



How To Get
Lots of Visitors to Your Site
Without Spending a Fortune

Free Traffic:

How To Get Lots of Visitors To Your Site Without Spending A Fortune

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1

Blogs: Capture Attention

The Internet has made it exceedingly easy for anyone to start a web log (blog) and use it to capture attention. Even teenagers and Fortune 500 companies have discovered the magic of writing a blog to attract attention and generate a consistent readership. Blogs are excellent vehicles for communicating news, keeping in touch with many people at one time, highlight your expertise, act as an introduction to a larger website, and keep fresh content constantly available to the search engines and everyone visiting your blog.

Familiarize Yourself With Blogs

If you've never actually done a blog, you will be surprised at how easy it is to set up an account. You can use any of the blogging portals out there like Wordpress.com or Blogger.com. They allow you to set up a free account and put up a blog simply by registering with them. They offer design templates that you can choose by clicking on your favorite design. They give you an administration panel that makes it easy to add features or remove them. It really is one of the simplest ways to start getting a web presence out there completely free! You don't pay for the account, the storage, or anything else. In return, the site might put up some advertising on your blog, but when you're ready to take it up a notch, you can always pay to get that removed.

So, don't be intimidated by a lack of knowledge of computers or the Internet. You don't have to be technically talented at all to start a blog! Later, as you continue to use the blog, you may want to add pictures and videos, and that may take some learning, but it still is nothing to break out in a heavy sweat over.

Write Great Content

At first, all you will need to do to start generating traffic is to make sure that you have **great content** on your blog. Your blog should have a specific niche that you've researched and that can be sure to draw crowds. Many first-time bloggers make the mistake of using the blog as a personal diary, with random posts on various subjects. This may prove interesting to a few people, but it's not sufficient to draw traffic from the major search engines that like targeted content better. So, pick a niche, and develop interesting content around that niche.

Try to review your posts before publishing to make sure they are relatively free of misspellings and grammatical errors. Try to include titles,

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subheadings, bulleted lists, and white space to make the copy easy on the eye. Many readers do not want to come into a blog and see a single paragraph written in poor English, no matter how interesting the subject. It's just too hard to read.

Understand SEO

Once you have a good schedule going for blog posts, you will want to start to research Search Engine Optimization (SEO). It seems a very technical term, but it only has to do with how big search engines rate content to decide how far up the results page it will show when someone does a search on that particular topic or keyword. Well, knowing that the search engines do have rules they follow to rank content, you should use that knowledge to create posts that automatically rank higher and get a heck of a lot more attention that way.

You can index your posts with keywords that have a high search volume within the search engines. You can add keywords throughout the copy to get a good rating for that keyword. Research potential keywords using Adwords Keyword tool to locate words that might be of benefit for you to use. Then, include them in your copy being careful to not exceed 2% for word density. So, if you have a 500 word post, and you have a single keyword, it should not appear more than 10 times (.02 X 500). If you have a density somewhere between 1% and 2%, you won't be penalized for overusing the keywords in your copy by the search engines, which can blacklist these sites. Or you can use plug-ins to help with SEO too.

Plug-Ins

Blogs offer plug-ins, small applications that are programmed separately and installed separately, to let you do a number of additional things on your blog. Wordpress has numerous plug-ins that allow you to add features like spam control and even monetize your blog. You can explore these plug-ins to help augment the features that you can provide for your audience and gradually make your blog more and more interesting. One of the ones that can help you optimize your blog for SEO is called All In One SEO Pack. See the resources section for more information on this plug-in.

Network

Whether you are a newbie or an old hand, you want to continue to network with other bloggers, particularly those in your core niche. Pay attention to the strategies they are using to gain attention and when you see them being successful, emulate them. Maybe they've added some feature to their site and now you see many more comments. Maybe they are discussing a particular topic that has landed them on a front page of a news outlet. Whatever it is, keep a sharp eye out for not only the ways they are operating

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their blog, who they are associating with, but also the topics and posts that generate the most eyeballs. Then, simply copy that strategy.

Another way to network successfully is to be a part of a blogger group like Wordpress or a circle of bloggers who regularly post on each other's blogs. You can even create groups of writers who are willing to contribute posts to your site to generate interesting content without you having to do all the work. Since these bloggers come in with their own audience and network, your traffic will climb up as they advertise their post on your blog.

Features That Increase Traffic

Social Bookmarking

After you set up a blog and start adding some posts, you will want to get the word out. To do that, you can use social bookmarking, which is just a way of tagging that blog post into areas that collect information from all over the web. It works about the same as when you bookmark a site in your web browser for yourself, except for social bookmarking you are doing it to a social storage area where many people can see what you've bookmarked. People who subscribe to these services and are searching for specific content have an easier time finding it then.

The nice thing about social bookmarking is that people can comment and rate the bookmarks that you add to a social networking site. In this way, you can have great exposure for a site and allow others to add their own ideas to it too. An example of a social bookmarking site is del.icio.us.

News

If your blogs are more about current events, the latest technologies, or even politics, than you will want to use social news sites like Digg.com. These sites offer round-the-clock news and can be particularly popular with news hounds. They show up to comment and rate stories and depending on their popularity, you can land on the front page and get lots of traffic! So, be sure to use this site if your blog is appropriate for it.

Tags

When you write up a post, the blog interface will have a place for you to put tags in to identify what the article is about. You can simply type in some key words there, or you can use a plug-in like SimpleTags to help you identify good tag keywords. Either way, the more relevant the key words and the more searchable, the easier it is for people to find your blog. So, be sure to add that information in if you want to attract people to your blog.

Comments

As you begin to understand the blog world, you will start to develop relationships with other bloggers. You can use that networking to help you create more traffic for your site simply by going to other blogs and commenting on a popular entry. When you comment, many blogs automatically put in your blog URL in where your name appears, if you are in the same community. And, you can also use html to add your own link to an article that might be relevant to the post.

People who come to read the other blog will read the comments and if your's is interesting they may follow your link or click on your name. Either way, this will produce much more traffic for you than simply sticking to your own blog.

RSS Feed

This feature is automatic on Wordpress blogs and a plug-in in other blogs. You should have it enabled because it allows people to subscribe to your RSS feed. This feed gets sent to their newsreader every time you update your blog, so it keeps people motivated to keep visiting, but only when new content is posted. The more regularly you update your blog, the more frequent the RSS feed is updated and the more people visit your blog.

Strategies

There are various strategies to increase your traffic for a blog, with the goal of creating the maximum exposure for each post. You want to use all the features available for that. So, that when you initially write a post, you will want to follow these steps:

1. Identify a topic of major interest to your readers,
2. Choose appropriate keywords for SEO or use plug-in,
3. Write it up and tag it with relevant tags,
4. Categorize it to make it easy to find in your blog,
5. Add interesting and helpful content,
6. Publish it,
7. Bookmark it,
8. Submit it to news sites,
9. Respond to all comments to generate a discussion,
10. Go to other blogs with similar topics and post comment and backlink.

You also want to research which posts were the most successful and steer your future blog articles in that direction. That's pretty easy to tell because your administrative panel will show the number of people who found your

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post and probably read it. It should also indicate which are the top posts of all, and that can also be valuable information.

If you happen to get a trackback from another blogger, this is really great news! A trackback is a reference back to your post from another blogger with a similar post. This can generate instant traffic for your post and you may be wondering where it's coming from, until you see the trackback. So, make sure trackbacks are enabled on your site.

One of the ways search engines determine how to rate your content is by the number of backlinks. So, when you work with a number of other bloggers, you can raise each other's post values by linking back to posts or using trackbacks.

