

How to use 'The Web' to get new clients

5 tips for your small business

An e-book from WebFlexor Technologies



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Introduction

Internet presence in U.S. households has reached nearly 75 percent, rising roughly 9 percentage points in a year. These figures are based on Nielsen/NetRatings as reported in the newly-released Enumeration Study, conducted in February of 2004. In the not to distant past you could expect to get exposure to potential clients/students by simply advertising in the phone book, but with the recent growth of the Internet most business searches are conducted via the web. What does this mean to your business? It means that if you don't have a Web presence you are missing the boat when it comes to tapping into one of the most consistent and cost-effective source of business leads. This e-book will give you 5 tips on how to use the web to get clients and students. This information will hopefully give you the insight and direction on how to develop a web presence and start to leverage the web to grow your business and brand recognition.



Tip # 1 Building the Right Website

A website can serve as a double-edged sword when it comes to enhancing the image of your business. In many cases your website is the first thing that your potential students/clients see and in some cases it is the only representation of your business they will ever see – so quality is important. The image that your site presents and the perception it creates is critical. A website should serve three very important functions for your business.



1. *Source of Credibility:* In today's market a website has become an important representation of professional credibility. In the past many prospects would ask potential service providers 'if they had a website' and in today's market it is often just assumed and the first question asked is 'what is your website address?'. This means that there is an expectation that service providers should have a website and any business without one risks being perceived as unprofessional. There is a saying that you only have one chance to make a first impression and in today's market your website is often the first point of contact a prospect has with your business. Opinions of your business based on your website are being formed instantly once a prospects visits the site.

When it comes to a website, remember that 'More is not better'. A simple, clean, informative website is very important. In order for a business to grow, a business owner needs to invest time, money and resources into it - and a professional website is a good place to start. Invest a little bit into your business by developing a professional website. Keep it simple, and not too flashy- make sure that it is updated regularly because as your business evolves your website and the content on it should evolve as well.

2. *Educational resource:* Your website can be a great tool to keep your clients and students updated on the trends in your business and in your industry. A website can replace hand-out materials, and with video and audio you can provide even more sophisticated educational elements. You can link to articles on the Internet, add your monthly newsletter, and incorporate pages on your site that are specifically dedicated to education. A good educational website becomes a marketing tool in itself because it shows potential clients/students that you have their best interests in mind and you want to be a continuous resource for growth in the field in which you specialize.

3. *Marketing Channel:* Having a website and making sure your prospects can find it are completely different processes and the majority of the rest of this e-book deals with that very topic. Once a prospect arrives at your site the website needs to be designed well enough to do the job. If your site is not set up properly or if you don't have the right message you could find those prospects fading away before they ever give you a chance to address any misconceptions or impressions they may have. Spending some time in the design-phase to do things right will help to ensure that you don't waste the effort involved in attracting a prospect to your site. The first and most important concept is that your site is not designed to sell your service. Many service providers make the mistake of trying to convince their prospects that they can serve their needs with the content on the site. From a sales perspective, convincing a prospect of anything is the last step in the process and if the earlier steps of 'getting their attention' and 'developing interest' are not attended to, then prospects will rarely commit to your service.

A website is designed to get attention and in some cases begin the process of developing interest. You have approximately 15-30 seconds on



average of someones attention once they hit the home page of your website. If you don't say something that prompts them to do something or take action, in most cases you will loose them. It's especially important on the home page that there is minimal text as to not overwhelm your prospects with information and it should include an obvious call-to-action such as a prominent link to 'Contact Us for more information'. Even more so than education the main job of a website for a growing business is to get prospects to contact you for more information, then it is your job to sell your service.

Tip # 2 Getting Listed & Found on the search engines:

How do search engines work?

Let's say you go on to the web looking for a local auto mechanic. You log on and type into your search box 'auto repair – and the city you live in', Then Google, for instance, comes up with a list of sites for you to visit. Google is able to present you with these choices because each of these sites have been submitted to its database.



These sites have html language (invisible to the visitor but like stop signs to the search engines) called meta-tags. The meta-tags contain keywords that match the words that you used in your search. You can observe html language/metatags in most websites by going to the homepage, right clicking on a blank spot, and selecting "View/Source." A little box will come up. If you read between the lines you should see the words "title, description and key words" followed by a string of text. This data must be input by your web designer and it is even more important to include these keywords somewhere in the text of your web-page. Each page of your site has its own meta-tags and can target a unique set of keywords.

