who comes to a Web site.

## Web Traffic

The number of Net users that check out your site. Not "hits", not "impressions" (Lesson 10), but real live individuals who visit your site. Traffic is comprised of first-time and repeat visitors. Counting the number of visitors at your site is an excellent way to keep score. Visitor count tells you how successful your mastery of web marketing techniques is.

## Web Marketing Techniques

Marketing techniques described in this planning guide make full use of all available sources for driving traffic to your site. Each is the subject of a lesson.

## World Wide Web

A hypertext-based system for finding and accessing Internet resources. Also called "Web", "WWW", or "3W".

## WWW

See "World Wide Web".

## Zine

See "E-zine."

## **Appendix B – More Web Marketing Resources**

Promotions Software Resources

Registration Resources

Announcement Resources

Classified Ad Resources

Discussion Group Resources

E-mail Marketing Resources

Media Resources

Online Advertising

Services and Tools

**NOTE:** Due to the rapid change that takes place on the Net some links may not work or be viable in that case using a search engine such as <http://www.dogpile.com> will do the trick.

## **Promotion Software**

### **123Promote! Promotion Software**

Software that lists specific URLs for listing and promoting your site using the following "cardfile" categories: search engines, business index, promotional, classifieds, e-mail directories, regional index, and future follow-up. The software is \$49 and available via e-mail. For an additional \$19, you can get an update every 90 days.

### **SitePromoter from Webster Group International**

Automatically registers you at 150 search engines and allows you to choose the appropriate category for each engine. The cost is \$97 via electronic delivery.

### **Web Promotion Spider**

Automatically submits your site to over 150 major search engines, directories, and Usenet newsgroups. Also it dynamically optimizes your site or page to help increase visibility.

## **Registration Resources**

### **Beaucoup Search Engines**

List specialized search engines covering topics.

### **Business Compass**

Search engine with media-related categories: advertising agencies, Internet, magazines, media, marketing, news, public relations, publishing.

### **Did-It.com**

Submits your site to top directories and search engines. Also provides monthly reports on status of your submission.

### **Submit It**

Free version submits your URL to over 15 catalogs on the Web.

### **Submit URL**

Submits your URL to over 1,500 places. .

## Vision Quest

Free online domain registration, free marketing articles and newsletter

## A Webmaster's Guide to Search Engines

Comprehensive site dedicated to explaining search engines.

## The World Wide Web Broadcaster

Free submission service to over 235 engines/Web media. Complete one form. Broadcaster registers overnight and e-mails a report of sites that accepted the registration

## **Announcement Resources**

### NewPageList, Subscription

A moderated, distribution list for the announcement of new Web pages. Brief descriptions are included.

### Weekly Bookmark Distribution List, Subscription

A distribution list/webletter that focuses on the Web, reviews 10-20 sites per issue submitted by Netizens.

## **Classified Ad Resources**

Mother of All Classified Links <http://tntmag.com/freeclas.htm>

### Webcrawler

Webcrawler links to dozen of free classified ads by entering "classified ads" in the search field.

### Yahoo free classifieds

Yahoo's free national classifieds service.

## **Discussion Group Resources**

### **Exposure**

Free weekly newsletter on Internet advertising and online marketing.  
e-mail: majordomo@databack.com. In the body: SUBSCRIBE EXPOSURE.

### **L.I.S.T., Inc.**

List of over 300 tech-industry mailing lists by title or subject keyword.

### **The List of Marketing Lists**

Descriptions and subscription info of over 50 discussion lists relating to marketing.

### **The List Exchange**

Database of lists you can subscribe to, link to "Lists of Lists" for thousands more.

### **Mailbot**

A software agent that you program to monitor mailing lists. Scans mailing list files for specific keywords or phrases and forwards found messages to you.

### **Newsbot**

Monitors newsgroup postings for you. Can be programmed to filter newsgroup postings based on your specific criteria.

### **Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists**

<http://www.neosoft.com/internet/paml/bysubj.html>

<http://www.euromktg.com/eng/res/cybmktg/maillistex.html>

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

<http://www.webcom.com/impulse/list.html>

Links to most popular directories of mailing lists, searchable databases

Reference.com

Finds data on 300,000 Web forums and mailing lists worldwide.

Web Digest for Marketers

Larry Chase's free Web marketing newsletter, articles and links to other resources.

## **E-mail Marketing Resources**

Arial Software

E-mail merge let you build targeted e-mail campaigns which you can schedule mailings and personalize them from most any database file.

Cool List

Create and maintain a mailing list on a virtual server -- free. Site earns income from advertising at the bottom of messages sent.

ListServ Lite

Free mailing list manager from L-Soft International, Inc. Perfect for individuals and small businesses who want to run their own mailing lists.

Edith Roman Online

List broker and manager Edith Roman offers a search engine with access to over 30,000 mailing lists worldwide. Free calculator for calculating ROI on a mailing, how many pieces to send out.

## **Media Resources**

<http://www.gugerell.co.at/gugerell/media/>

A downloadable media list that is constantly updated.

### **EditPros**

Public relations Web tool: business news media e-mail directory with links to reporters and editors over 270 U.S. newspapers and business trade, general and regional magazines.

### **Eric Ward's URL-Wire**

Reaches Web reviewers, media and news services in ten countries.

### **Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations**

Leading publisher of associations database offers search engine of about 2,500 associations and descriptions (with link and e-mail).

### **GuestFinder**

Resource for experts, guests, and story ideas seeking media interviews

### **Information Express**

Table of Contents service has periodical and articles for over 60 industries: health, medicine, technology, pharmaceuticals, science, engineering, law, government, business and management.

### **Infoscavenger**

### **Internet News Bureau**

Mail your press release to over 1000 journalists. Plus a information about writing and distributing press releases

### **Parrot Media Network**

Media e-mail addresses used by publicists and ad buyers.

<Http://www.webcom.com/leavitt/medialist.html>

Listing of newspapers, magazines, TV stations and other media outlets that accept electronic submissions.

#### Public Information Online

E-mails or faxes releases to newspaper editors for a fee. Starts at \$75 per 300 addresses.

#### PRFORUM

PR news, information, and threads for commenting on PR-related topics.

<http://www.prsa.org>

<http://www.cprs.ca>

<http://www.impulse.research.com/prlist.html>

Links to over 145 PR resources: US and international PR agency web sites, organizations and companies providing news, promotion, cybermarketing assistance and professional education.

#### NEWSPAPER MANIA

Worldwide compilation of over 2,000 newspaper sites and online news sources.

#### PR Central's Body of Knowledge

Publisher of "Inside PR" and "Reputation Management". A Library of Case Histories, an online resource of thousands of articles and case histories.

#### Reuters Media World

Reference source for advertisers/marketers. Free registration gives you access to news reports, geographical market data, how to make buys and evaluate media, current media sources, industry shows and meetings

<Http://www.m2.com>

PR distribution service.

#### The Internet Public Library

#### The US All Media Jumpstation

Direct Contact Publishing's media guide to more than 3,000 magazines, journals, trade and consumer publications broken down by category.

[Http://asaenet.org/gateway/onlineassoclist.html](http://asaenet.org/gateway/onlineassoclist.html)

[Http://www.ceoexpress.com](http://www.ceoexpress.com)

Links to international news, trade and technical magazines and more.

[Http://www.media-mark.com/](http://www.media-mark.com/)

Lists subscription newsletters for PR professionals.

## **Online Advertising**

Advertising brokers

Complete links of advertising brokers.

Adbot, Inc.

Buy & sell Internet advertising via open-bid, outcry auctions.

Ad Resource

Reviews of over 500 Web advertising, marketing and promotion resource links, web advertising rate guide, web advertising articles, a forum and much more.

ADSmart.net

Buy or sell online advertising space. ADSmart's TrueTargeting methodology targets audiences.

Adspace locator

Advertising brokers

Advertising links maintained by University of Texas

Extensive collection of advertising-related links for advertising/marketing professionals, students, and teachers.

Banner Ad samples

Banner ads that process e-mail requests for information and keep browsers at your web site.

#### The Banner Generator

Create banners online in minutes. Type your copy, select a font, banner size and color schemes.

#### Burst! Media

Sells banner ad space.