Lastly, if you are still having trouble raising interest, try to ride on the coat-tails of other popular blogs that have made the front page of some tagging or news site. You simply put a comment in their blog with a link back to your post. Or, you can try to respond to an interesting article online with your own commentary and offer a link back to their blog. Then, add a comment showing your own controversial view of the topic to get extra readers by sharing your link.

2

Websites: Convert Your Audience To Sales

What's the point of getting traffic, if you can't convert it to dollar signs at some point? That's where a website comes in handy. Your blog should always have a way for people to step into your website so that you can start to capture emails and begin to market your visitors. Without the email, you haven't really connected with your visitor, nor do you have any idea who your potential customers might be. So, add a website and then add a way for them to subscribe to a newsletter or get a free product for subscribing to your email list.

You may think you can do this through social networking sites or blogs, but that's not the case. With the advent of spam, many third party networking sites do not allow the harvesting of emails from your contacts for business purposes. On a blog, you can get subscribers, but you can't see their emails either, and that's the way most people like it. They don't want to be hounded by marketers without their expressed permission, so many people are wary of giving out their email too soon. Although people congregate on social networking sites and groups, you will have to move that traffic at some point to your website. To make it a little less shocking, many people use the blog as a mid-step and then from there they try to move it to their website where they can start to market people.

The Website Spider Web

So, even though the website is the final point of contact where you can actively market your products, you most often have to collect your traffic from other points around the web. So, you will want to create a web of different portals that all point back to your site to garner that traffic. That will include blogs, but it also includes so much more of the Internet that you have to really understand the full picture. Here are some places you will want to investigate and tie into your website to help you generate traffic to your website.

Search Engines

What major search engines are generating traffic to your site? Google, Yahoo? Others? You can tell by visiting the administration control panel for your website to find out where most of your traffic is coming from. Then, you will want to target that search engine with appropriate SEO strategies to help build traffic to your site. Don't forget to try some social networking search

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engines like StumbleUpon to generate free traffic that is heavily targeted to your market niche.

Groups

Are there any groups or forums that you are active within that point back to your site? Maybe you have been an active member and each time you posted, your signature pointed back to your website. Or, maybe, people are discussing something on your site and you are getting lots of traffic from specific groups on the web. Once you know what's going on, you can exploit that market by visiting these places more often and becoming the resident expert there for your industry.

Social Networking Sites

Places like Facebook and MySpace can be a great way to introduce yourself to a great number of people. But, they are not the place to solicit people for business or you will be banned from the site. So, although they will be part of the strategy to create a web where traffic comes from other areas to your site, it will probably need an intermediary step of a personal blog to keep you from getting in trouble for soliciting people.

Affiliate Marketing

If you have an affiliate marketing program that offers great benefits to the seller, you can easily have people competing to put backlinks to your site on their websites through your affiliate marketing program. Each one of those links cost you absolutely nothing and can even generate sales. Once the sale is made, then you might have to pay a commission, but until then all that traffic they generate for you is absolutely free. You can learn how to set up your own affiliate links through affiliate directories like cj.com or clickbank.com.

Video Marketing

You've probably gotten a few emails with funny videos or seen them posted on YouTube. Videos are quickly becoming the most viral product out there. They can be created easily these days by anyone and they can be brief enough to capture the attention of even the busiest of people. If people really find the video enchanting, funny, or helpful, they will comment on it, rate it, and even email links to their friends or post it on social networking sites. If it happens to be your video, and you have posted the link to your website at the end of the video as the closing screen, you can expect megatraffic to run straight to your site. So, posting videos on other areas of the web is an excellent strategy for gaining new traffic, if not a stampede of traffic if it goes viral.

Classified Ads

Just like newspapers have classified ads, there are many places on the web that will allow you to post classified ads for your products or services. Places like eBay and Facebook's marketplace are two third-party places where you can go and submit a classified ad. Some places, like eBay, you pay for the classified, but Facebook's marketplace is free for anyone to use. You may even see classified ad areas in forums like digitalpoint. There, you can advertise particular products like websites or domain names you are selling without having to pay to list them.

Directories

There are numerous online directories that help to bring maximum exposure to your site and categorize your website to make it easier for others to find. Many of them are free to submit your website to and can produce astounding results in traffic increase. Once you submit, it may take a few months for the entry to show up, but once it does, you will have a larger exposure on the web that goes directly back to your website.

Using Some Old Features

You do want to use some of the same features we discussed for blogs for your website. You want to add RSS feeds and submit relevant pages to different news sites. You do want to do social bookmarking on your website pages. And, at every chance you get, your blog should continue to guide the attention of the reader to products or services available on your website.

Strategies

Okay, so you go out and you do the following when you set up a website:

1. You write interesting content for your site using keywords,
2. You bookmark the pages,
3. You advertise your website and products on groups,
4. You submit your website url to free directories,
5. You link your blog to your website,
6. You link your social networking sites to your blog,
7. You add video content and upload it to YouTube,
8. You add an affiliate marketing program for your products,
9. You advertise through classified ads,
10. You set up RSS feeds and make sure they are updated properly.

Now, for other strategies, you can start to bring in even more traffic from those areas that respond best. The way you do that is to carefully monitor the incoming traffic with Google Analytics. This free tool will give you a great

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overview of where your traffic is coming from and how to best exploit that market. All you have to do, is understand what that particular segment of your traffic desires and what bought them to your website in the first place. Then just provide more of that and see your traffic grow, and with it, your sales.

The best way to attract sales to your pages is to attract traffic first, and then learn how to keep those people coming back. Social networking sites are particularly sticky because people like to engage other people online. It gives them a sense of community. You can build your own community within your own website and this also will give your website a degree of "stickiness." This is much easier to do now, than ever before. Places like ning.com can help you set up community sites using templates and features that reel people in quickly. You do want to get rid of any reference to ning.com in the final version so that people don't take your great idea for a website and start their own, once they find out how easy it is to do.

If you're not into building your own community site, you can let other people do it for you and then just harvest that traffic back to your site. Simply join multiple social networking sites that offer community and then make your presence felt for a pronounced period of time. If you don't want to spend too much time filling out profiles and generating content on other social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace, Twitter is a great way to start socializing without too much effort. We'll discuss this more on the Chapter on social networking. Anyways, once you engage people as a resident expert, they will follow your signature line back to your website and find out more about you and your products.

Always seek to stay abreast of what is new in the World Wide Web and any new portals that are ascending fast in new membership. Once you locate portals with a great deal of attention, you should join them, add a profile that describes you and is targeted to your business. Then, you should check out the profiles of other people online and start to use whatever gadgets or strategies they are using to increase their friends or influence. You may think you only need to be present for one of these portals, but the more you join, the more exposure you get. The more people find you easily on the Web by typing in your personal or business name.

3

Groups: Spread Your Influence

With so many new social networking sites, you may be tempted to overlook the older groups and forums that first started this trend online. Don't! These are a goldmine of targeted traffic that usually attracts people who are webmasters, entrepreneurs, and other people who are technically involved in spreading information on the World Wide Web. So, while joining social networks increases your exposure to the ordinary folk, you can usually find some heavy duty movers and shakers on groups. And, that's where you should be too to gather some of that influence for yourself.

Not only that, but groups are exquisitely narrowed to specific topics and concerns. Where else can you go to a group that is involved solely in the pursuit of all things that deal with Keanu Reeves, or some other film star? Where else will you find an area solely devoted to composting or raising worms? The number of groups on the web is astounding as so is the degree to which they specialize. Since they are so specialized, they make the perfect petri dish to grow exactly the type of connection that brings people who are interested in your products back to your website.