Should your site be submitted to the search engines?

Search engine submissions are a must if you want to be found in keyword searches. This is done by going to the search engine (Google, Yahoo, ect...) and finding the "submit a site" option. Each search engine is a little different, some are free (Google) and some charge (Yahoo - \$299 per year, although Yahoo also has a free submission as well). Since 80% or more of the searches are done through Google and Yahoo, be sure to submit your site to those search engines.



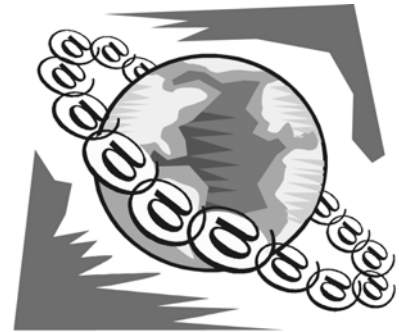
How does a website obtain an optimal position in a web search?

You may wonder what factor the search engines use to determine how websites are ranked during searches. For example, if you do a search for 'computer stores' in the Los Angeles area in Yahoo, why does one website appear in the first position and another website in the one hundred and first position. This is a very important question if you want your website to be favorably ranked.

Each search engine calculates its rank differently. While meta-tags, use of keywords in your content and appropriate labeling of page titles, alt-tags and filenames are universally important, some search engines include other key factors. In Google for example, the primary factor used to determine which website is ranked near the top is how many other websites it is linked to. It could be considered a popularity contest - the website address/URL that is 'linked to' from the most other websites often secures the highest ranking – this is referred to as 'Link Population'.

Tip # 3 The art of cross linking

Once your website it is live, it is recommended to initiate a link exchange program in order to begin building your Link Population. A link exchange program is a process of contacting owners of other websites via email or over the phone requesting a link exchange. It is important to know that the search engines prefer relevant links – in



other words linking with websites that are in a similar industry or share similar content as yours. You may also want to link to sites which support your site but do not compete with it, in other words you probably would not want to link with websites of organizations in the same industry in the same area.

You could start by doing a general websearch for the name of the industry and this search should produce numerous websites in that industry. Look for sites that already have links pages, because they are probably savvy to exchanging links. Contact them and explain that you would be interested in exchanging website links with them so that you can both benefit by improving your rankings in the search engines. It will be important that your website also has a links page so that you have a place on your site to add links once you find link partners.

How many links that you will need to determine where you end up on the search engines depends on the size of the market that you are in and the density of the population in which you reside. For example, if you sell computers in New York City you will be competing with hundreds if not thousands of other companies that target the same keywords and you will probably need to link with more sites to achieve the desired boost in your ranking. As a rule of thumb, try to link to as many sites as possible and keep an eye on your ranking for your targeted keywords on the search engines that you are most important to you.



You may also choose to join a link exchange site which is a service you can find on the web. There are many options available, some are free while others charge a fee. If you decide to sign-up for a service make sure you do your homework first. As mentioned before – the relevance of the site that links to you is an important factor.

Tip # 4 Pay-Per-Click Advertising 101

What is it Pay-Per-Click Advertising?

Above and beyond search engine optimization there is another way to get your website to appear on the search engines. You can pay for positions on Yahoo and Google and other search engines using pay-per-click or sponsored link programs. Google's program is called 'Google AdWords' and Yahoo!'s is called 'Yahoo! Search Marketing by Overture'. Using these programs, you can place an ad for your business or service by paying for it. After you set up your account you will need to create multiple 'advertisements' in their system, each advertisement targeted to unique keywords and keyword phrases. When these ads are 'live' the provider will begin to display your advertisements in their sponsored link area and then each time someone 'clicks' on your ad you'll be charged for it, hence the name pay-per-click advertising.



What will the ads look like?

Try searching for 'gemstone beads' on Google. See the sponsored links at the top of the page and the right-hand column. Those are the ads (or links) that you can pay for with Google's Adword program. Now do the same for Yahoo. You'll notice that Yahoo also includes sponsored links at the bottom of their page as well as at the top and right-hand side.