#### ClickZ: The Daily Stop for Web Advertisers

A new daily column written by ad reps, media planners, site publishers, software developers, traffic builders reflecting personal experiences, insights and advice. Also numerous ad networks, interactive agencies, ad rep firms, site promoters and ad software.

#### Computer Currents International

CCI is an online resource for business decision makers and computer users. Discount banner programs available.

#### CyberGold

Pay-for-performance advertising offers guaranteed results for your web ads.

#### DoubleClick

#### The B&R Samizdat Express

Provides best places and ways to advertise, advertising strategies, results to expect. Alternative ways to promote your site/business. Designing your site for advertising.

#### IMGIS

#### Internet Advertising Guide

Links to print publications on Inet advertising

#### Internet Advertising Report

A Morgan Stanley report on the state of Internet advertising, current trends, forecasts, rate card data, and measurement techniques.

#### Internet Banner Network

#### Mailing List Advertising

Advertise on over 700 mailing lists for \$5/CPM.

#### Market Match

Help plan a media campaign. Up-to-date data on 700 Web sites that accept advertising.

#### MediaFinder

A directory containing over 80,000 targeted advertising resources.

#### Microscope's Best Ads on the Web

#### @NY -- The New York Internet Newsletter

Reach 4,000 new media insiders each week, 3 months worth of effective e-mail banners for only \$2,500.

#### Open Horizons Book Marketing Update

Resources for marketing books.

<http://www.safe-audit.com>

A transaction ad banner network which allows host sites to select advertising banner placement proposals. Register as a host site and you can check through current proposals.

#### Starting Point

Offers ad banner programs. Purchase a trial package (100,000 impressions +4 keywords) and receive 25,000 FREE impressions.

#### TradeBanner

#### Web Ad Rates and Offerings

Ad cost information

### WebLink Express

Printed, category-specific web site directory with a numerical reference for each listed site is distributed to 85 million households via PARADE and USA WEEKEND. Browsers type in code at WLE's site and connect to a directory Web site.

### \$1.50 CPM Advertising

An advertising scheme offering a CPM of \$1.50.

## Services and Tools

### AltaVista Live Topics

Live Topics Guide, advanced feature of AltaVista.

### DBASICS

Monitors traffic to each page, tells how many repeat visitors, how many users link or bookmark your site.

### Mainspring Communications

Advertising host site with has a well- defined audience: people who plan, design and build Internet applications; content; and personalization tools. A subscription based service. Free previews are available.

### NewBot

A personal agent based on HotBot search technology. It combs the web to find new information in selected topic areas, then flashing an icon on your screen. Click on the icon to see a list of URLs to new sources.

### net.Analysis Pro

### Net-Trak

Track traffic, see visitor IP's, browsers, hits each day, each hour.

### NetGambit's PositionAgent

Tests top search engines to find out where your site is

#### Rank This

Also reports you ranking in search engines -- in the top 200 entries. Also lists the top 10 entries with hotlinks so you can compare.

#### SEARCH.COM

Web searches by category. CNET feature screens and categorizes tens of thousands of quality web sites.

#### Webcaller ID

Identify visitors to your site in case you want to contact them.

#### WebGrip's Web Promotion Spider

Automatic registration service, search engine rankings, link exchange

#### WiseWire

A free, web-based, information filtering service. Highly intelligent, personalized information service that gathers and packages web pages and news. You can rank information obtained thereby teaching WebWire about individual preferences.

## **Appendix C -- Media Lists and Site Reviewers**

## **Magazines**

Adbusters , adbuster@wimsey.com

Ad Age Editors, Advertising Age , ehbu73a@prodigy

David , Hakala, BoardWatch Magazine, dave.hakala@boardwatch.com

Wayne Poston, Bradenton Herald, bheditor@bhip.infi.net

Sean Savage, Bradenton Herald, savage@gate.net

Cahners Publishing Company, corpcomm@cahners.com

Computerworld, editor@cw.com

John Tyler, Computing Japan, jltyler@gol.com

John Boyd, Computing Japan, 6840615@mcimail.com

Cyril Fiévet, Cyberspere, cfievet@quelm.fr

DBMS Online, dbms@mfi.com

Dr Dobbs, editors@ddj.com

Tim Moran, EE Times, tmoran@cmp.com

Jack Robertson, Electronic Buyer's New Online, jroberts@cmp.com

Stanton McCandlish, Electronic Frontier Foundation, mech@eff.org

Lindsey Vereen, Embedded Systems Programming, lvereen@mfi.com

Daniel Muse, Family PC, daniel\_muse@zd.com

Colleen O'Hara, Federal Computer Week, ohara@fcw.com

Government Technology, gteditor@govtech.net

Home Computing & Entertainment, hceedit@plesman.com

Tom Steinert, Inter@ctive Week, tomhyphn@onramp.net

Karen Rodriguez, Interactive Week, krodriagu@zd.com

Steve Vonder Haar, Interactive Week, svonderh@zd.com

PC Week Online, pcw\_online@zd.com

Voters' Telecommunications Watch, vtw@vtw.org

WebMaster, thorgan@cio.com

International Business Magazine, emmervosh@ibnet.com

The College Magazine, editor@linkmag.com

Media West, shyba@wimsey.com

MiniWorks, miniworks@genie.geis.com

Mondo 2000, mondo@well.com

Mother Jones, x@mojones.com

Multichannel News, higgins@dorsai.dorsai.org

The Nation, nation@igc.org

Newsweek-Periscope, ghackett@newsweek.com

NOW Magazine, news@now.com

Business Magazine, aq060@freenet.carleton.ca

Problem Solver, problem.pol.mlo@medtechnet.com

Real Goods News, realgood@well.sf.ca.us

Reason, 70703.2152@compuserve.com

Rolling Stone, rollingstone@echonyc.com

St. Charles Countian, pacmosteve@aol.com

Running Wild Magazine, runwild@world.std.com

S.F. Examiner Magazine, sfxmag@mcimail.com

Security Insider Report, p00506@psilink.com

Southwestern Union Record, 72734.1717@compuserve.com

Spectrum-New York, n.hantman@ieee.org

Der Spiegel, 100064.3164@compuserve.com

Stern-Germany, 100125.1305@compuserve.com

3D-Magazine, 3d-magazin@stereo.s.bawue.de

Streetsound—NY, streetsnd@aol.com

Time, timeletter@aol.com

Training Magazine, trainmag@aol.com

Los Angeles, urbmag@netcom.com

USA Weekend, usaweekend@aol.com

News and World Report, 71154.1006@compuserve.com

Utne Reader, editor@utnereader.com

Prime Time, munger@island.net

VeloNews-Colo, velonews@aol.com

Vibe, vibeonline@nyo.com

Washington Technology, technews@access.digex.net

Whole Earth Review, wer@well.sf.ca.us

Wired, editor@wired.com

Don , Willmott , PC Mag-Abort Retry Fail , don\_willmott@zd.com

CNet--Net editor, Jeff Peline

Web Guide, webguide@mcs.com

CLICK! Interactive Magazine, editor@click.com.au

Paul Kapustka, Communications Interactive, pkaps@cmp.com

Computer Life, ceditors@zd.com

Barbara Krasnoff, Computer Shopper, BKrasnof@zd.com

Stephanie Izarek Smith, Computer Shopper, 72241.245@compuserve.com

Computer Times, comptime@singnet.com.sg

Vern, Cyberspace Today, vern@cybertoday.com

Brock Meeks, CyberWire Dispatch, brock@well.com

Dave Payton, 74777.462@compuserve.com

Digital Highway Report, dhrpt@japanmedia.com

Laura Lorek, Ft Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, lorek@sunsent.com