Finally, it's far easier to be noticed in a small group of a few hundred people than it is to be noticed on a social networking site with millions of people. Obviously, the more you participate in a group and contribute to the conversation intelligently, the higher your reputation in that group. Eventually, if you maintain a presence in a group long enough, people start to remember who you are from your older posts and they will start to see you as more of an expert in the topic that the group is discussing. This not only increases your influence in the group, but eventually it increases your influence with the people who are going to be your customers. They will land on your website from links placed in your signature when you posted and they will be more apt to buy from you because they trust you.

Groups Galore

So, where are these groups and how do you find them? Groups can be set up by anyone, a major portal online, or even non-profits or other social entrepreneur sites. There are even groups on Facebook that you can join that will allow you to network outside your profile and connected friends. Some groups are started by website owners who offer a membership that includes access to special groups. These aren't free like the others, but if they are highly popular can lead to getting good traffic if you contribute within them content that people admire. If you want to find groups by plugging into a

search engine, just add the following into the search box "keyword+groups" to find more groups.

Let's review some of the more popular places to find groups.

Yahoo! Groups

The Yahoo! Search engine offers a groups forum. You can join using the same email address and password that you use for Yahoo! Mail. Once, into a Yahoo! Account you will have various options, and Groups will be one of them. You can browse a category list of Yahoo! Groups if you're not sure which ones you want to join. They have major categories and when you click in they show you the popular groups in that category at the top with the rest listed too. If you don't want to browse the groups by categories, you can also put in a search term to search through the Yahoo! Groups and find ones that are relevant to your market niche. You can join multiple groups and usually the larger groups with more members will provide better exposure.

The way Yahoo! Groups work is that you can sign up to receive individual email updates of new posts or they will send you a daily digest of all posts for the day. You can also choose not to receive any emails and simply respond to groups online. You may have to be accepted into the group by a moderator, if it is a closed group. You generally want to stay within public forums for the most part, though.

You can set up a profile of yourself for your username. There, you can also list your website and other information that might bait someone into visiting your website. Once in, you do have to follow the guidelines for posting or risk being banned from the group.

Google Groups

Google groups are a little more sophisticated with integrated email and customized web pages you can set up as an individual. You can even set up shared web pages where a number of people on the group develop the page for themselves. You're able to change the color and style of the group more than the Yahoo! Groups. You can upload files and really set about to generate interest from various media, not just your written posts. You can search for groups using the search engine and pull up the group you are interested in joining this way. The group directory is far easier to see in one shot. It tells you how many groups are in each category too. Once you get into the group front page, it tells you how many members and a little more about the group. Like Yahoo! Groups, you can set up a profile page for free. You are also able to put in your website URL and the address to your RSS feeds online.

Facebook Groups

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You have to join Facebook to join one of their groups. Once you build a profile in Facebook, you can start looking through the groups available to join on the left-hand menu on the old interface, and on the right-hand menu on the new Facebook interface. In Facebook, you can see the groups that your friends recently joined as well as the ones that you joined on the front page. You can browse the rest of the groups by selecting the menu link that says "Browse Groups." Then you can see a listing of categories, much like Google and Yahoo! Groups. They have a drop-down menu for the main type which separates the groups into different major categories, and then they have a list that allows you to pick the subtype. Just make sure that you are in the Global network so that you don't limit the groups that show up.

Creator Or Contributor?

Anyone is able to join a group or create a group. There are advantages to either. You can be both a creator and a contributor of different groups. So, you might want to try things out and see how you fare either way. It's usually far easier to contribute to an existing group that is popular and climb the ranks than it is to create your own group and nurture it into a popular format with plenty of members. But, that's not always the case.

If you happen to already be a leader in a civic or social organization offline, then it can be extremely easy to start a new group online and invite these people to be the seed starter group for your online group. Once people see that other people have already joined your group and are knee deep in discussion, they will be more willing to join your group too. And, there are additional benefits to being the creator of a group rather than just a contributor.

When you contribute to a group, there will be group moderators most of the time who take care to make sure no one spams the group or tries to solicit anyone. This limits the activity you can do for your website marketing in these groups to mostly a link every now and then in a post and your signature line pointing back to your products or website. People who are regulars to the group will get pretty used to seeing your signature and soon they won't even bother to read it. So, that's really only effective for newer people who might be wondering who you are. You can get some traffic this way, but promoting your products in a group will not be allowed.

On the other hand, if you are the creator of the group and you have sufficient people there, you have a captive audience for any website or product promotion you want to do because you are effectively the moderator. You can keep people from posting their marketing material, but you have free reign to decide what links and posts are allowed so you can use the group to advertise your products too. That's the biggest benefit to being the creator of your own group.

Strategies

So, what's the proper way to generate interest in a group without getting banned? How do you attract people back to your website in droves?

1. Join multiple groups targeting your market niche,
2. Set up a profile in each one with your website url and RSS feeds,
3. Introduce yourself to the group if it's required,
4. Read each group for 15 minutes each day for about a week,
5. Begin to post comments with a signature line that promotes you or your business products,
6. Be helpful, but don't spam,
7. Limit your posts so that you don't catch the moderators attention,
8. Answer questions that might come about from your posts – join in the discussion,
9. Make yourself the expert,
10. Create your own group and do steps 1 to 9, promoting your goods on posts too.

The strategy to get attention on groups is to contribute thoughtful and insightful comments to the discussion. For that, you have to be involved and participate. You can't just open a post and spam it with some arbitrary message because people will realize you aren't listening at all, you are merely spamming. As soon as someone sees that, they will notify a moderator and you will most likely be banned from the group.

So, the key to successful presence is to listen closely. You want to engage people one-on-one and have them begin to see who you are. This means you want to be as authentic as possible so that your image as an expert comes through as genuine and not contrived. Don't be in a rush to get people to your site. It's okay to just join in the conversation and get to know people slowly. Once you do that, you will begin to identify the movers and shakers on the group and you can begin to target your comments more to them. Once you have their attention, the group has your attention.

Above all, be courteous. Groups can get intimate fairly quickly and sometimes it's hard to decipher the motivation behind posts. They may seem to be angry with you, when they just don't know how to turn the cap locks key off when they post. Stay respectful and never post anything you don't want your significant other, your boss, or your colleagues to see. This simple rule can save your reputation and keep you from being labeled a trouble-maker or troll (the Internet name for someone who likes to bait other people in groups to make them mad).

Once you have the hang of how to deal with numerous people online, it's time to start your own group where you will be the moderator. It may look

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simple, but remember that your audience comes from everywhere with their own ideas of what's proper and what's not. So, establish the ground rules early and stick to them. Be careful to keep out spammers and trouble-makers, unless they are increasing the number of eyeballs that are seeing your products. But, even, the strategy of controversy has a point of diminishing returns. While people love to have scapegoats and people to burn at the stake, you don't want your products associated too much with that type of energy. When the rubber-necking finally stops you will find you have to start from square one to rebuild your business because everyone will be too disgusted to play with you anymore.

Fortunately, that's not likely to happen, but it is a word of warning. Just stay courteous. Initiate discussions that are interesting. Join in the conversation. Always look for the entry point where you can establish some business connection and exploit it. Use your signature line to advertise things. Use your profile to advertise your website and RSS feeds. Pretty soon traffic will build from these groups and those people may be in other groups where they start discussing you and your products for you. That type of interaction on the web is worth a fortune.

4

Squidoo: Define Your Brand

Unlike social networking sites, that we'll discuss later in Chapter 6, social marketing sites allow you to define your brand and market it to make money online. Squidoo.com is the best example of a social marketing site that allows you to create lenses that are like a focal point of interest that you are an expert in. By being part of social marketing site, you will be able to network with other people interested in showing off their expertise too and that can build traffic to your site.