To learn more about these programs and/or to sign up go to www.adwords.google.com and www.overture.com. The ads are ranked mainly by the price you bid for each advertisement. You set the amount you're willing to pay for each click and you also can set your target budget for the day or month. Google's Adword program ranks ads a little differently, basing ad position on a combination of pricing and relevancy. In Google's own words: "Ad's are ranked on a combination of its maximum cost-per-click (CPC) and click through rate

(CTR). The higher your CPC or CTR, the higher your ad's position will be. Because this ranking system rewards well-targeted, relevant ads, you can't be locked out of the top position as you would be in a ranking system based solely on price." Overture's ranking is a little simpler. It's based solely on pricing. If you pay the most then you get the top spot. But in either case, the name of the game is proper targeting of your ads and your ad content so you can find qualified prospects without getting into bidding wars.

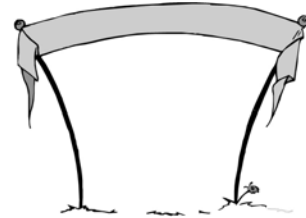
Should I be doing it?

It's probably something you should at least try and test for a time. It only costs \$5.00 to start a Google Adwords account and you can pay as little as five cents per click. Now you probably won't get a very high ranking at 5 cents but if you're a niche business and target ads with specific keywords then you might be surprised. Adword advertising can be a very cost effective and targeted form of advertising your business. It's also a great way to get jump started in your web marketing. While changes to your search engine optimization efforts can take several months to percolate through to your actual ranking, your pay-per-click advertising changes are in place within a day if not instantaneously. So you can watch your trends and make changes quickly to continue to improve your results.

There's also a lot you can do with tracking your advertising dollars to see if they're converting to sales and leads. Both programs have a return on investment (ROI) tracker, which is a great way to see how effective your advertising campaign is. You can also choose to only serve ads to certain geographic locations. Let's say, for example, that you serve clients mainly in Boston and are only interested in having your ad shown to searches performed by people in the greater Boston area. This is possible by adjusting your campaign settings. Both ROI tracking and ads targeted to geographic locations are explained in greater detail in Google's Adword and Overture's tutorials - which are both worth taking the time to watch.

Tip # 5 Banner advertising- Is it for me?

Any time that you do spend any money in advertising the decision should be considered very closely. Your advertising dollars should be directed as much as possible to the niche in which you are targeting and you should, as much as possible avoid spending advertising dollars that target prospects outside of your niche. This is one of the reasons that Pay-Per-Click advertising is so specialized and effective (if done correctly) because you are only paying for those prospects that were already searching for something similar to your product (assuming you built your pay-per-click campaign correctly).



A banner ad is essentially a link that is placed on another website that links back to your website. The link usually is a graphic that looks like a banner and it usually contains images and text that would motivate someone to click on it. If you do decide to place a banner on another site here are some important things to remember:

1. Have a professional designer create a quality link that would 'get attention' effectively
2. Have the copy in the advertisement written by someone that is good at writing copy. A marketing copywriter is always the best bet.
3. Have your ad placed in a prominent place on the website- especially if you are paying for it. The top of the homepage is the best case scenario.
4. Place ads on sites in which your prospective clients/students would visit- especially if you are paying for it. If you are a personal trainer you would want to have a banner placed on a website that sells athletic gear but not on a site that sells auto parts.

5. There are several Banner Ad services that will work with you to place your ads across a range of sites. Many even give you the option to restrict your site from showing on certain sites. One example is Microsoft's Banner program which can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/online/banner-advertising/detail.mspx>
6. You could also exchange banners with other organizations so as to not have to pay for it.



Conclusion

Being found on the web is becoming an art and science in and of itself. Because of the rapid growth of the Internet, competition in web marketing has already grown, but many companies are still not taking full advantage of the tremendous potential web marketing has to offer. Most of the work involved in being found on the web entails learning what needs to be done.

WebFlexor can provide you with a quality website for a minimal investment that can present your business in a professional manner. The WebFlexor system can also give you the ability to easily edit and add your own content and images so that your website will evolve with your business. With WebFlexor you can add links for cross linking and linking to educational articles on the web, regularly add newsletters, update schedules and update educational information on your site. WebFlexor also has an Internet Marketing division that can help your business by teaching you about 'how to be found on the web'. For more information go to www.webflexorinternetmarketing.com.