Bob O'Donnell, Info World, bob\_o'donnell@infoworld

Internet Underground, IU@mcs.net

Internet Week, mcaesar@phillips.com

Net Traveler, ntravel@biznetusa.com

Barry Cooper, Orlando Sentinel, barrycoop@aol.com

PC Computing, pcc\_webmaster@zd.com

Dave Farrell, Roadside Attractions, roadside@cris.com

Ellis Booker, Web Week, ellis@webweek.com

Web500, info@web500.com

WEBster--The Cyberspace Surfer, editorial@webster.tgc.com

Weird Online World, tristan@dorsai.org

Where It's @, whereis@mistral.co.uk

Wendy Aron, XSO's Lost in Cyberspace, aron@xso.com

Information Week, informationweek@mcimail.com

3W Magazine, 3w@3w.com

Accountants on Line, ayfdave@aol.com

Advertising Age, ywkj04a@prodigy.com

Amazing Computing, 76174.2404@compuserve.com

Amazing Computing-Online Content, rhays@delphi.com

Associated Press, wise@well.sf.ca.us

Axcess-Internet Kliff Notes, kliff@axcess.com

Axcess-Submissions, submit@axcess.com

Communications Week, 440-7485@mcimail.com

Computer Player Magazine, compplayer@aol.com

Computer Life, ceditors.notes@mailzd.ziff.com

ComputerWorld, letters@cw.com

Connect Magazine, connect@aol.com

Corporate Computing, 439-3854@mcimail.com

Creative Edge, midnight@halcyon.com

C User's Journal, cujsub@rdpub.com

Data Communications, 416-2157@mcimail.com

DBMS, 73647.2767@compuserve.com

BBS Magazine, publisher@bbscd.com

Business Start Ups, bsmag@aol.com

Business Week, bwreader@mgh.com

EE Times, 70212.14@compuserve.com

Electronic Entertainment, elecent@aol.com

Electronic Information Report, simba02@aol.com

Enterprise Systems Journal, 543-3256@micmail.com

Federal Computer Week, letters@fcw.com

LAN Times, 538-6488@mcimail

MacUser, editor, letters@macuser.ziff.com

MacTech Magazine, press\_release@mactech.com

MacWeek, letters@macweek.ziff.com

Monitor Publications, 74353.2767@compuserve.com

Multimedia World Magazine, 75300.2503@compuserve.com

Network Computing, network\_computing@mcimail.com

Amy Dunlop, Internet World, associate editor, adunlop@iw.com

Jim Ivers, Internet World, associate editor, ivers@iw.com

Pat Joseph, the net, reviews editor, pat@thenet-usa.com

Wayne Cunningham, the net, news editor, wcunning@thenet-usa.com

New Business Watch, 70307.454@compuserve.com

Forbes, 5096930@mcimail.com

Government Computer News, editor@gcn.com

HERD it on the Internet, editor@2cowherd.net

Home Office Computing, hoc@aol.com

Home , PC Magazine, homepc@aol.com

Imaging World, imagingwrld@aol.com

Infowar Review, gldneaglpr@aol.com

Infoworld, letters@infoworld.com

Inside Media, mediaseven@aol.com

Internet Business Advantage, edit@wentworth.com

Internet Business Journal, mstrange@fonorola.net

Internet:Marketing & Technology Rpt, imt@compecon.com

Newsbytes, newsbytes@genie.geis.com

Online Access, oamag@aol.com

PC Computing, 76000.21@compuserve.com

PC Magazine , letters, 157-9301@mcimail.com

PC Week, 557-0379@mcimail.com

Popular Communications, popcomm@aol.com

Self Magazine, comments@self.com

Small Business Gazette, jimd34@aol.com

Technology Transfer, us.036260@interramp.com

Telecommunications, 311-1693@mcimail.com

Elana Frankel, Teleconnect, ElanaFrankel@MCIMail.com

The Business Journal, pdxbj@teleport.com

The Internet Novice, tates@access.digex.net

US News and World Report, letters@usnews.com

Windows Computer Shareware, 5648326@mcimail.com

Wired Magazine, infodroid@wired.com

WorldVillage, jcomm@worldvillage.com

Business Know-How Online, bizknowhow@aol.com

AI Expert, 76702.705@compuserve.com

John Steiner, Bug Bytes, john\_steiner@cup.portal.com

Amiga Computing, amigacomputing@cix.compulink.co.uk

Amiga Report, Letters to the Editor, rniles@hebron.connected.com

News & Sightings, dtiberio@libserv1.ic.sunysb.edu

Emulation Column, jcompton@bbs.xnet.com

European Market, norjj@stud.hum.aau.dk

Skid Marks Review, blakader@csos.orst.edu

Axcess, General info, rants and raves, editor@axcess.com

Best of Mac News, best.of@applelink.apple.com

CIO Magazine, ciomag@mcimail.com

Communications Networks, 75300.243@compuserve.com

The Computer Paper, 72627.1732@compuserve.com

Computer Shopper, 100034.1056@compuserve.com

Computer Weekly, comp\_weekly@cix.compulink.co.uk

Computing, [computed@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:computed@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Datateknik, [datateknik@dt.etforlag.se](mailto:datateknik@dt.etforlag.se)

InfoLinja, [jlahti@infocrea.fi](mailto:jlahti@infocrea.fi)

The Internet Letter, [netweek@access.digex.net](mailto:netweek@access.digex.net)

Journal of C Language Translation, [ljclt@iecc.com](mailto:ljclt@iecc.com)

LAN Times, [538-6488@mcimail.com](mailto:538-6488@mcimail.com)

MACLine, [macline1@aol.com](mailto:macline1@aol.com)

Macworld, [macworld@aol.com](mailto:macworld@aol.com)

Programmers Challenge, [progchallenge@xplain.com](mailto:progchallenge@xplain.com)

MikroPC, [mpcmagas@mikropc.fi](mailto:mpcmagas@mikropc.fi)

Network Computing , editor, [editor@nwc.com](mailto:editor@nwc.com)

Reader Advocacy Force, [nwraf@world.std.com](mailto:nwraf@world.std.com)

PC Computing, [72241.2451@compuserve.com](mailto:72241.2451@compuserve.com)

Tony Westbrook, PC Magazine, [tony\\_westbrook@hades.zis.ziff.com](mailto:tony_westbrook@hades.zis.ziff.com)

Steve Brown, PC Labs, [steve\\_browne@hades.zis.ziff.com](mailto:steve_browne@hades.zis.ziff.com)

PC Plus, [pcplus@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:pcplus@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Personal Computer World, [editorial@pcw.ccmil.compuserve.com](mailto:editorial@pcw.ccmil.compuserve.com)

Toronto Computes!, [75570.2744@compuserve.com](mailto:75570.2744@compuserve.com)

UniForum Monthly, [pubs@uniforum.org](mailto:pubs@uniforum.org)

Vancouver Computes!, [scribe@mindlink.bc.ca](mailto:scribe@mindlink.bc.ca)

Xephon, [100325.3711@compuserve.com](mailto:100325.3711@compuserve.com)

## **Newspapers**

Associated Press Online, [weise@well.sf.ca.us](mailto:weise@well.sf.ca.us)

Cowles/SIMBA Media Daily, [simba02@aol.com](mailto:simba02@aol.com)

Grupo Negocios, [tprennushi@bitmailer.com](mailto:tprennushi@bitmailer.com)

Greenwire, [greenwre@apn.com](mailto:greenwre@apn.com)

Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, [kai@ikp.atm.com.pl](mailto:kai@ikp.atm.com.pl)

Media Page, [mpage@netcom.com](mailto:mpage@netcom.com)

M2 News Agency-UK, [satnews@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:satnews@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Newsbytes, [newsbytes@genie.geis.com](mailto:newsbytes@genie.geis.com)

Telecomworldwire-UK, [satnews@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:satnews@cix.compulink.co.uk)

Gannett Public Affairs, [gcishare@info.gannett.com](mailto:gcishare@info.gannett.com)

Anne,Saul,Gannett--news editor, [asaul@gci1.gannett.com](mailto:asaul@gci1.gannett.com)

Gannett - news editor, [asaul@gci1.gannett.com](mailto:asaul@gci1.gannett.com)

Gannett - public affairs, [gcishare@info.gannett.com](mailto:gcishare@info.gannett.com)

Greenwire, [greenwre@apn.com](mailto:greenwre@apn.com)

Albany Times Union, Asst Managing Editor,[mSpain6581@aol.com](mailto:mSpain6581@aol.com)

Albuquerque Journal,Columnist,[jbelshaw@triton.unm.edu](mailto:jbelshaw@triton.unm.edu)

Albuquerque Tribune, [rbuergi@etrib.com](mailto:rbuergi@etrib.com)

Anchorage Daily News, [74220.2560@compuserve.com](mailto:74220.2560@compuserve.com)