One of the many advantages to using Squidoo to help you get noticed is that you can do sales calls for action and it won't get you banned from the site. Squidoo is crawled by the Google spider and so there are many ways to use the power of Google to get your Squidoo lens ranked higher and attract people through the search engine dynamics. Meanwhile, it's perfectly okay to advertise your own products, your affiliate products, or anything else you want to promote on your Squidoo lens.

What's Up With Squidoo?

In order to learn how to maximize the potential to draw attention from Squidoo, you have to understand some of its features. Squidoo's main feature is a lens, which consists of a single web page used to promote anything that matters to you. You can use it to recommend products or services to other people. You can use it to promote yourself, a topic, or your business. You can even earn royalties off the lenses that you create.

Lenses

The lens isn't just used to create sales copy, although many people use them this way. They are also for getting the word out about things that interest you or that might interest other people. You are able to create up to 10 lenses a day on any topic you desire. However, creating a lens that gets attention is somewhat of an art form. You don't want it to appear to be too commercial, and you don't want to spam a lot of keywords, but you do want to use strategies that can bring in traffic and convert to sales later.

When you write a lens, the best way to think of what content to add is to think of the various topics you are an expert on. Squidoo likes to remind people that they are like a cross between Friendster and Wikipedia. You want to be sociable, but you also want to get interesting and accurate information across to the readers of your lens. You want to narrow that topic so that it

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becomes a brand, of sorts. It should be very clear, it should have a niche, and you should strive to make it interesting.

SquidU

SquidU is the area for learning all things Squidoo. It is a bulletin board style format that allows you to see major categories of topics and search the database for topics of concern to you. If you are brand new to Squidoo, it can be very helpful to connect with people who know more than you do. They can help you optimize your pages, create attractive profiles, and guide you on the best way to use Squidoo for your particular topic. You are not only learning this way, but you are also networking. If you start to create online friendships with other Squidoo users they might come to your lens and vote on it, increasing the ranking. The more people that notice and rank your lens, the more that it will become a magnet for people on the Internet.

Google Adwords

Your lens should be optimized for Google Adwords. You can pick any title you want for the lens and Squidoo will recommend a keyword, if it finds it in your title. Otherwise, you will want to do a little research on your own before you actually build the lens to make sure you've picked some good keywords to include in your lens. You can do this through the Google Adwords Keyword Tool located here: <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal> .

Using this third-party tool to help customize your Squidoo lens will help you to draw traffic from the Google search engines, and also increase your advertising payout. All you have to do is think of what niche you are interested in marketing and start plugging them into the keyword tool. It will pull up associated keywords that you can use. You can choose to pick your keywords on various factors: volume, CPC payout, or the amount of competition for that keyword out on the Internet. You can even decide your own formula for which keywords are more attractive than others. Thank choose at least four to be able to fill out the Squidoo lens. Use one in the title and add the other three when they are requested.

Plexo Links

Squidoo has several modules you can set up in the profile. There are a variety of Plexo modules you can use with Squidoo. A plexo module allows people who visit your lens to see a list of the content you've chosen and vote on it. Odds are, if the plexo link list is really interesting, you would come back to see whether your choices are ranking higher or lower, as other people vote on them too. This has the effect of getting you repeat traffic, which is the same as lots more traffic, but with a loyalty and name brand recognition factor thrown in.

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Plexo links can be from a variety of formats. You can use a module for Plexo text, a link list, Amazon, YouTube and Flickr content. The Amazon Plexo module allows you to display more than five Amazon products on your lens, which you can't do elsewhere in your profile. Interactive lists, like Plexo link lists, are an excellent way to capture attention and keep it.

Finally, another feature of Plexo link lists is that other Squidoo lensmasters can hijack them into their own lenses. This gives you, the author, a free link on someone else's lens. If you happen to build a Plexo link list that is very popular, you will have multiple links all over Squidoo. When that happens, you can much more traffic from people who see the list, spot the actual author, and go to check your lens to see the rest of what you have to say, since you are the expert.

Squidoo Strategies

Ways that you can attract attention from search engines and other Squidoo members are to include the following:

1. Create an attractive profile,
2. Add content using some keywords,
3. Tag your lens,
4. Display interesting images,
5. Add plexo links to create interactive fun,
6. Link to other interesting or relevant profiles,
7. Proofread for crisp, clean, and accurate copy,
8. Discuss your lens to others at SquidU,
9. Promote your lens on other social networking sites,
10. Make lens of the day.

Create An Attractive Profile

This is a lot easier than it seems, since Squidoo allows you multiple modules to bring in interesting content. You can add a YouTube video, Flickr images, and much more. You do want to be particularly careful to choose a bio picture that is attractive.

Add Content Using Some Keywords

It's good to identify keywords that attract attention, but you want to attract the attention of people on the web, not the Squidoo staff. If you overuse keywords or use specific keywords that are tagged as spam by the Squidoo staff, you may get a notice that you have to wait three days to publish your lens because it is under review to make sure it's not spam. The lesson here is that keywords are good, but you still have to be careful how you use them.

Tag Your Lens

When you first build the lens, Squidoo will ask you for a title and then recommend some keywords. Those are your tags. To build an effective lens, you want to make sure the entire lens is tagged appropriately and that your additional keywords appear in your content somewhere too.

Display Interesting Images

People are very visually oriented. Since most Squidoo lenses follow the same format, you need interesting visual images to set your lens apart from the rest. You can upload your own images, if photography interests you and you are trying to highlight your skills in photography. However, you don't have to. There are so many photo sharing sites online that allow you to use their photos for free, that even if you know nothing about photography you can still find interesting images to use online.

Add Plexo Links

Don't forget to create some fun plexo links to make your site interactive and to encourage repeat traffic. You can even grab someone else's plexo link that you like and insert it into your own profile to start. Once you get the hang of plexo links and what type of lists are more popular, you can create your own. Hopefully, someone will find it so compelling they will feel tempted to grab your list and use it on their profile! That will mean a free link and lots more traffic!

Link To Other Sites

You can promote yourself on every lens you create. There is an external links module you can use to link back to other content you have on the web or your website. You can link to Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Zazzle, CafePress, and your own blog. You can link to other lenses that relate to your lens and sometimes people will give you reciprocal links. So, even though the lens is on Squidoo, it can be used to funnel traffic to your other content online, especially if it is marketing or sales content.

Proofread Your Lens

Typos and grammatical errors are a complete turn-off, no matter whether it was your fault or through content that you grabbed off another lens. Always proofread any copy you put online, and especially in Squidoo. You are claiming to be an expert on some subject when you put up a lens. If you can't even spell, your credibility drops significantly and you lose readers.

Network At SquidU

When you are first getting to know Squidoo, it is helpful to meet other people at SquidU who can help you develop efficient lenses. This helps you to network and to build contacts that can lead to more people visiting your lens. If you have a question on how to do something there, it's also nice to know you have somewhere to go where people more knowledgeable than you can help you with your problem.

Promote Off Squidoo

Odds are you are probably a member of multiple social networking sites. These sites can be a great resource for building contact lists, but they don't allow you to market on them. However, they do allow you to link to other sites on the web. So, promote your Squidoo page on other social networking sites to lead the people you know in one area that is non-commercial, to another area that will expose them to some of your commercial ventures without seeming too abrupt. This builds traffic and sales.

Make Lens Of The Day

Serious marketers will have a goal on Squidoo to make "Lens of the Day." This blog will highlight a few lenses every day and can seriously amp up your exposure and increase your traffic. One way to do this is to target topics that are of current interest, like the Olympics. Big news items or clever lenses can end up on the Lens of the Day blog and become an overnight hit!

