



Market Your Business on the Web

STEP #1 – Website Design & Marketing
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RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION –A well-designed site—initially created simply to bring in new business—can do so much more. It should be professional & informative, as it often gives potential customers their first impression of your organization. It can offload repetitive tasks from overburdened staff members, increase satisfaction by improving customer service, and provide clients with features and options that make your business stand out from competition.



But it is important to note that designing an attractive and useful site is only the first step to success on the internet. A site that is not properly marketed is like a business card that is never distributed. Gone are the days when simply publishing a website immediately garnered hundreds of new clients. Increased competition now necessitates that you put more thought into marketing your site.

Below are a series of suggestions for this process. (*PLEASE NOTE that these are suggestions only. Search engines constantly change their ranking criteria and ODI cannot guarantee top listings on a search engine, even should every step be followed.*)

STEP #1: WEBSITE DESIGN & MKTNG

- I. **Optimize the design.**
- II. **Submit it on Search Engines.**
- III. **Market the site everywhere possible.**



- I. **Optimizing the Design** – Search engines use ‘spiders’ (automated programs) to crawl your site searching for content and keywords. They use this (and other) information to rank your site and match it to key words that people search for. ODI reps can assist you in creating (or updating) a website to make it more “search friendly”. There is always something more that can be done to enhance your site’s content or design, so it is important that your webmaster be aware of these factors. Just a few considerations include:

A. **Graphics vs. Text:** ‘Spiders’ cannot scan graphics...they only scan TEXT items. Even words that you can read can be a graphical item vs. text. (See below. The word on the left is a graphic, the one on the right is text.) A spider would only be able to ‘see’ the item on the right to add it to info about your site. However, a site with ONLY text would be very unattractive—so it’s important to balance between the two.

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- B. **Number of Pages & Content:** Search engines use complex formulas to decide how to ‘rank’ your website (whether you’re #1 or #21 when someone searches for your services). Many rank sites based on: the number of site pages, the number of times you mention the ‘key word’ being searched for, how high up you mention these words, the word ‘density’

(the largest number of word repetitions in the shortest amount of text), etc.

C. *Internal Links and Resources:* Many search engines consider your site more valuable if your site contains links to other websites and resources. Their spiders scan for these links. Additionally, valuable resources can make your site more popular with users, who sometime pass the word to others to visit your site for these items.

D. *Keywords & Descriptions (Metatags):* Hidden within your website's code are keywords and 'Metatags'. These are also used to compare to the words and phrases people are searching for to decide whether your site is a match. The more times they see these words, the higher your ranking. Particularly, the Title Metatag is used by almost all spiders in this ranking. Choosing the right combination of keywords for your site requires some thought. Your most important keywords will often include:

- *Your company name* (including synonyms and abbreviations)
- *Products and Brand Names that you Feature/Sell*
- *Countries, regions or cities you're associated with*
- *Generic terms for your business, services, or brands*
- *Combinations of 2 and 3 keywords (many people search for phrases, rather than just single words)*

NOTE: *You can research keywords to see what gets used a lot at WordTracker.com*

E. *Flash and Java Applets:* Some pages are designed with very attractive and eye-catching movie and animation effects, sometimes designed with Flash or Java code. These can definitely make your site stand out. However, we recommend that that you also offer alternative 'plain' pages for viewers who cannot easily load these items and for spiders to more easily search. Also, if you use these elements to create navigation links ('buttons' you click to visit other pages), include text links as well as the flash links.

F. *Reviewing your site and links:* Search engines don't like to see sites with "Under Construction" notations, incomplete pages, links that don't work, and other shortcomings. Sometimes, they will wait to include your site until these elements are removed. So it is important to review your site thoroughly for these issues and wait to submit your site until it has been completed.

II. Search Engine Submissions – To get your site listed with search engines, it must be submitted. After this, a 'spider' (automated program) crawls your site to gather info on what your site is about and to decide how to rank your site. The submission process has become more complex as search engines have adopted various levels of submission programs and ad campaigns. Keep the following in mind:

A. *Free vs. Paid Submissions:* Although most search engines still offer free submissions, they also have paid submissions with better features (they'll guarantee to include you within a certain period of time, and come back to re-scan your site for new content, among other benefits). The free submissions, however, may take 4-6 weeks, and offer no guarantee of inclusion. It is up to you to check back and resubmit the site, if needed.

B. *Advertiser Priority:* As with other media, those who advertise are given ranking priority over others on search engines. When performing a search, you'll often see a 'sponsored sites' section at the top BEFORE the ranked listings of other websites appear. This moves your site even further down the page, decreasing potential visitors. So you may want to consider advertising with a search engine, if a top listing is your goal. There are

a variety of campaigns available with a range of prices.

