

Organic SEO Process:

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1. For an existing website, we perform a **detailed site analysis** of your current web site to identify optimization opportunities and whether there are any technical barriers to getting your site indexed.
2. For a new project, our SEO team works closely with our developers to ensure that the site is developed in a **“search engine friendly”** manner from the beginning.
3. **Identify target phrases** with extensive keyword analysis for maximum impact using real search data and information about your business, website and objectives. We also try to find additional “out of the box” key information that your targeted visitors need, which your site can provide as a resource or reference (example: if you sell baby cribs, a list of top baby names as a resource to you visitors).
4. **Organic or Natural Keyword Optimization** is critical to ensuring your site is organized properly and that your content reflects your target keyword phrases accurately. Relevant content is key for top search engine rankings. If additional content is needed, we have an SEO copywriter that can provide additional content for you. We optimize Title, Description and Meta Tags as well as other HTML so that the on-page content, organization and internal linking structure of your web pages is properly formatted and keyword relevancy and frequency abides by top search engine guidelines.
5. **Manual submission to the search engines.** We manually submit to the top search engines in a manner that ensures compliance with the unique rules and stipulations of each search engine.

Getting Found in the Search Engines

The term these days for getting your web site listed and found in the search engines is called Search Engine Optimization. An entire industry of companies specializing in the practice of boosting your presence on the search engines has sprung up to help companies in this increasingly competitive environment. We will discuss some of the ins and out of the practice in our next edition. However, there remain free opportunities to getting your site listed, and listed well, in some of the most highly trafficked engines.

To begin with, study up on the key elements of preparing your site for the search engine. Proper execution of your page titles, keywords and descriptions is critical for even moderate success. However, there are several other factors that can be controlled within your site that are too numerous and go far beyond the scope of this article. Fortunately, there are many free resources on the net for you to get a great education. For example, start with searchenginewatch.com to get a good taste of the resources available and to get an idea of the scope of the work involved.

Once your site is prepared properly, you can begin submitting your site to the search engines that accept free submissions. The following are a few sites that accept free submissions:

- Alta Vista
- Hot Bot
- Google
- AOL
- Netscape
- Lycos
- Open Directory
- Excite
- MSN

Each contains simple instructions on how to submit your site to their database. Our next edition will explain the major differences between these and other engines, and describe the present landscape of paid submissions and listings.

Reciprocal Links

Sharing links between sites, often referred to as reciprocal links, is a common way to increase traffic to your site. This is based on the concept that sharing links between compatible but not competitive businesses is a great way to get at the same target markets. If some other site has the market you desire, obviously, you want to be there. The price for this free access is a link back to their site.

The process for finding compatible sites and creating the links is quite easy. Surf the web for the sites you want to have access to. Email them at their designated email address and request a reciprocal link. On your site, you should have established a page that will contain their links. You can decide if you will allow banner images, text descriptions or both. But, realize that you should not expect any more exposure than you will provide them in reciprocation. Also, be prepared to reciprocate only with sites that do not generate advertising revenues or which command large volumes of traffic.

Shared Content

Recall the necessity to make available rich content on your site in order to attract your target market. Clearly this content would be valuable to other web site owners, as the markets are sure to overlap with a large population of businesses on the web. Consequently, your content could be posted on other web sites.

Arrangements such as these typically work in a way that provides a link back to your web site, in exchange for your content. The receiving web site benefits by having content that will, in theory, attract more people to their web site. You benefit by having, in effect, another doorway back to your web site.

Email Newsletters

In our previous edition, we explored in detail the benefits, processes and rules of producing email newsletters. An effective newsletter campaign uses an opt-in sign up process and accumulates a list of people who are genuinely interested in receiving the email. The email will contain a balance between valuable content and creative advertising, which in turn will drive qualified traffic back to your web site and ultimately increase sales.