5

Classified Ads: Pitch Your Wares

Newspapers are what we typically associate with the standard classified ad. However, Internet classified ads can be far more effective at sales and generating traffic to your website. Classified ads on the web give people instant gratification when they choose to buy or click a link, unlike a newspaper. They can reach people all over the world, and not in a small subscription area. They provide a way to advertise online giving you the option to use affiliates. If you find a way to attach a classified ad to an Internet portal that already has a large audience, your classified ad online has far more power than just a newspaper classified ad, and it can also get you backlinks and point people to your website from larger portals, increasing traffic.

How To Write Effective Classified Ads

In order for your ad to work online, it has to follow some basic rules of online marketing. You won't have a whole lot of time to capture someone's attention and you will also have stiff competition for available eyeballs. So, make sure to always follow some basic guidelines to give your classified ad the maximum chance of being noticed.

Headlines That Pop!

Headlines are important for various reasons. Search engines weight titles very heavily, so if you don't put in an accurate and popular headline, it may end up showing near the bottom of the list. The other reason headlines are important is that they are the first thing a person reads when scrolling down the results of a search engine result page. If you don't have a headline that pops right out and grabs the reader in their chair, it will not be as noticed as if you did.

You do want to describe what you are promoting in the title, but it should be said in such a way that it begs the viewer to click into the link to read more. So, instead of "office supplies for sale" you would write: "Top Business People Organize Their Lives With Our Office Products!" In this way, you not only say you have office supplies for sale, but the main benefit implied is that their business will grow if they buy from you. So, add a benefit, describe the product, and make them want to read the rest of your classified ad.

Be Brief

The classified ad is not a sales page. Most experts believe that the longer the sales page, the better the probability of overcoming any objections a buyer might have. However, the classified ad is not a sales page. It can be the introduction to a more indepth sales page, it can be used to generate a contacts list, but it also can be a very brief way to advertise some product or service which is sold instantly at the click of a button. It's up to you how you will be using the ad, but it should remain long enough to get your point across and brief enough not to lose someone's attention.

What works very well in classified ads are bulleted lists of benefits. This way a person can quickly review why they want to buy your product or click to go to the link your website in a very short amount of time. You should vary the font and provide sufficient white space so that the classified ad is visually appealing and easy to read. The ad should be less than 100 words long for it to be quickly effective. Don't forget to use your keywords even here!

Add Pictures

If the site allows you to add pictures, do so. The ads are much more noticeable with an icon next to the title than without and they make a bigger impact with pictures inside too. If you are selling a physical product people will want to see your wares before they decide to buy. So, it's also important to have pictures of the items you are selling so as to generate enthusiasm and excitement for the purchase.

Post Online

Once you have a good idea of what you're going to say and how you're going to say it to attract attention, you want to identify different areas online that allow classified ads. They should be sites with large audiences that promote classified ads or that make them easily searchable. Some places online that offer free classified ads are Craigslist.com and Facebook.com. In other areas, like eBay, they do offer classified ads but they charge for them. We will discuss some featured sites for classified ads in the next segment.

Posting your classified ad is not a one-time affair. You will want to have a regular schedule to keep posting the ad, at least weekly, so as to keep it visible. Otherwise, it will rapidly be buried by other people posting classified ads and your ad will be old, stale, and practically invisible.

Featured Sites For Classified Ads

For a completely free site that allows you to post any classified ad you want, you should check out Craigslist.com first.

Craigslist.com

This site started out as a simple email list for people in the San Francisco area and morphed into a gigantic directory of classified ads for everything imaginable. It is separated into geographic regions, by state and city in the United States. It is available for countries other than the United States too and might be separated by other regional boundaries there.

Craigslist is like a giant flea market of people advertising products and services. You can find anything from real estate to used bubble wrap on Craigslist. You can also find advertisements for jobs, non-profit volunteering opportunities, and personal ads. It's all neatly categorized by major category and sub-categories. There are even discussion forums available for you to network in.

Craigslist does list its ads by the region that you are in. So, if you live in Boston, Massachusetts, people would have to enter Craigslist first through that region to find your particular ad. If they lived somewhere else, they wouldn't even see your ad, most likely. So, in that respect, Craigslist mimics newspaper classified ads quite closely. However, the number of people on Craigslist is so high, it doesn't matter. You still can get plenty of views. And, there's nothing keeping you from posting the same ad in multiple regions. It may take a little more time, but you will have a greater exposure too.

To understand the value in advertising on Craigslist, you would have to realize that there are over 30 million classified ads posted each month. So, the competition is fierce, but the exposure is tremendous.

The way you would post an ad is to pick the main region and category first. Write up a simple classified as we explained in the "how to" section. Respond to any inquiries in a timely and courteous manner. If it sells, you can delete the post or keep it up (if you have multiple items you're selling). Then, post it frequently if you want to keep getting noticed.

You can use a classified ad to link to a blog or website to increase your visibility on the Internet. Just be careful people don't flag your ad as spam or it will automatically be removed from the system.

Facebook Classified Ads

Another place you can ad a classified on a social networking group is Facebook. You would have to go to the marketplace to be able to add your entry there. It also is limited to your network for people to view it. However, it can be an excellent way to network your wares on a social networking site.

Facebook typically does not allow you to solicit your friends online. It will ban you if you begin to spam people with business solicitations. So, although that's the policy, the marketplace is one place where you are allowed to put

out your wares. So, take advantage of it to make your friends into customers on Facebook.

Ezclassifieds.com

This site offers people the ability to create classified ad programs to use in affiliate programs. They offer a way to help you make classified ads very quickly for specific products or geographic regions. You share 50% of the revenues generated from the classified ads.

Strategies To Use With Classified Ads

To set up and market a classified ad is quite easy. You would follow a similar strategy no matter what portal you decided to post your ad in. It would look something like this:

1. Find a niche product, service, or your business to promote, Research keywords.
2. Create snappy title and make it 5 to 8 words long, including one keyword.
3. Write keyword rich content of 100 words or less that lists benefits of product, service, or business.
4. Make sure you have accurate contact or product delivery description on the ad.
5. Add images to raise interest.
6. Post it on different classified ad forums and make sure it is in the right categories.
7. Include accurate pricing information, including shipping, and taxes (if applicable),
8. Link your other content online to your classified ads to generate cross-traffic,
9. Repost ads frequently to get a high spot on the listings.
10. Answer inquiries in a timely and courteous manner.

As you can see with many of these chapters, the trick to building traffic is to have good content that is posted in the right areas, and networked across multiple sites. Classified ads are not interactive, like some other formats we are discussing, and people won't be able to rate an ad or give feedback unless they contact you directly. So, make sure that option is available to them, even if you are selling an information product that can be delivered instantly when they click on a button and pay for it online. You will still want to make sure you have other information available to let them know where to contact you, should they have questions, because it will help you to customize your next ad better to appeal to particular objections potential buyers might have or to tweak the copy to answer any unasked questions later.

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The big benefit to classified ads is that people who are browsing them are typically in a buying mood. They are usually looking for a specific item and have to find it by wading through many classified ads, and hopefully your ad captures their attention first! Even if they don't end up buying your product right away, you will have generated interest in the form of additional traffic that can be funneled back to your website and help you to increase the potential for future sales.

6

Social Networks: Connect With Others

One of the biggest things to come out of the Internet is social networking. With sites now dedicated to the concept of bringing people together into distinct social groups or a circle of friends, you have a powerful way to network and build connections with people all over the world. If these people turn out to be movers and shakers in your industry too, then some of that magic rubs off on you and you get much more attention.