C. *Repetition:* Once you've submitted your site(s), it will be important to see that they are re-submitted on a regular basis. As time goes by, other sites are submitted which might 'bump' your position. Re-submitting will help keep your listing fresh, and will give the search engine an opportunity to browse new site content.

III. *Marketing your Site:* Now you've got a great site. You're listed on search engines so people can find you. But don't rely on JUST the search engines to drive in business. *THIS IS A COMMON MISTAKE!* A successful website requires a bit of work and consideration in other marketing areas. Everything you do combines to drive traffic to the site, increasing the number of potential new customers.

A. *The "Phone Number Rule"* – Put your website everywhere you list your phone number, including (but not limited to): signs, cards, ads, flyers, letterhead, invoices, etc. People will see the site name and visit it even when they won't pick up the phone and call you. They feel less intimidated and committed to buy. They can review the site to determine whether you have what they need, whether you're reputable & professional. If they've read your sign or ad, give yourself another chance to 'hook' that customer, by pointing them to a great resource to professionally represent your business, products and services.

B. *Make sure your site is listed everywhere possible:* There are many ways to get free listings for to your site to increasing traffic AND improve your rankings with search engines (who use these links to gauge your sites' popularity). See the RESOURCES section at the end of this document for more details. An overview of areas you should consider for these listings would include:

- i. All Major and local directories (such as Yahoo, ODP, Looksmart)
- ii. Trade, Business or Industry-related directories
- iii. Suppliers, happy customers, relevant sister companies, and partners
- iv. 'Great Combinations' (if you sell knives and he sells forks, link to each other)
- v. Related but non-competing sites

C. *Share links with non-competitive businesses:* There are often a number of non-competitive, related businesses in an industry (E.g. Florists link with photographers, tux rental shops, event coordinators, etc). If you haven't already done so, develop relationships with these businesses for the purpose of referrals. You can also offer to include a link to their site if they do the same for you. In this way, their web traffic can become your own! As mentioned earlier, this also may increase your rankings with search engines, who see these links as additional resources your site offers to viewers.

D. *Send out an 'intro' mailing or Press Release:* To announce your new site and let people know about this new resource, send out a postcard, flyer, or bulk email. Or, consider sending out a Press Release—especially if you've recently opened the business.

E. *Send out a Newsletter:* Consider sending out a printed newsletter or email a link to an online, editable newsletter. This drives people back again and again. If you have interesting or useful content, viewers will share the info with others, expanding your reach. It's also an inexpensive way to present your clients with more details about what you do, new products, and specials. Lots of revenue can be generated through "upselling" your clients to additional products or services they might not be aware of.

STEP #2: MAKE YOUR SITE WORK FOR YOU: A good website not only generates new client (and thus more revenue), but can also SAVE dollars by improving functionality, customer satisfaction, etc.

- I. Decrease Work Volume** – Employees can be more productive when not burdened with tedious or repetitive support issues. Exactly how this is done will vary from one business to another. One example might be putting links to commonly requested forms to save employees' time faxing them to clients. Or, have clients fill out order or service request detail on the website – this saves employees' time AND eliminates some of the human error involved in taking this data verbally. Plus, the information may now be added to a database, response emails may be automated, etc. The possibilities are unlimited!
- II. Offer incentives to use the site.** Encourage patrons to use the site by offering discounts, free freight, etc. (even if only for a limited time). This encourages them to try the new process, which they typically wind up preferring, and you save money & resources!
- III. Offer “free” resources on your site.** This adds interest, trust, AND generates traffic. It can also make YOUR business stand out from your competitors. You can offer something simple - perhaps something closely related to your business such as a mortgage/amortization generator for realtors, a car loan calculator for car dealers; etc. Or you can go a step further. *Example: a construction company added a Client Center to their site allowing clients to log in and view text & pictorial updates of their construction project. Automated emails were sent, notifying clients when their project status changed. This increased satisfaction AND stepped them up above competition!*

RESOURCES – Below are a few resources you might make use of in your Web Marketing Plan (Note – ODI is not affiliated with any of the sites listed and cannot be held responsible for content, changes, or procedures of these websites):

- I. Free Listings:** There are MANY business directories, industry resource sites, etc that will provide you with a free listing on their site. While you should be aware that some of these may add you to bulk email lists, and some may not be effective, it is a good idea to have your business (and a link to your website) listed in as many relevant places as possible.