Alisa,Hoffman, Apostrophe Publishing, [apospub@aol.com](mailto:apospub@aol.com)

Arizona Republican, short takes editor,[dhontz@republic.pni.com](mailto:dhontz@republic.pni.com)

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, [news@arkdg.com](mailto:news@arkdg.com)

Army Times Publishing, armytimes@aol.com

Atlanta Journal Constitution, gppl16a@prodigy.com

Austin Chronicle, xephyr@bha.com

Bay Windows, baywindo@world.std.com

BLK, newsroom@blk.com

Boston Globe, Story Ideas, news@globe.com

Boston Herald, heraldpol@delphi.com

Dan, Kennedy, Boston Phoenix, dkennedy@shore.net

Gary, Nielson, Charlotte Observer, gary.nielson@community.com

Chicago Tribune, tribletter@aol.com

Chicago Sun Times, deputy director online publications, jwcary@suntimes.com

Christian Science Monitor, op-ed, oped@rachel.csps.com

City Pages, citypages@igc.apc.org

City Paper, 71632.57@compuserve.com

City Sun, sysop@f206.n278.z1.fidonet.org

Colorado Daily, colorado\_daily@onenet-bbs.org

Columbus Dispatch, letters@cd.columbus.oh.us

Community News, commnews@airmail.net

Contra Costa County Times, cctletrs@netcom.com

Corvallis Gazette-Times, gt@proaxis.com

Crain's Chicago Business, ccbnews@aol.com

Ben, Daily Citizen, ben@essential.org

Daytona Beach News-Journal, 74142.1666@compuserve.com

Dallas Morning News, 74774.2236@compuserve

Democrat-Gazette, news@arkdg.com

Des Moines Register, dsmreg@delphi.com

Des Moines Register, 76247.2367@compuserve

Detroit Free Press,tech columnist,watha@det-freepress.com

Evansville Courier,computer/internet columnist,jderk@evansville.net

Fairfax Journal, journaexp@aol.com

Fayetteville Observer-Times, frink@infi.net

Flint Journal, fj@flintj.com

Ft Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, sbanderson@aol.com

Free Times, 71632.165@compuserve.com

Galveston County Daily, galvnews@aol.com

Galveston County Daily, 76440.3467@compuserve.com

Gazette-Telegraph, gazette@usa.net

David,Novis,Goleta Valley Voice, goletavv@aol.com

Hollywood Reporter, thrscott@aol.com

David, Honolulu Star Bulletin, davids@aloha.net

Dwight,Silverman,Houston Chronicle,computer writer, dwight.silverman@chron.com

Glenn,Golightly,Houston Chronicle, Electronic Media,Virtual voyager, glen.golightly@chron.com