Thus, social networking has to be done somewhat consciously for it to generate the results that you want: recognition and higher traffic. So many people go online and believe just putting up anything as a profile on these sites will suffice. Then, they start collecting friends without being too careful who is linking to them. What ends up happening is they waste a lot of time on the site and they don't get the attention they deserve. Social networking works beautifully when done right. It can be very distracting when done wrong.

Becoming A Social Butterfly

Networking online usually begins with the profile. A profile page talks all about you and tells people what makes you so interesting. Whether you are using MySpace or Facebook, you will want a profile that makes your professional image come alive. It should be targeted to the audience that will hunger to read more from your website links. It should not be so random that people don't have a clue what you're about. So, while you want to be a social butterfly, you want to have a plan to project the right image and, more importantly, attract the right friends to link to you.

Your Image

The first thing people will notice about your profile is your image, the current photograph you have posted. Just like you would not go to a business function wearing shorts and a T-shirt, you will want to cultivate your online image too. If you are in the business of selling beach items, then you want a free-and-easygoing image and shorts and even a surfboard in the background of your profile picture are quite acceptable. If, however, you are selling business information and are trying to look professional, that type of image would do more harm than good.

Your Preferences

Next, profiles may ask you to list your favorite movies, quotes, books, topics, and much more. This is where you get to give people an idea of what makes you tick. So many people make the mistake of putting in too much information on these pages. You want to clue people in to what drives your passion, but you don't need to get into your drug habits or inappropriate behavior that is going to make people think twice about your judgment. While your social friends may understand, new potential customers finding you through a social networking site will probably not give you enough credit for being an expert on anything and fail to be motivated to be guided to your website or classified ads.

So, develop a personality, but put it into context with what you are trying to achieve there with regards to your other business ventures. And, as always, be authentic because a fake profile is a complete turn-off to everyone online and easily spotted.

Your Friends

The whole point of social networking is to start developing online relationships. Some people call them friends. These friends will eventually end up being your customers, if you play your cards right. You are looking to cultivate friends that are interested in the image you have portrayed which has been targeted to the products or services you intend to sell. You can start with the friends you know online to build a presence that says, "hey, I'm a worthy person who already is well liked!" That's always attractive. People with a large group of friends usually have an aura about them like they are really successful or well-loved people. And, that aura magnetizes others to come take a look and see what all the big fuss is about!

Once you have a core group of friends, you can visit other profiles, groups, and forums and start joining in the discussions in various places. What you are doing is rubbing elbows with people online. This serves two purposes: it creates an opportunity to use your signature for a backlink to your website, and it helps you to meet and make new friends who might be influential. So, making the right friends is more important than making a lot of friends. Sometimes, you can even make friends with one person who knows hundreds of others and have them introduce you to their posse. Then, you have an easy way to get connected.

Build Your Friends Into A Community

Once you have numerous friends, you can start increasing your presence by starting groups or community projects that increase the interaction between all your circle of friends. The more they get to know each other, the more likely they will start to develop bonds with each other. If they are bonding in

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your forum and you are allowed to post your links to products, services, and websites, there, you now have a captive audience hanging on your every word. You begin to develop much more influence on the social networking site. Then, you can parlay that influence into sales by starting to promote items to your group members and asking for reviews and such for freebies. This will get them to start discussing your products or services, which will be a free way to advertise yourself and make more backlinks and ratings.

You Are At The Top Of The Heap

If you follow this format, you will soon find yourself at the top of a heap of a bunch of people online. You will be viewed as either an expert, a great coordinator, or a really interesting person to know. People will seek you out to network with you, just like you started out looking for influential people to network to build your influence. So, your influence grows and with it the traffic coming to your profiles. If those profiles have links to your websites and RSS feeds, you will steadily drive more traffic to these areas.

Featured Social Networks

There are numerable social networks out there. Some have profiles and some don't. Facebook and MySpace are very similar except that Facebook has a wider appeal to professionals. LinkedIn is strictly for connecting via business profiles. Twitter is a social networking site that is unlike the others so deserves a special mention.

Facebook

This social network began as a way for college students to connect with other college students in their university network. It took its name from the black book that many college students used to keep track of each other. Now, this has outgrown its original roots and allows anyone in, whether you are in a University or not. However, you only have access to the collegiate networks if you are a student attending that particular college or university.

Facebook.com follows the pattern of profile, friends, and community groups. It's main advantage is that it also has a marketplace where you can sell your products and places to buy advertisement to widen your audience. It is free to set up the profile and to use the marketplace for classified ads. There is a way to list links to your websites and RSS feeds on your profile page. Also, using regular updates from your blog or newsfeed can pull people off Facebook to your blog and eventually to the products on your site. Be sure to check out the applications that are installed separately. There are many there that can help you connect more or create better business opportunities.

LinkedIn

This social networking site has a far more business-like and professional flavor. It is noted for helping people network to find new jobs or business opportunities. You will find industry experts and business partners here. There is far less of a capacity to market, but it still is a tremendous place to network with other influential players in your industry. It is well-known and used quite widely.

Twitter

One of the ways to build a network is to constantly stay in touch with people. As your network increase from less than 50 to over hundreds, this task may seem harder and harder to do if you are a member of multiple social networks. That's where Twitter comes in. You can update people on multiple networking sites all about your moment-to-moment activities, if that's what you want. There have been people who used this site when they were getting fired or laid off, giving blow by blow details of the termination process, and through the power of social networking had a job again only a few hours later. Why? The people on the social networking sites found their story so compelling it created a vortex of energy to try to help this individual. Twitter has a way of hooking people in to a constant stream of news, much like a soap-opera.

Strategies For Social Networking

Of course, your strategies may vary with the policy of each site. Some will allow you to do some limited promotion of your products and businesses and others won't. Some will allow you to bring in external content to help build your profile and others won't. Each have their own unique way to keep in touch with people, some through profiles only, and others through mobile status updates like Twitter. So, it can be a little daunting to give one technical way to use all social networking sites. However, the strategy is still the same for most:

1. Set up a profile with your website links, and develop an online, authentic, personality,
2. Invite friends you already know to link to you,
3. Look at their friends list and see if you have mutual friends you can invite to link in to you,
4. Join in the networking and keep your profile fresh with updates and new content like videos, pictures, and blog postings,
5. Stay present and check in daily to answer inquiries, add some status information, and see if you can make new friends.
6. Check out other people online to see what they're doing to build their presence and copy it,

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7. Join groups and use a signature line to link back to your website,
8. Network with other people online, staying conscious of who the major players are to connect with them if you can,
9. Explore any applications or other features within the site for marketing and contact building,
10. Always try to have a way to funnel your contacts back to a blog or website for those social networks that limit your marketing capability.

So, even though social networking is a big term, it's still all about making friends and influencing people. It's not that much different from real life except that you have to be a little bit more aware of the mechanics of how to do that with each specific site.

Social networking takes time. It doesn't happen overnight. The sooner you get started, the more time you have to develop a network that is primed to be marketed later. The more time you spend on each site, the more you will begin to see clever strategies that others have developed to increase their influence as if by magic. And, like everything else in this book, always cross-link all your sites for a spider web effect, a vortex of traffic, to eventually pull them into areas where you can make sales.

7

Bookmarking and Indexing: Be Visible

We discussed a bit about how you tag Squidoo pages or blog pages. This is a form of indexing to make that information more easily categorized and ranked by search engines. Bookmarking is very similar in that you are storing web page links to interesting sites and most of the time, that bookmark gets added to your web browser to make it easy for you to retrieve that site later.

But, what about if you want to share your bookmarks?