NOTE: In search engine rankings, “link popularity” (the number of sites who link to you and the number of sites you link to) is used to rank you. But, links from recognized authorities and very popular sites count more than links from small sites on a free host. And experts warn *“Don’t use free submission software to submit to hundreds of thousands of free directories and search engines just to gain more links. Links from some of these places don’t do you much good and there is even a risk that some of the links you get this way might harm your rankings.”* Some of these disreputable sites are considered by search engines to be spam. Focus, instead, on getting links from relevant major players in your field – they are the ones that really count.

Use your own discretion in this area (or consult a qualified webmaster), but a search for “Free Business Listings” for a particular region or industry, will yield many relevant possibilities. Just a few examples of this are:

Regional Sites (Florida):

- SarasotaLinks.com – free business listings, 2 business days to include:
<http://sarasotalinks.com/home-adlink.htm>
- SarasotaBradentonVenice.com – free business listings:
<http://www.sarasotabradentonvenice.com/business/>
- BizHwy.com: Florida Business Directory offering free listings
<http://florida.bizhwy.com/b/> (click “Add Free Business Listing” at top of page)

Organizations & Affiliated Businesses:

- Chamber of Commerce: If you’re a member, get your listing on the site and MAKE SURE you link your own page, if you have one.
www.ManateeChamber.com
- The Yellow Pages: All businesses are entitled to a free Yellow Pages basic listing in the non-advertiser section of SuperPages.com in up to 5 categories.
<http://www.superpages.com/products/> then click “Add/Modify/Check your listing”
<http://www.whitepages.com/> (uses same directory of names)
- Business Organizations for your industry (you know what they are!):
 - Florida Bar Association: www.FLABar.org
 - CPAs: www.AICPA.com – American Institute of Certified Public Accountants

II. Web Marketing Options & Facts: Web advertising options are limitless. A good plan is to seek out sites YOUR customers would visit & solicit them to find out what they will do for your business. Some offer affordable options. Others are an expensive undertaking.

A. Bulk E-Mail (SPAM) - People hate being spammed. Its human nature to delete a message without reading it if they don't know who the sender is. There is some talk that it will soon be illegal. No matter what you do, Don't Send SPAM. It can destroy an existing reputation and you can lose your credibility.

B. Opt-In E-Mail - They work on the premise that everyone in the "system" has given their permission (opt-in) to receive e-mails. Although this may be the case, most people who join Opt-In programs either use a dummy e-mail address (Yahoo, Hot-Mail, Z-Wallet, etc) or they forward their e-mail address to an "auto-responder" that just replies back to you with junk mail about their program. ***The bottom line: Don't waste your time with them, they're garbage.***

C. Banner Advertisements & Ad Boxes - They have some potential however they usually won't generate the amount of traffic you might think and they take a while to implement. One common drawback is that they sometimes require that you place a Banner Ad on your website in exchange. You need to keep these limited, or your own site will begin to look cluttered. A web master can help you to implement these.

BradentonHerald.com, TampaGuide.com & other local sites are more affordable than major sites like AOL and MSN. But keep in mind the ‘click through rate’ on some of these is 0.1% to 0.3% - so make your campaign affordable!

D. Other Ad Campaigns - There are now a multitude of advertising campaigns available. A common version is Google's Keyword Ad Program. With this program, you 'buy' a key word or phrase (they tell you in advance how popular the word(s) are and how many average searches are made on it daily). You then agree to a negotiable CPC (Cost per Click) fee. This means that each time someone clicks your ad to visit your site, you pay the agreed rate. The good thing about CPC is that you only pay when someone actually reads your ad (or visits your site). Comparatively, CPM (Cost per Impression) campaigns charge you each time your ad appears, regardless of whether anyone actually paid attention to it or not!

D. Search Engines (Yahoo, Goggle, Alta Vista, etc) - Search engines continue to be one of the major forces on the Internet. (Even the Internet novice knows of Yahoo). The problems with getting listed in a search engines is the sheer competition. There are thousands (sometimes *hundreds* of thousands) of websites competing for the same keywords & phrases. The smart Internet Marketer knows that if you're not listed in the top 10-20 you will never get a notable amount of traffic.

Getting—and keeping—a good listing in search engines requires money to have a professional tune you website, repetitious submissions, and constant review & 'tweaking'. After initial submission, it can take several months to get listed (although paid submissions often guarantee inclusion in as little as 24 hoursd)—and ***there are no guarantees***. Bottom line, only the 'owner' of the search engine can guarantee inclusion in their listings and level of placement. It typically comes down to money. If you're paying for a listing, you'll be included---if you're not, it's hit and miss. ***If you're paying for advertising with the search engine as well, you'll be listed higher than non-advertising competitors.***

Yahoo, for example, only offers a paid submission program. The cost is \$295 and they guarantee to REVIEW your site within 7 days. Should they decide for any reason not to include you, the fee is ***non-refundable***.