IBM Internet Journal, 76130.221@compuserve.com

Idaho State Journal,online czar,isjrep@aol.com

Idaho Statesman, 76424.3356@compuserve.com

Infosecurity News, 2439796@compuserve.com

Inside Tucson Business, sjewett@infop.com

International Herald-Tribune, iht@eurokom.ie

Journal Newspaper, thejournal@aol.com

LA Weekly, laweekly@aol.com

La Crosse Tribune, 71210.3567@compuserve.com

Leader-Telegram, jaymar@discover-net.net

Jonathon, Weber, LA Times, Cutting Edge section, jonathon.weber@latimes.com

Los Gatos Weekly-Times, lgwt@livewire.com

Media Page, mpage@netcom.com

MicroAge RealTime, avidean@microage.com

Middlesex News, mnews@world.std.com

Minneapolis Star Tribune, star tribune online, roberts@startribune.com

Morning Journal, mamjornl@freenet.lorain.oberlin.edu

NuCity, nucity@swcp.com

OakNet News, editor@oaknetpub.com

Michael, Hofferber, Outrider News Service, mhourider@aol.com

O'Reilly & Associates, nuts@ora.com

Palo Alto Weekly, paweekly@netcom.com

Philadelphia Inquirer, personal computing column, reidgold@netaxs.com

Phoenix Gazette, phxgazette@aol.com

Portales News-Tribune, pnt4481@aol.com

Port Townsend Leader, leader@pt.olympus.net

Portland Oregonian, oreeditors@aol.com

Rahleigh News & Observer,online editor,bsicelof@nando.net

Reno Gazette-Journal, rgj@libcom.dps.com

Dave,Chapin,Richmond Times-Dispatch, davechapin@aol.com

Ridgefield Press, 71052.3315@compuserve.com

Sacramento Bee, sachedit@netcom.com

San Diego Daily Transcript, editor@sddt.com

San Diego Union-Tribune,bi-weekly Internet section only,computerlink@sduniontrib

San Francisco Chronicle, chronletters@sfgate.com

San Francisco Examiner, letters@examiner.com

San Francisco Examiner, sfexaminer@aol.com

Salt Lake Tribune, the.editors@sltrib.com

San Jose Mercury News,Business Editor,lflynn@aol.com

Thomas, San Jose Mercury News,business news rep,thomasbrew@aol.com

San Mateo Times, smtimes@crl.com

Santa Barbara News Press, sbnpbiz@aol.com

Santa Cruz County Sentinel, sentcity@cruzio.com

Saratoga News, sn@livewire.com

Seattle Times,personal technology,ptech@seatimes.com

Southwestern Union Record, 72734.1717@compuserve.com

Star-Telegram, mhammond@delphi.com

Stars and Stripes, jenie@wam.umd.edu

St Paul Pioneer Press, virtual reality, vpress@aol.com

St Petersburg Times, 73174.3344@compuserve.com

Stuart/St. Lucie News, m.dodge1@genie.geis.com

Sun Newspapers, sun@sunnews.com

Tampa Tribune, online editor, sywg06A@prodigy.com

The Baltimore Sun, baltsun@clark.net

The Bergen Record, newsroom@bergen-record.com

The Columbus Dispatch, crow@cd.columbus.oh.us

The Knoxville News-Sentinel, kns-news@use.usit.net

Sandy, Thompson, The Las Vegas Sun, thompson@lvsun.com

The Ledger-Star, debg@infi.net

The Met, trogers@themet.net

The Monterey County Herald, herald@ix.netcom.com

The Olympian, olympian@halcyon.com

Orange County Register, wilde@ocrl.freedom.com

The Pilot, boyer@infi.com

The Progressive, progmag@igc.apc.org

The Small Business Gazette, jimd34@aol.com

The State, state@scsn.net

The Register-Guard, tomd780@aol.com

The Riverfront Times, rft@plink.geis.com

The Times, kerr@howpubs.com

The Tribune, letters to editor, tribletter@aol.com

The Village Voice, voice@echonyc.com

The Virtual Times, Huntsville, AL and International ed, editor@hsv.com

Tucson Citizen, letters to editor, tcnews@aol.com

Twin Cities Reader, sari23@aol.com

UnixWorld, Wiz Grabbag, grabbag@uworld.com

USA Today, letters to the editor, usatoday@clark.net

Utne Reader, editor@utnereader.com

Valdosta Daily Times, gambr@www.valuu.net

Valley Breeze, valbreeze@aol.com

Vancouver Columbian, vanpaper@aol.com

Washington City Paper, washcp@aol.com

Willamette Week, mlzl@aol.com

Rick, Selvins, Philadelphia Daily News, software columnist, RickEditor@aol.com

Albany Times-Union, letter, tuletters@aol.com

The Australian, ausleter@ozemail.com.au

The Age, editorial, editorial@theage.com.au

Daily News, edcdn@sri.lanka.net

The Daily Telegraph, letters to editor, editor@telegraph.co.uk

Ben, Rooney, Electronic Telegraph, editor, benry@telegraph.co.uk

The Globe and Mail, letters, letters@GlobeAndMail.ca

Networks, column, Networks@GlobeAndMail.ca

Cyberia column, jkapica@GlobeAndMail.ca

The Guardian Innovations, innovations@guardian.co.uk

The Guardian, Notes & Queries, nandq@guardian.co.uk

The Guardian, Computer Page, computerg@guardian.co.uk

The Guardian, On-Line, online@guardian.co.uk

Bill, Gates, Microsoft, column, askbill@microsoft.com

Irish Times, computer times column, computimes@irish-times.ie

Jerusalem Post, jpost@zeus.datasrv.co.il

Kashif, Saeed, Lancashire Evening Telegraph, wayfarer@cix.compulink.co.uk

Middlesex News, mnews@world.std.com

Morgenbladet, truls@telepost.no

The News & Record, Letters edpage@nr.infi.net

Norwich Bulletin, norbull@aol.com

Ottawa Citizen, News tips, lap764@freenet.carleton.ca

Prague Post, 100120.361@compuserve.com

The Province, News tips, tabtips@ppress.wimsey.com

Terry, Taylor, Cybertalk, ttaylor@cybertalk.wis.net

Spartanburg Herald-Journal, 73511.522@compuserve.com

Springfield News-Leader, Press releases, nlnews@ozarks.sgcl.lib.mo.us

The Sunday Times, Innovation, innovation@delphi.com

Jonathan, Miller, The Sunday Times, columnist, jonathan@delphi.com

Davey, Winder, The Sunday Times, columnist, dwindera@cix.compulink.co.uk

Sun-Sentinel, Grapevine, vineeditor@aol.com

Sydney Morning Herald, letters page, letters@sml.com.au

Die Tageszeitung, briefe@taz.de

## **Appendix D – Search Tips**

Technically, there are two kinds of "search engines"

Directories or Catalogs like Yahoo and Magellan.

Search Engines like Alta Vista, Excite, Infoseek, others.

The directories list sites by category after visiting each site to verify its relevancy to one or more categories listed in the submission form. Finding relevant results often entails drilling down through the categories and sub-categories. Directories are more suitable for broad category searches.

Search engines, such as AltaVista, Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, and Webcrawler, are based on an abstract of contents on millions of Web pages. Preferably, use search engines that index entire pages and not just the headers and page titles.

If you're looking for an answer to a question or a web page you've seen before, it's best to try a comprehensive index like AltaVista, Infoseek, Lycos, or Excite. Directories like Yahoo return a much smaller list of pages found but generally of a better quality. They are more suited for when you want to find categories of sites. Yahoo will actually prompt you to switch to search AltaVista if a search of their database was unsuccessful.

If you use Netscape's Navigator or Communicator, or Microsoft's Internet Explorer, you'll find a search button on the tool bar. For best search results, limit yourself to one of the search engines listed there. These are the largest with the resources to incorporate advanced search technology.

You will probably find it's faster to go directly to the search engine's URL instead of approaching it from Netscape's or IE's search page.

## **Getting Ready to Search**

Give some thought to your search query before beginning the search. An ill-defined query is sure to inundate you with tons of returns. Then be ready to add a sign or punctuation that will narrow your search to more manageable results (see the next section).

Know your search engine. Take a few minutes to check out its FAQ or tips before the search. It will save you considerable time over the long-run.

Note which search method is the search engine's default. If you have options for different methods, you want search result rankings by relevance, for example, rather than the date the page was indexed or updated.

Also test several search engines for especially important searches. Don't assume that the one

you've used in the past returns adequate results. Try several using the same query. You may be surprised at the results. Each returns different results for the same query. Remember, no search engine is perfect in terms of accuracy or comprehensiveness. Chances are pretty good that none will consistently outperform the others.

Don't assume that search engines are up to date, that they display new sites. Directories such as Yahoo manually check out new submissions. Yahoo has often been criticized for being months behind. Many site owners have complained that they have been unable to get their site listed at all.

Search engines such as Alta Vista also have difficulty keeping up with new submissions. They can take months to sweep the Web for new content. By the time they have completed a sweep, a lot of new content has been added and has yet to be indexed.

Before beginning your query, make sure that you have spelled the search words correctly. Avoid words that you're not sure of.

You'll save time if you take a few seconds to think about how you can refine your search in advance so that the results will be meaningful rather than using trial and error. See below for techniques you can use to improve search results.

### **Using Simple Techniques to Improve Searches**

You can dramatically improve nearly all searches with a few, simple techniques. Inexperienced searchers simply enter keywords in the search field. They are usually inundated with a list of far too many pages to review.

The key to good searching is to narrow your search using one or more of the techniques below. Not all search engines recognize some of these so make sure beforehand the one you are using does:

- Capitalize proper nouns.

- Use 'AND' or '+' when you want more than one word in your query to be on every page (see the chart below).

- Use quotations (") around words if they must appear next to each other. Some search engines recognize "near" in the query to mean that multiple words must be within a few words of each other.

- Put a minus sign (-) before each word that you don't want on the page (e.g., "Web traffic"-railroad).

- Try natural language searches. Phrase your query using natural language. For example, "how do I ....."

### **Improving Your Searches with Intelligence Agents**

Several major search engines allow you to progressively narrow your search. Infoseek has a

"search within a search" feature for being more specific in stages thereby improving the relevancy of your search.

Excite has a "More Like This" feature. If a site in your search result stands out as particularly relevant, you can tell Excite to find "more like this".

AltaVista also has feature that allows you to narrow your search -- "Live Topics". Enter query words and when you get the results, click on "LiveTopics" at the top of the page. AltaVista compiles a page of possibly related keywords. By highlighting some, you can narrow your search dramatically and improve results.

### **Trying Meta-Search Tools**

Meta-searches use multiple search engines simultaneously. They retrieve, consolidate, and organize the results for you in one list. Theoretically, at least, meta-searches are superior to single search engines because:

Search results are likely to be more current because the Web changes so quickly no one search engine can keep up so.

The potential for finding information is greater because more databases are searched.

Different search syntaxes are consolidated into one language.

Relevancy scores from different search engines are combined into a composite score.

Compare for yourself the desirability of using meta-searches. These are several of the better known ones:

Metacrawler send queries to Excite, Altavista, WebCrawler, Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos and others. It organizes the results in a uniform format with a relevancy ranking.

Savvy Search performs parallel searches on multiple databases, combines the results and eliminates the duplicates. It also prepares a "search plan" for you based on your query and its own experience with past searches. The plan ranks the usefulness of search engines for your query.

Internet Sleuth allows you to search over 2000 searchable databases. It not only searches the web but also newsgroups and topic categories.

### **Trying Specialized Search Engines**

The web is getting so vast, it's often difficult to get manageable results in general search engines no matter what techniques you use. Consider for your next search specialized engines that index or catalog sites relating to a specific topic. They are more apt to be up to date and all-inclusive for the specific topic in which you are interested.

Several of the major search engines conveniently provide lists of searchable databases:

C/Net's search.com.

The Internet Sleuth.

All-In-One-Search Page

Suppose you have to find specialized search engines on your own. Here are a few tips for finding them:

Search on topical key words plus 'directory', 'catalog', 'search' or other key words likely to find search engines.

Look for them at the super directories found in Exercise 5-2.

Ask in related discussion groups (Exercise 7-1).

Scan the list of search engines approached by automatic registration services (Exercise 2-5).

After a few searches, you'll soon find which specialized search engines are the best and how they compare with the larger general search engines.

## **Searching Newgroups**

Too often searches concentrate on the Web and overlook newsgroups. This is a mistake. Newsgroups contain a wealth of information, often more current than what you find in web searches.

Although several of the major search engines allow you to search usenets newsgroups, probably the best search location is Deja News. Long after articles have expired on newsservers, Deja News retains them indefinitely.

## **Other Kinds of Searches**

Many sites, including several of the major search engines, allow you to search for individuals and businesses. One of the best sites for people searches is Four11. Use it to search for:

E-mail addresses

Telephone numbers

Street addresses

Net phones.

C/Net's Search.com enables you to search for:

Software

Stock quotes

City maps

Links to your site

Pages at a site

Key words in a URL

Key words in a title.

Electronic Yellow Pages are handy for finding businesses. Try Big Yellow.

Did you know that you can also search for graphic images? AltaVista supports an image-searches technique: enter "image" as your query prefix. Yahoo! has sections devoted to finding graphics at its site.

A number of image-specific search engines exist but don't be surprised if you are disappointed with the results. Image searches are certain to be much better in the future. For now, try:

Image Surfer, a Yahoo subsidiary, searches image-based Web sites.

WebSeer allows you to search by subject, colors, dimensions, and origin. It has a database of over 750,000 images.

