

10 Common Web Site Promotion Mistakes

Everyone knows that promoting your Web site is critical. But if you don't know what you're doing, you may do yourself more harm than good.

Once you've built your masterpiece, or had someone do it for you, you have to spread the word. Submitting your Web site to search engines, directories and related sites is critical to success.

Unfortunately, there's a lot of fools' gold, bad advice and even downright scams in the Web site promotion field. If you go about promoting your site the wrong way, you can actually hurt traffic instead of helping it. Here are 10 things you should definitely not do, no matter how tempting some advertisements makes it sound:

1: Thou Shalt Not Spam

This is the cardinal rule of "Netiquette." Mass, unsolicited e-mail's are not acceptable, anywhere, for any reason. There are hundreds of hustlers out there trying to sell you databases and software that you can use to e-mail people, but don't believe their promises. Spamming will make enemies for you, not friends. It may even get you barred from your Internet Service Provider, crippling your traffic.

2: Don't shell out big money for submission services

"Submit your site to 500 search engines for \$19.95!" Bad deal. There aren't 500, or even 100 search engines worth submitting to. The 19.95'ers simply run your URL through an auto-submitter like Selfpromotion.com or submitit.com. If you want a careful and very through job, have a professional assist you with submission.

3: Don't waste time submitting your site to unknown search engines

Submit your site to the major search engines and directories, perhaps using one of the auto-submitters for some, and doing others individually. There are about 30 that are worth submitting to. Then seek out specialized directories that are appropriate for your site (travel, investment, shopping, country-specific, etc.). Don't waste time with obscure search engines and links pages. There are billions of sites like this, but they get zero traffic. Your time is better spent carefully crafting your submission to Google, Yahoo and MSN.

4: Submitting your site too early

Although this is done by some people to start appearing in search results faster, you shouldn't submit your site to search engines until it is completely done. If they start indexing your site while it is in an incomplete state, the result may not be what you intend. Broken links and test pages don't score well in search results. Only submit your site when it is ready to be viewed by the user.

5: Don't forget to integrate your web address into your business

Your Web site address should be on every piece of company media from letterheads to e-mail signatures to coffee cups—anywhere that a phone number would be included. If your employees wear uniforms, put your URL on them so every one of your customers sees a walking advertisement of your website.

6: Don't bother with sneaky tricks

There are a lot of sneaky tricks on various promotion sites that claim to improve your site ranking. Loading your page with invisible keywords, creating special "doorway" pages with magic dust on them, and secret programs that "force-feed" your page to search engines. Don't bother with these. The search engines typically wage an ongoing battle against those who would "beat the system," and they can and will bar you if they suspect you of "spamming" them. Do use carefully chosen keywords in your page titles and body text, and always follow the submission rules of Google, MSN, or Yahoo.

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7: Don't put anything in your Web site that you don't want the public to see

Most of us have a few "test" pages, or perhaps pages of personal material, that we keep on our Web site server. Straight search engines like Google, however, will automatically "spider" and index every page on your site, making it possible for everyone to see.

8: Don't neglect to measure your traffic

Some wise man said, "*If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.*" Be sure to keep your Web log files safe, and use the software tool of your choice to analyze them, or use a reliable company to report and analyze your statistics for you. Your hosting company may offer one or more free basic tools for your use. Properly analyzed, your site statistics can really help you boost your traffic by telling you how many hits are coming from each search engine, and what keywords people are searching for to find your site.

9: Don't rush through your Yahoo submission

Yahoo is one of the most important directories, and the hardest to get into. Submissions are reviewed by real editors, so follow the instructions to the letter, and really try to convince them that your site is a useful resource. Put some thought in creating these, because they can significantly boost or reduce the amount of traffic you'll get from the directory. When writing your description, don't use words like 'best' or 'cheapest,' and don't use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Write a short (15-25 words) description that accurately describes your site, and try to make it sound like an impartial review.

If you decide later that the description you entered the first time isn't good enough, it is possible to contact most directories and try to get your description changed to a better one. Unfortunately, it is usually very difficult and very time-consuming to get directories to change the description of your site at a later date. So, I highly recommended that you try and get it right the first time.

10: When you're finished, don't stop

Site promotion is an ongoing process. Keeping your website content up-to-date not only reflects your organization in a good light to visitors, it can also help you climb the search engine rankings. Adding news features is a great way to tell people who come to your site about how great your business is doing. Keeping your website content up-to-date not only reflects your organization in a good light to visitors, but also makes it look like its cared for and updated regularly.

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