

How to Promote Your Website

So, you've got your shiny new website up and running – how do you let people know it's there? Unfortunately you cannot just sit back and hope for the best, so this article aims to shed light on the many different ways to get people to your site and keep them coming back for more.

The first steps to getting your site seen begin at the design stage. A good web designer will know all the tips and tricks involved in making your site visible to search engines through Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). You should also fill your site with compelling copy that you visitors will enjoy reading, while skillfully dropping in specific keywords. We go into SEO in more depth in our other article, [Search Engine Optimisation – What Does it Involve?](#), but suffice to say it is the cornerstone of website promotion. Once you've given your website a fighting chance at being seen in the organic (free) search results, you then need to help push it up the ranks.

Submitting Your Site

Once your site is live, you should first [submit your site to Google](#) so that it can start indexing your lovely optimised pages. Often your web designer will do this for you (we do), so check before you do it yourself as multiple submissions can count against you.

Next, it is advisable to get your site listed on a number of directories, although you should make sure these are reputable directories. Avoid sites that just have pages upon pages of links and nothing else. Your first port of call should be the [Open Directory Project](#) (www.dmoz.com). It is free to list your site and will really help your site get found. Since it is run by volunteers who look at each submission individually, it may take a while for your site to show in the directory, but be patient as it'll be worth it (at Vanilla Gecko, we submit your URL to dmoz.org for you as standard).

Other free directories to consider are [Touch Local](#) or Google's [Local Business Centre](#) (which will also get you listed on Google Maps). Remember not to go link crazy – the number of links you have to your site does nothing for your search ranking in itself, instead you are aiming to put yourself on directory sites that your potential customers may be visiting and searching for the products/services you offer.

Traditional Marketing

Just because your site is online, that doesn't mean that all your efforts to promote it should be too. Your website address should be included on all your stationery, invoices, adverts, email signature...at every point that you promote your business you should include your website address. Perhaps you could run an online promotion or offer something for free that is only accessible from your website – the perfect excuse to give out your web address and get people to your site.

If you send out printed newsletters, you should also include information on the latest updates made to your site to encourage people to not only visit your site once, but keep on visiting. Keep it interesting though – no-one wants to know you just changed the colour of the text on the About Us page!

Blogs and Social Networks

Having a blog on your site is a perfect way to inject fresh content to your site and a good blog will attract followers who are likely to add links to your blog on their own blog or site. You can post articles, you views on current trends in you industry or simply let people know you've added new content or products to your website.

There are many third party blog sites available, such as blogger.com, but this is held on a separate server away from your own website. A good way to keep the blog on your site to encourage people to look around at your other pages is to integrate a [Word Press](#) blog into your site. Your web designer can make the blog look just like any other page on your site.

Don't just write on your own blog: you should also leave comments on other blogs related to your topic or expertise to increase your exposure and help you acquire new links back to your site or blog. Don't be tempted to spam though, as no one will appreciate it. Make sure you only leave valid comments that are relative to the blog. Spamming will only hurt your search ranking.

Social networking sites should be becoming increasingly important in your website promotion efforts. They encourage people to interact and leave comments, recommendations and, most importantly, quality links to your site. You should use as many means as possible to generate awareness of your product or service. The main social networking sites to consider are [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#). Again, don't go in head first with the sole intention of promoting your business. Relationship building is the aim – if you just aggressively plug your business people will get annoyed.

Beyond this, there are also social bookmarking sites where people share links, or bookmarks, to sites that they have found interesting. It is rather like bookmarking a website on your own computer except with social bookmarking, your bookmarks are online meaning that you can send them to your friends. Examples of social bookmarking sites are: [StumbleUpon](#), [Digg](#), [Delicious](#) and [Google Bookmarks](#).

Forums are a great place to show off your expertise by helping others with any problems they have posted. Make sure that your signature contains a link to your site and maybe a little tag line.

Email Marketing

This is a great way to keep in touch with existing customers are also entice new ones. Of course, you should never send unsolicited mail – only send emails out to people who have opted to receive them from you and always let them know they can unsubscribe at any time.

Take time to compose quality newsletters sent out once a month or even every two months. Include company news, offers, suggestions – anything that will encourage people to re-visit your website. Email marketing is a brilliant way to build a relationship with a captured audience, building trust and hopefully future business.

It should be noted that most hosting providers set a limit on how many emails you can send out per day or per hour, so while it may be beneficial to start sending our your emails from your usual email account while your list is small, once it grows to hundreds you will have to consider a third party software. Some will charge you a monthly

subscription (eg. [Contact Contact](#)), while others offer a pay as you go option (such as [Mail Chimp](#)). You should shop around to find the best solution for your individual needs.

Make the Most of Website Statistics

How can you possibly know if your efforts are working without checking your web stats? Most hosting providers will give you some kind of statistics for your site, but they can be limited. [Google Analytics](#) is a free web tracker that provides a wealth of information. All you have to do is sign up and ask your web designer to insert a small bit of code at the bottom of each page you want to track and away you go!

While not quite so advanced as Google Analytics in other ways, [Stat Counter](#) will show you the path a particular visitor took through your site, which can be handy stuff to know. Since Stat Counter is also free, there's no reason why you can't use both – we do!

These tracking tools will really help you figure out what's working for your site and what isn't. You can see how visitors arrive at your site, the keywords they use, how long they stay for and what the most popular content is. You can measure the success of your marketing campaign and use that information to improve it further.

Pay Per Click Marketing (well, it can't all be free!)

Pay Per Click or PPC is as invaluable as it is time consuming to get right! The principle is simple: you only pay when your advert is clicked on, not just for having it shown. It is easy to measure and you get a quick response. In fact it is a great way to test out advertising copy before you run it in a magazine or newspaper.

PPC is far too complex to cover in this article, so we have dedicated to whole articles to it! Please refer to our [articles page](#) for more information.

In Conclusion

There are many ways to promote your website, both online and off. The important thing is to keep your visitors interested and build a relationship with them by using fresh content on your site, your blog or in your newsletter. Social networking plays an important role in marketing your site, but always remember not to plug your business too much – it's about relationship building.

Diversifying your efforts will keep your visitors coming even if the search engines change their algorithms (which they do often).

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