Would you like to add a search engine to your site? Go to Excite and download their program for free.

## **Appendix E – Web Marketing Plan Presentation**

## **Guidelines for Completing the Presentation**

This section provides guidelines for organizing essential information from your Web Marketing Plan into a presentation to an employer, a client, members of a web project team, or other individuals. You simply may want to use the presentation to demonstrate your expertise at devising a plan for increasing web traffic.

A completed presentation also serves as an excellent record, particularly for the recipient, of your activities and recommendations for improving a site's potential. The information and resources in the presentation may be used over again for future Web Marketing Plans.

Nearly all of the presentation information is derived from the completed exercises. If you prepared the Web Marketing Plan on your computer, simply cut and paste the applicable sections from it under the presentation headings.

Some headings in this presentation may not be relevant to your marketing plan. Simply leave them out of your presentation. If a section is too long, such as links placed at other sites, attach a separate sheet and reference the attachment in the presentation.

If you are able to provide a breakdown of the traffic generated by the techniques used in the Web Marketing Plan, be sure to include it in your final presentation.

Good luck. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have for improving both "Black Belt Web Marketing" and this presentation. We would also like to hear your success stories.

## **Web Marketing Plan Presentation**

For \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Key Elements

### A. Web Event

(Description from Worksheet for Exercise 1-2)

### B. Target Audience(s)

(List audiences from Worksheet for Exercise 1-4. Optionally, tell why you selected them)

### C. How Promoted

(Describe the spin from Worksheet for Exercise 1-5)

## II. Registration

### A. Recommendations for Improving your Site's Search Ranking

(List the recommendations from Worksheet for Exercise 2-1)

## B. Key Words Used for Registration

(List the key words from Worksheet for Exercise 2-3)

## C. Registration Description

(Show the description from Worksheet for Exercise 2-4)

## D. Automatic Registration Service Selected

(Identify the service chosen in Exercise 2-5, the number of registrations, and cost)

## E. Manually Registered at These Locations:

(List sites from Worksheet for Exercise 2-6 where you manually registered)

## F. Verified or Resubmitted Registration:

(List search engines from Worksheet for Exercise 2-7)

# III. Announcements

## A. Announcement Posted

(Enter the subject line from Worksheet for Exercise 3-2 and body from Worksheet 3-3.)

## B. Announcement Locations

(list locations from Worksheet for Exercise 3-4)

## C. Discussion Groups Where Announced

(List newsgroups from Worksheet for Exercise 3-5 and mailing lists from Worksheet 3-8)

# IV. Classified Ads

## A. Classified Ad Placed

(Describe the ads from Worksheet for Exercise 4-1)

## B. Categories Chosen for Ad

(List the categories from Worksheet for Exercise 4-3)

## C. Classified Ad Locations

(List the locations from Worksheet for Exercise 4-2)

## V. Linkage Campaign

### A. Directories Approached

(List super directories with URLs from Worksheet for Exercise 5-2)

(List directories from Worksheet for Exercise 5-4)

### B. Complementary Sites

(List sites from Worksheet for Exercise 5-5 )

### C. Reciprocal Link Arrangement

(List sites from Worksheet for Exercise 5-5)

### D. Partnership Arrangements

(List sites from Worksheet for Exercise 5-6)

### E. Status of Our Site Directory

(Describe efforts from Worksheet for Exercise 5-7)

## VI Resources Database

### A. Summary of Competitors Sites

(Identify competitors from Worksheet for Exercise 6-2)

### B. Promotion Resources

(Identify promotion sites from Worksheet for Exercise 6-4)

### C. Other Valuable Resources

(Identify resources from Worksheet for Exercise 6-3)

### D. Recommendations for Being Selected as a "Cool" Site

(Identify "Cool" sites from Worksheet for Exercise 6-5)

## VII. Discussion Group Participation

### A. Mailing Lists

(Identify the mailing lists from Worksheet for in Exercise 7-1. Summarize the types of postings and number of subscribers if known)

## B Newsgroups

(Identify the newsgroups from Worksheet for Exercise 7-1. Summarize the types of postings.)

## VIII. E-mail Marketing Campaign

### A. Program for Handling Mailing List

(Identified the program for administering mailing list from the Worksheet for Exercise 8-2.)

(describe why it was selected)

### B. Visitor Sign-Ups

(Techniques used from Worksheet for Exercise 8-1)

(The number of visitors who visited the site and signed up.)

### C. E-mails to the Mailing List

(Describe the types of contacts from the Worksheet for Exercise 8-3.)

(show the contents of the email or as an attachment)

(describe how autoresponders were used and any discernible impact. Recommend how they should be used in the future.)

#### D. Mailing List Rentals

(If lists were rented, identify source from the Worksheet for Exercise 8-8.)

(describe the offer that was e-mailed to the lists.)

(summarize the results of the mailing.

(recommend to what extent rented mailing lists should be used in the future.)

### IX. Media Campaign

#### A. Media Page

(Describe the media page from the Worksheet for Exercise 9-2 )

(recommend how it should be used in the future)

#### B. News and Press Releases

(Identify press releases from the Worksheet for Exercise 9-3 and news releases from Exercise 9-6.)

#### C. Media List

(Describe steps used to build a media list from the Worksheet for Exercise 9-4, how many entries in the list)

(list media contacted by category (e-zines, newspapers, etc.)

(describe the techniques you used to contact the media on your list)

#### D. Results of Media Campaign

(Identify media who picked up your story and summarize how they handled the story – Exercise 9-7.)

(describe the impact of the media campaign)

#### E. Recommendations for Future Campaigns

(Recommendations for future media campaigns from Worksheet for Exercise 9-8.)

### X. Online Advertising Campaign

#### A. Banner Ads

(Describe the banner ads used from Worksheet for Exercise 10-2)

(Describe the design principles used to increase effectiveness)

#### B. Sites Selected to Host Banner Ads

(List the sites from Worksheet for Exercise 10-3.)

(Describe the financial arrangement worked out with the host site.)

#### C. Effectiveness of Online Advertising

(Describe the effectiveness from Worksheet for Exercise 10-5.)  
(include any recommendations for the future)

#### D. Preparations for Selling Advertising Space

(Describe preparation steps from Worksheet for Exercise 10-6.)

#### E. Banner Ad Exchanges, Networks, Auctions

(List the companies from Worksheet for Exercise 10-7.)

#### F. Sponsored Content

(List the newsletters and mailing lists from Worksheet for Exercise 10-8.)

(Describe the financial arrangement with each)

(Describe the effectiveness in generating traffic by those selected)

(Describe your recommendations for future content sponsoring)

### XI. Recommendations for the Future

#### A. Future Events

(List future events that should be considered)

#### B. New Target Audiences

(identify future audiences that could be targeted and what the site would have to do to attract that audience.)

### C. Future Implementation

(list what more can be done in the future to continue implementing this Web Marketing Plan -- more links, more registration, etc.)

### D. Monitoring Schedule

(Recommend a future monitoring schedule and follow-up for registration, announcements, etc.)

## **Web Event Idea Generator**

The Web Event Idea Generator is a brainstorming tool. It is designed to stimulate your creativity and plant seeds that could grow into major web events – events that are sure to dramatically increase a site's profile and traffic. Key to having a successful web site is to aggressively conceive, implement, and promote a succession of events, to be willing to continually think up new events, experiment with change, stay active on the net.

It's important to maintain a dynamic site so that net users' interest in visiting is regularly renewed. Ideas described here could spark the conception of many new events for future Web Marketing Plans.

### **How To Use Idea Generator**

Review each event in the generator in terms of how it could be manipulated to fit within the scope of your site's objectives and resources. The third column is for your own thoughts and reactions. If the event has no potential for your site, indicate so and move on.

Events may be searched by key words. Events listed in the first column include one or more words in bold type. This is to help you quickly events for certain ones and identify keywords by which to search for the event.

As noted in Lesson 11 of "Mastering Web Marketing Techniques", periodical events is essential to the long-term success of a Web site. New events and new ideas are the lifeblood of successful Web sites. The idea generator is a creativity tool that you can use over and over again to enhance scheduled events and help conceive future events.