There are ways to share your bookmarks online, on the WWW, so that what you find interesting can be bookmarked on a social networking site and made available for everyone else to see too. This makes that content highly visible because it isn't being rated as interesting by a search engine, but rather by human beings. If you provide valuable bookmarks then people start to see you as someone who can point them to great content and you become the expert on that topic through pure association. It doesn't even have to be your content you are bookmarking to make that sort of leap in prestige and recognition.

How Bookmarking And Indexing Works

Bookmarking works because people are much better at identifying spam or commercial solicitations than search engines. They are also better at knowing what might be of interest to another human being. So, you begin to see more people using social bookmarking sites to locate information and even some use them more than big search engines, like Google or Yahoo! It's content that is highly specialized and reviewed by a number of people to make sure it's not spam.

There are several characteristics of bookmarking and indexing that you want to be familiar with: creating and saving links, web feeds, and voting or rating the bookmarks.

Creating And Saving Links

When you bookmark a page online, a link is saved to a shared storage area on the web where other people can view it. Each social bookmarking site will have a way to easily save through their sites using a button on your browser that you install, or by clicking buttons available in the content that others post. Some social bookmarking sites give you the option to save some links

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as private and other links as public. If you are doing this to increase the traffic on your sites, then you need to use the public option for others to view the content you post.

When you insert the bookmark to the site, it will ask you to index or tag it with words that best describe that link. Some sites can show recommendations for that link, if others have saved the link before you too, but all will allow you to put your own keywords, whether they be one or two words or more. It's generally better to put in as many tags to index the content as you can think of because that will determine how visible that link is on the social networking site.

Social bookmarking sites will categorize the links based on the indexes that you chose and people can search for them using the site's search engine too. So, be sure to be as descriptive as possible when you post the link. Include a brief, but thorough description of the link and tag it with indexes that can put it into multiple categories for people doing searches.

Web or News Feeds

After content is submitted to the social bookmarking site, it is made available to other people using web or news feeds. There are some ways to help your particular bookmark make the news feed in other social networking sites, and that we will cover in the next chapter, Chapter 8. Suffice it to say, after you bookmark it in one site, you want that information to be made available to other sites, and the way to do that is to make use of web, news, and RSS feeds.

Ratings

Bookmarks can become very popular when more than one person begins to discover that site. Then, they gain weight in their popularity because more than one person said it was a favorite and rated it a good bookmark by submitting it. Other systems allow friends to comment on your bookmarks and that can drive up the popularity because there is more discussion going on with these sites.

Featured Bookmarking Sites

There are so many social bookmarking sites out there that it would be impossible to review all of them within the limits of this chapter. We will discuss some highly notable examples that are sure to drive up traffic if you use them with the strategies we will outline later.

StumbleUpon

This site is unique in that they have their own search engine that offers up random “stumbles” to people who are just in the mood to crawl the web of interesting pages others have bookmarked within the system. When you sign up to join the site, you give them an indication of the categories that are of interest to you. Then, later, when you install their toolbar on your web browser, you are given a button that has the words “I like this” and a thumbs up next to it. Anytime you are browsing the Internet and find a page you like and want to bookmark on StumbleUpon, you just click the “I like this button” and tag it. Later, if you want to see what other people have added to StumbleUpon, you can choose the option to “Stumble the web” and see pages that other people have randomly bookmarked.

This site is tremendously popular and can drive up your traffic overnight! The nice thing about it is that although the stumbles appear random, they are driven by the categories you initially chose when you signed up. So, when someone stumbles across the page you bookmarked, it may seem like a random page to them, but you've just attracted people to your site who already expressed an interest in what you are promoting. It not only drives up your traffic, but the traffic you receive is much more in tune with the type of visitor you are seeking to attract!

Del.icio.us

This was the original social bookmarking site and is still highly popular. It first came out under the url del.icio.us, but now you can also find it by typing in <http://delicious.com>. Delicious has several great features. One is the ease of bookmarking, with an option to add features to your browser toolbar. Another feature is the way it can recommend tags for you, if someone has already bookmarked that site. A great feature of the site is the way it easily integrates with other elements of the social web, like blogs and websites. You can save bookmarks and create a cloud list that you can import and display in your blog or other content areas. It's very easy to search with a search box available too.

You also have the option to save a public profile so that when someone lands on one of your bookmarks, they can check out who saved it. Within that profile you can add contact information and a website url. This is a great way to drive traffic to your site. If your bookmarked pages land on the front page of any of these social bookmarking sites, they will lead to instant celebrity, at least for the time frame they are posted on the front page.

Digg.com

Another popular social bookmarking site is Digg.com. This site makes it very easy to rate and comment bookmarked pages. They also have the categories of bookmarks separated by the media type. So, if you are interested in videos, then you use that tab. If you want news, click that tab. The way digg works is that you have to register to use the service. Then, you will be allowed to rate the bookmarks on Digg.com. Anytime you find a story you like, you can choose to "Digg it" and it will increase the count of Diggs on that story or bookmark. When the count reaches a high number, it may get promoted to the front page where it attracts enormous attention.

Strategies When Social Bookmarking

The point of social bookmarking is to increase visibility for your content and drive traffic back to you. So, you do have to be careful how you are rated, who comments on your bookmarks, and that you have a popular appeal. If you just create content you think you will like, and never check the demographics of the social bookmarking site you are using, the odds are it won't rank very high and it will be wasted effort. So, you want to not only social bookmark content, but also create content that is of interest to that particular group.

The steps to increase visibility are as follows:

1. Create your website with content that has a large appeal,
2. Register with Digg.com, StumbleUpon, and Delicious.com,
3. Bookmark and index all web pages and content you want to submit,
4. Submit to multiple social bookmarking sites to get the widest exposure,
5. Add bookmark buttons to your blogs and other content you want to have people rate,
6. Get people to comment on your bookmarks,
7. Get people to rate your bookmarks,
8. Share your bookmarks on other social networking sites by posting the links or through news feeds to your circle of friends,
9. Rate and discuss other friend's bookmarks,
10. Automate the process, if possible.

One of the ways to automate bookmarking is by using a third party tool like Socialmarker.com. You do have to be careful when signing up for products that allow you to automate the process because you don't want to be labeled a spammer. Avoid using any software or third party that promises to bookmark your content on more than 40 sites with one click. You aren't really interested in spamming the web as much as generating bookmarks that attract attention, ratings, and discussions.

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You can bookmark anyone's content, it doesn't have to be your own. The idea is to build a portfolio of interesting content and have people check out your profiles that lead them back to your sites. Of course, you will also be submitting your own sites, but if that's all you do it may look obviously self-promoting.

If you don't have interesting content of your own to post, avoid claiming someone else's content as your own. That's known as plagiarism and it can get you banned on a lot of social networking sites. So, always give credit where credit is due and some of that prestige will ultimately rub off on you.

8

News Feeds: Make The News

If you've ever been asked to sign up for an RSS feed than you've been exposed to one of the newest and best ways to raise your audience from occasional lurkers to hardcore subscribers. RSS feeds stand for Really Simple Syndication and are used by news outlets to help provide fresh content to their viewers non-stop. Wouldn't it be nice if you could do that too? Well, you can. You can make your own news feed and post in on your website and content to provide fresh content that you didn't even have to create on your own.

Another way that RSS feeds are used are by people who browse multiple sites and are looking for particular stories. They install a news reader on their web browsers and they can then pull in RSS feeds to help them categorize and view headlines of multiple stories without having to read or visit each one. This makes the job of finding relevant information extremely easy and it allows them to really target news that they are interested in viewing.