In The pricing and effectiveness of advertising on the Internet has changed substantially over the past year. While the novelty of advertising banners and eye-popping side bars may have worn off, pricing for these avenues has dropped accordingly. At the same time, wise marketers have always been careful to advertise only where their target markets are sure to be, thereby avoiding spending advertising dollars exposing their message to people who have no interest.

Before agreeing to any advertising program, it is first important to understand the

economics of acquiring a customer. Web marketers should understand the value an Internet client will bring to their business and make projections about what percentage of prospects who come to their web site will become actual paying clients. With this information, it is then a simple matter to then determine how much you can spend on any one advertising campaign.

For those who seek them, there continue to be very cost effective ways to advertise, as follows:

Search Engine Paid Positioning

This industry has literally exploded over the past year. Overture was the first search engine to make it big and continues to have almost a monopoly position. Paid Positioning offers marketers an opportunity to guarantee positioning for specific key word phrases whenever those phrases are searched on.

There is almost no risk in taking advantage of this opportunity since the marketers bear costs only when someone clicks on their listing. Even better fees for the majority of phrases can be secured for pennies, meaning a lead can be generated from a listing for almost nothing.

The biggest problem with the majority of paid positioning engines is that they do not generate substantial traffic to their listings which turn into clicks for the paying customers. Overture solved this problem by supplying their listings to major search engines, such as AOL, Netscape, Alta Vista and others, making Overture a major player itself.

Standard Banner Advertising

Average banner click-thru rates have dropped from about 5% three years ago to a low of about ½%. This means that for every 1000 exposures of your banner, just 5 people would be expected to click on it and go to your web site, whereas 50 people would have been expected to click through to your web site just three years ago.

This is not a problem provided that the price for banner advertising has dropped respectively. It has dropped, but not by 90% as the click through rates have. Current rates are anywhere from 2 to 3 cents per click, whereas three years ago, the rates were in the range of 5 to 10 cents. The resulting cost of a click-through (at ½% yield and a 3 cent cost) is about \$1.50, far higher than the price of a click when comparing to the paid positioning opportunities.

Still, banner advertising can offer wide exposure to a narrow market. Marketers should be careful to place their ads on pages where the content of that page will attract their target markets. The more focused the better.

Media Rich Banner Advertising

While the percentage click-thrus for traditional banner advertising is quite low, banner ads that incorporate flash or java based programming are yielding substantially higher numbers. These new forms of ads allow for better graphics, motion and even user interaction. The cost of production is substantially higher and mostly out of reach for small business. And, it is too early to say whether the higher yields are only due to the novelty of the designs.

Web Site Sponsorships

Similar to banner advertising, deals can be struck where small or odd shaped

banners are permanently placed on web site pages. While the pricing may be fixed or priced differently than banner ads, the evaluation is the same. You should understand the possible exposure for your ad, what the historical click through rates have been, and then attempt to calculate the true cost of acquiring that customer.

Email Newsletter Ads

There exist thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) of opt-in email newsletters on virtually every subject matter where advertising can be purchased. Costs for email newsletter advertising can run in the pennies (5 to 10 cents) per email with yields as high as 10%. Finding the right newsletter for your target audience is a challenge, however, because there are few good sources for finding these newsletters.

Email Advertising

For the record, we strongly discourage any email advertising that is not opt-in based, otherwise known as SPAM. We simply view it as a violation of business ethics.

Affiliate Relations

Affiliate Relations is simply when other web sites market your products with listings or descriptions on their web site. Because of the power of the internet, it is possible to know which web site brought that customer to your web site. And, therefore, calculating commissions based on the sales of that customer is relatively simple.

Providing incentive to other companies to market your products makes great sense, the majority of expense is variable, since you only pay if a sale is made. Many shopping cart programs offer this ability as a feature of their programs. So, for small web sites, it is relatively easy to implement affiliate programs.

These programs represent the majority of paid Internet advertising opportunities. To be sure, there are many other creative and low cost ways of marketing your wares on the Internet. You should be open to new avenues and even experiment with them to see which is right for your target markets, though the principals of evaluating their effectiveness are all the same.