### **Principles of Creativity**

We believe that you will find the idea generator is a valuable creativity tool. How valuable it is depends almost entirely on your creative ability. To perhaps give your creativity a boost and thereby improve the valuable of our idea generator, we decided to include 25 principles of creativity based on our research:

1. Believe that you can become as creative as the next person (more so).
2. Remember past triumphs.
3. Creativity is an acquired skill.
4. Become as comfortable as possible with the subject.

- 5.Put what you learn in the proper context
- 6.Create a database of stimulating ideas
- 7.Ask for feedback from others.
- 8.Quantity improves quality
- 9.Don't hastily dismiss unusual ideas.
- 10.Keep practicing creativity exercises.
- 11.Prepare a creativity checklist.
- 12.Pinpoint key challenges to success.
- 13.List approaches to overcome challenges.
- 14.Don't commit prematurely to an idea.
- 15.Give ideas a chance to "incubate."
- 16.Don't be discouraged by early failures.
- 17.Turn stress into a working asset.
- 18.If not satisfied with progress, revisit previous approaches.
- 19.Shift gears to avoid getting bogged down.
- 20.Pump up sagging enthusiasm.
- 21.Always be prepared for ideas
- 22.Foster a creative mood.
- 23.Look for patterns in creativity.
- 24.Schedule sessions for creative thinking.
- 25.Minimize distractions during creative sessions.

Now that you've more insight into the creative process, we expect that the number of event ideas resulting from our idea generator will multiply.

## **How to Evaluate These Events Ideas**

These tips will help you get more out of this Ideas Generator:

1. Get in a creative frame of mind. Try to schedule review of these event idea for when you are fresh and eager to tackle new ideas.
2. View each idea as potential for an interesting event that would appeal to your target audiences.
3. Consider attention-grabbing ways you could describe selected events to audiences
4. After the first pass-through, focus on the ones that seem to have the best potential for your site.
5. Consider possible combinations of ideas into unique events
6. Evaluate potential events for feasibility.
7. Prioritize remaining events.
8. Schedule implementation.

<b>Events</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
1) Mailto Banner Ads	Dramatically increase effectiveness of banner ads by making them e-mail sign-ups for free content: newsletter, reports, tips. Include promotional material with each e-mail content. Convert signees through repeated contacts.
2) Chat Rooms	Schedule regular chat events and offer incentives for net users to visit, such as a prize for every 100th participant. Try to schedule important people in your field. Summarize and publish the discussions for your target audiences. Heavy hitters in your chat rooms discussing important issues create interest and credibility in your site.

- 3) Free Email                      Create an e-mail web site and offer your target audiences free e-mail in return for permission to include sponsor ads on each e-mail sent. This requires substantial eligible audiences. Also consider adding valuable content so that e-mailers look forward to visiting your site for more than just e-mail.
- 4) Training Expo                Are you in a field that has substantial training requirements? Consider sponsoring a training expo. Invite trainers, related software and product developers to participate. Create online the equivalent of an off-line training program. Such an event would be easy to work up a Web Marketing Plan for and attract favorable recognition for your site.
- 5) Jobs fair                        Are you in a field with active job seekers and recruiters? Sponsor a jobs fair where you compiled list of job and contract openings in your industry or field. Easy to do. Search large jobs newsgroups like misc.jobs.offered.
- 6) Supplement printed publications                      Offer publishers and authors web content to supplement publications aimed at your target audiences. The site can earn commission on sales of the publication, promote a related service or product, or generate ad revenues.
- 7) E-mail reminders            Offer free e-mail reminders to visitors. They enter events they want to be reminded of. Your e-mail reminders will include in addition to the reminder requested, promotional wording about your site or services.
- 8) Publish coupons              Offer visitors to your site coupons if they sign up for them. The coupons could offer free products or a discounts. You could create a partnership with another web site by honoring each other's coupons on products.
- 9) Award recognition            Think of reasons why another site would be eager to display your logo and a link to your site: "Site of the Week", "Best Site", etc. Identify sites for your target audiences and announce your selection. Even solicit nominations from audiences.
- 10) E-mail Updates              Encourage visitors to sign up for e-mail updates about events occurring at your site. Each change at your site triggers another reminder of your site to past visitors and gives them a reason to return. Consider offer something of value for sign-ups such as a discount, free information, etc.

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 11) Daily Tips           | Provide a daily tip about your product, a popular related product , or for mastering any skill. Include a promotional message, even a sponsor, with the tip. Compile the tips into a valuable web archive.   |
| 12) Tips Report          | Compile the daily tips from the last event idea into an archive at your site. Make a report available to users for downloading. Promote the availability of the report to audiences.   |
| 13) Arrange partnerships | Learn how to use products popular with your target audiences. Arrange partnerships such as providing a free tips report in return for a link, banner ads, sales commissions, etc.  |
| 14) Automatic updates.   | Give visitors incentives to sign up for regular notification of changes at your site. Use free newsletter subscription, discount to signees, early registration, etc.  |
| 15) Free Offer           | Heavily promote free availability of your product or service for a limited time. Consider limitations like first 100 visitors each day, only those who fill out a survey, agree to be notified of changes, events, etc. Also search for sites and newsgroups that track free stuff on the net. |
| 16) Build a Library      | Gather all the articles, white papers, FAQs, events calendar, current events, trends, etc. that would interest your audiences. Promote your site as the #1 information resource.   |
| 17) Review page          | Going beyond developing a super directory of sites in your field, review them for your audience. Recognize the best sites and describe why. This will establish your credentials. Ask the best sites if they want link to you or advertise at your site.                                       |
| 18) Photo Gallery.       | Does your field lend itself to historical events, current events, inside activity, interesting, photogenic products? Create a gallery of works that would interest your audiences  |
| 19) Animation            | Incorporate animation with content or instructional material.  |
| 20) Video clips.         | Consider new video technology, such as streaming video, to generate interest. Make sure that the video lends value and is not just a gimmick.  |

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 21) Interview a celebrity             | If you interview an authority or somebody interesting in your field, you may have a newsworthy event. Some topics are more enticing than others: new technology, future projections, behind-the-scenes.   |
| 22) Product Reviews                   | Product reviews are a valuable service. If you evaluate and review products used by your audiences, you will have many opportunities for motivating audiences to visit your site. Show how they can use the good ones to assist them or make them more productive. Good reviews may get the product developer to link to your review.   |
| 23) New products                      | Follow events in your field. Jump on new products or trends. Become the authoritative site. Beat the competitive.   |
| 24) Interactive tutorial              | Training requirements these days are huge. If you are in a field that requires learning a new skill or updating an obsolete one, providing an online tutorial and/or a hardcopy training manual is a good way to generate traffic. Include illustrations, graphics, examples. Plan tutorials for beginners get them started, intermediate, and then advanced. Nice touches would be instant scoring on tests, whiteboard interactions, chats with the instructor. Become the primary source for training, free information, tips, learning aids, etc. It's an excellent way to strengthen your credentials. |
| 25) Online portfolios<br>of works     | Use for such subjects as photography, art, writing, poetry. Find a way to make portfolio concept appealing to specific interest groups. Like thumbnails to fuller images. Sponsor contests, encourage visitor voting, etc., award prizes  |
| 26) Introduce a<br>cartoon character. | Build "brand awareness" by associating a cartoon character with your site (Joe Camel is available). It could emit noise, be animated, respond to visitor actions, etc. Also use the character as a link to your site at other sites.  |
| 27) Vanity pages                      | Appeal to people's desire to have a web page of their own to publish personal information, photos, exhibits of their work. Tie catering to an ego in to your product or service. Watch interest in your site soar.  |
| 28) Maintain Registration             | Register target audience members in a published database. For example, contributors to your site's contents, product users, experts, consultants, etc. Publicize their accomplishments and build  |

loyalty, encourage other to register. Build marketing plans around announcements, special recognition, awards, member updates, etc. Tie in with your services

- 29) Humorous responses      Ask your audience to submit funny experiences, anecdotes relating to their field of interest, about your products, or about a related topic, possibly horror stories about competitors' products. Publish the best ones at your site and/or in a newsletter. Develop a web marketing plan promoting the humor campaign.
- 30) Sponsor a contest.      Create a contest that will interest your audience. Build a web marketing plan around the contest. Invite entries, publish updates, announce winners. Publish the results at your site. Register the contest at sites which maintain a database of web contests; for example, <http://www.181-4.com/promotions/sweeps.html>.
- 31) Solicit feedback      Encourage visitors to comment on your site, service, products. Use favorable testimonials in your Web Marketing Plan. Use negative comments to improve your site. Important to establish a user base.
- 32) Automatic reminders      Encourage your visitors to add your web pages to URL Minder at <http://www.netmind.com/URL-minder/URL-minder.html>. This free service will notify your visitors for you whenever your site changes.
- 33) Direct Contact  
with customers      The Internet is eliminating the middleman in many fields. Initiate at your site the ability to service end customers. Offer customers offline encouragement to use your web site's sales and service features.
- 34) Buy search words      Buy key words from popular search engines that searchers would use to find a site like yours. Try best key words first, monitor traffic, decide then if you should buy more key words.
- 35) Add photos of  
your team      Encourage visitors to check out photos of people associated with your site. Add personal profiles, quizzes, and other fun stuff. Be sure to present your people in a fun context.
- 36) Promote seminars      Does your product or service lend itself to a seminar, workshops, or audio/visual materials? Possibly somebody in your field has

already put together a quality seminar. Develop a Web Marketing Plan to promote the seminar, possibly even collect commissions on sign-ups if its somebody else's seminar.

- 37) Yahoo! Pick of the Day/Week  
A little research into how Yahoo picks web sites of the day and week may pay big dividends in terms of increased traffic. Check out <http://www.pscentral.com/yahooPicks/index.html>
- 38) Surround Video  
Generate interest in your site by adding new bells and whistles such as surround video which allows visitors to manipulate 360 degrees a view of something. See Black Sun's demonstration at <http://www.microsoft.com>. Remember: fun bells and whistles generate traffic.
- 39) Help Desk  
Create a Help desk to answer questions about your products, others' products, or any current topic. Preferably you have a mastery of the product and it is popular with your target audiences. To make this service more interesting consider an on-screen persona – like a wizard, guru, Dr (Dr. Ruth) -- and phrase help in terms of "Ask The Wizard....."
- 40) Artist's Rendering  
Display at your site an artistic exhibit of something that interests your audience: A rendering, collage, etc.
- 41) Fuel Controversy  
Pick a hot topic in your field and take a stand. Or present both positions in a controversy and act as mediator. Provide historical background about the controversy. Become the net's primary source of information. Encourage opinions and reactions from visitors. Encourage related sites to link to your controversy page. Monitor discussion groups for more fuel.
- 42) Online Tours  
Create a photo tour of famous locations, events, people in your field. Sample subjects could be a corporate headquarters, project team facilities, photos showing a project's progress. Consider slide presentation software for your web site.
- 43) Contests for Graphic Artists  
Hold a contest for graphic artists that will net you something of

value: logo, banner ads, home page graphic, rendering of your product, home office, etc. Award prizes, grant recognition, link to participants. Invite visitors to vote and/or comment, publish results.

- 44) Create Biographical Page  
Identify somebody important in your field: visionary, leader, innovator. Create a web page devoted to the individual's background, accomplishments, impact on events and developments in the field.
- 45) Chronicle Events  
Track developments of an important event such as new technology with a time line, descriptions, photos, links, archive, sound, video, etc.
- 46) Publish FAQ  
Anticipate possible questions in your field, or about your site or product. Publish a FAQ. New users appreciate FAQs. It may even reduce customer service and Help desk requirements. Be sure to register it at FAQ Finder.
- 47) Planning Aid  
Does your field involves projects and extensive planning. Create a planning page that helps visitors develop a plan. Provide worksheets, guidelines, checklists, step-by-step instructions. Also offer supplement resources that will help in the development and implementation.
- 48) Monitor Events  
Keep track of important event in your field, or of major interest to net users, and e-mail updates to those who sign up to be notified. Also consider keeping an activities calendar. The event could be anything from product development to progress on a congressional bill. If you get a good response, monitor multiple events.
- 49) Events Calendar  
Can't find a good events calendar in your field to promote your seminar, product introduction, workshop? Create your own. Invite your audiences and other sites to contribute their events.
- 50) Geographical Map  
Is geographical locations important to your product or service, or to your audiences. Consider providing maps that would interest users: branch, outlet or important locations. Supplement with information such as contact information, product availability, etc.
- 51) Task Instructions  
How-to content is especially appreciated by Netizens. Identify common, but challenging tasks your audience faces and explain in

easy, step-by-step format how to successfully complete the task. Supplement the steps with graphics, illustrations, other learning aids.

- 52) Download Page      Create a page for software, utilities, publications, or any lengthy document. Update it as new items become available. Download pages keep visitors coming back repeatedly. They will probably want to sign up for e-mail updates when new items, especially items matching key words are added.
- 53) User Content      Publish a newsletter, e-zine, anything that justifies soliciting content contributions from your audiences. Reward contributors with recognition, links, prizes. Also consider approaching other sites and ask to include their content in return for a link. Establish high standards and be selective.
- 54) Yellow Pages      Create a Yellow Pages-like directory for your field. Consider an attractive, unique format like a classy super directory. Provide free listing/advertisement for related product and services. When your Yellow Page listings becomes large, solicit advertising revenues from banner ads and from larger, more prominent listings.
- 55) Legal Advice      Are you in a field that involves possible legal complications. Create a legal page that describes how to avoid those complications.
- 56) Glossary Page      Your field probably has many terms and concepts that are unclear to all but the most skilled or experienced. Create a glossary page that includes definitions, examples, illustrations, pronunciation, related terms, background information, etc.
- 57) Case Studies      Borrow a concept from Harvard Business School among others and provide case studies in your field. Situations, experiences, how an issue was handled. Solicit informative, relevant, interesting studies that others can learn from.
- 58) Nostalgic Trips      Focus on an important and/or interesting person or event from the past. Provide nostalgic reminders with an imaginative combination of history, illustrations, insight. Milk it.
- 59) "Push" Contents      Offer your visitors the opportunity to subscribe to automatic e-mails whenever events they have an interest occur. Consider it a mini-Pointcast in your field with probably more obscure sources. E-

mails can include a promotion of your product or a sponsor's.

- 60) Overseas Opportunities Frequently Americans (naturally) think of the Net as a domestic phenomenon. In many fields they are oblivious to what's going on in other countries. Consider an international page to fill this void. Round up foreign resources and experts to contribute. You may even develop important partnerships from this effort.
- 61) Educational Game Does your field lend itself to an education game? Along the order of fantasy football, investments, Rotisserie baseball. Games are an excellent way to educate and generate interest. Be creatively playful.
- 62) Online Journal Create a journal page that describes events in a product's evolution, life cycle, etc with a human's range of emotions. Aim for an insider's account that is entertaining, funny, insightful, and with a touch of confidentiality as if sharing secrets.
- 63) Trivia Page Can you assemble a collection of minutia relating to your field? Something your audiences would appreciate? Include humor, irony, interesting tidbits. Hey, how about a trivia contest?
- 64) Publish an E-zine Online magazines are excellent attention getters. Include topical information in an attractive format. You can cover a wide range of topics and features that would interest subscribers. Solicit contributions from others in your field. When you get the number of subscribers up, sell advertising.
- 65) Newbie Page The "newbie" population keeps growing larger daily. Create a "dummy-down" page specifically for new Net users in your field who may need extra hand-holding. It's a good way to build goodwill and loyalty. Devise content and services specifically for them. Identify valuable resources.
- 66) Greeting Cards If you capture visitors' names using a form of registration consider also capturing their birthday. Then send them a card, such as a birthday card, wishing them well and giving them a reason to visit your site.
- 67) Panoramic Images Imaging software lets you add 360-degree panoramic images to your web site. Got a view of something that web visitors would enjoy navigating around? Software I from PhotoVista

(800)724-7900

- 68) Host forums      Create bulletin boards for visitors to exchange comments, ideas about pertinent topics. Allow them to create new "threads" (topics for discussion). Preferably, establish rules for proper Netiquette before they enter the discussion area.
- 69) Find Off-line Partners      Trade your access to Internet users for something of value from off-line advertisers. Provide a web page, host a banner ad, or provide newsletter sponsorship to get the advertiser's message to Netizens.