Finally, you can take the ability to create an RSS feed and use it with your own content. Then, you can provide that RSS feed to other people who might be interested in syndicating your content. You can even charge for that, if your content is that much in demand. So, there are plenty of ways that RSS feeds are becoming more and more the ultimate way to create subscribers, generate exponential exposure, and even make money too.

How To Work With Different Types Of News Feeds

While we've only discussed RSS feeds here as the most common way to develop news feeds, there are other options on the web that are integrated within social networking sites. Facebook, for example, has it's own version of that with a news page that puts in all kinds of information on what people in your circle of friends are doing online. This can be exploited to post links to your site, talk about your latest venture, and generally hog the limelight. So, while the majority of people are referring to RSS feeds when they talk about news feeds, there are other ways that term is used in different social networking sites.

As we discussed earlier, the two ways of using RSS feeds is to get subscribers or to use them to provide fresh content to your site. The first way involves an action that has to be taken by the person visiting your site. It isn't something automatic, so that you have encourage people visiting your

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site to subscribe. Since the mechanics of RSS feeds are still not that well known by the average Internet user, you have to educate your visitors to how to get the latest content using your RSS feeds. The truth is that they may actually be using a news outlet like Yahoo! but not even realize that the content is coming through an RSS feed. So, to get subscribers you must first educate them to what's available.

Educate

You don't have to get too technical about it, but you do want to give them a brief overview of why they want to become a subscriber to your RSS feed. They can get updates more quickly and be notified of when new content is up on the site. They can even set up email to receive it in a format that is easy for them to access. However, you have to educate them on how to do that, otherwise, they will take the path of least resistance, which is to ignore your RSS feed.

Create Buttons

There are a number of ways to make it easy for them to sign up. You can provide buttons for numerous news reader outlets, like Yahoo! Or Bloglines. You will have to get the URL for your news feed and use that to create a button that allows people who are familiar with these larger online news feeds to subscribe to your content. For that you have to have the RSS feed module installed and have it available. It will typically look like this: <http://yoursitename/feed> . Some places like Wordpress automatically install RSS feeds and you can use the address provided to create those subscriber buttons.

Offer A Freebie With Your Feed

If you're still having problems getting subscribers, try offering a small freebie to get them to sign up. It can be a report of some fantastic tips to save or make money, or it can be a free video download. Try to make it something you can deliver instantaneously over the web with autoresponders. That makes this feature very easy. Of course, realize that they may sign up and get your product and leave easily too. So, you want to continue to provide content that will keep them interested and subscribed.

Package Your Own RSS feed

If you have various websites and content and you want to get the word out fast with minimal duplication, you want to package your own RSS feed and promote that with other website owners. You will want to split up your content by categories that others may want to subscribe to. You wouldn't put any recipes on a site you have along with how to get hired on another site, even if they are both blog posts. You have to be clear that whatever you

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package in the RSS feed package is one topic or focal point of interest for specific news outlets. A way to do that is to separate the categories into feeds for the mainstream media, a feed for your customers, some for potential customers, and even your competition. Or, you can split up the feeds into discrete industries that you can market to specific news outlets.

Promote It To Various Outlets

After you've packaged your own feed, you want to make sure it is available for others to use. Whether that is by agreement to purchase the feed or whether you merely post it on website newsreaders, it's up to you. You can submit your feeds to search engines and directories, just like they were their own pages. They are actually web pages, but they are in XML format which needs the newsreader to decipher and read. Once you're syndicated on a variety of other sites, traffic will pour in non-stop as long as you keep providing content.

Featured Aggregators

To view the RSS feeds, people use aggregators. Some are programs you add to your browser or install on your desktop. Others are websites that allow you to set up an account and use them to read news feeds. Some you can even integrate into your email to get RSS feeds through email format. It doesn't matter what you use, but here are a few that you can find online that you can check out.

My.Yahoo.com

This is a great way to see how easy it is to use an RSS reader through a website. Many people set up a page here and have no clue they are actually using an RSS reader because it's not that technical. You just search for categories of news that are available as RSS feeds and then choose to see them. They put in all the headlines in the various choices you made and you can easily check multiple sites and headlines in the category that you want.

Newsgator.com

This aggregator works with Microsoft Outlook. The Newsgator Online RSS feed is a software package that is free to download and use on your desktop. The Newsgator database claims over 1.5 million feeds available. There is even a mobile version available for cell phones.

Yahoo Pipes

This aggregator helps you compile RSS feeds from other RSS feeds. You have the option to search for feeds, combine them any way you like, even filter them, and this is called a pipe. This pipe can then be outputted as

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another RSS feed that you can use to deliver fresh content to your readers. They have a list of hot pipes that you can see and the ability to put widgets on your website pointing to the pipes you create. You can even geocode the pipe and see it displayed on a map.

Bloglines

This is a popular feed reader that is online. It has a social networking flavor in that you can share your favorite feeds with your friends. You can also set up your blog roll on an external blog using the bloglines news subscriptions you've selected. If you have multiple blogs, this is a great way to update the blog roll in one place and see it updated everywhere you inserted that code.

Strategies To Use News Feeds

So, we know that there are several ways to generate traffic with news feeds. You can either attract subscribers and have repeat visitors to your site. You can use RSS feeds to grab interesting content off other people's sites and make your website more attractive and interesting. And, you can also create and package your own RSS feeds and make them available to other people to publicize your content and bring people to your site.

So, what's the best way to go about doing all three? Here's a way to think about each strategy as you are starting to learn RSS feeds and how to use them:

1. Subscribe to multiple RSS aggregators,
2. Create feeds that are interesting and include them in your content,
3. Install RSS feeds on your blogs and websites, if it's not already there,
4. Add buttons and explanations to your blogs and web pages for people to be able to subscribe to your RSS feeds,
5. Send your feeds to your friends,
6. Publicize your feeds on social networks and in your signature lines,
7. Package your own RSS feed for your content,
8. Persuade other people to use your RSS feed for their sites,
9. Syndicate the feed,
10. Submit your feeds to search engines and directories.

This type of activity can take time to set up, but once you've located content from other sites that is renewed frequently, the feed will update itself. Every time you update content on your site, all your subscribers will see the newest version in their news readers or be updated in email. If you get really good at working with news feeds, you can pretty much start to be the star of the show on various different websites, from social networking to mainstream sites.

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You might even be able to start charging money for your feeds, especially when you go into syndication. So, RSS feeds may seem like a bit of an abnormality right now, but they are quickly becoming the only way to package your content online. If you haven't started to use RSS feeds yet, you are already behind the eight ball, as they say. This format is becoming more and more important as the web goes mobile as RSS feeds are uniquely suited to cell phones and Blackberries. So, try to jump in now and get your feet wet because this area is set to explode and start to generate huge traffic for those with the know-how to exploit this technology.

9

Applications: Working Hard For You

All these strategies and tools sure seem like a lot of work, right? Well, Internet marketers will tell you that you do have to put some effort into the process to start generating traffic. It doesn't happen instantaneously. Traffic is cumulative. The less you have, the harder it is to get. The more you have, the more likelihood you'll get even more. So, getting past the initial stage where no one knows where you are is important. To do that, you have to work hard to get your name out there and use as many strategies and tools as you can to bring that about.

Eventually though, you start to figure out that there are people who have gone ahead of you and had the same thought: "Gee, there must be a simpler way." So, they created applications and programs to help people do some of the social marketing tasks in much less time. This makes your life easier and many of these tools are still free, so it doesn't cost you anything to try them out. The only caution that we would deliver is that if you abuse any tool or application to spam any site on the web, you will soon be targeted for banning. So, be wise and use what you can, but avoid drawing unnecessary negative attention to yourself too. Just because a product can allow you to bookmark 100 pages all at once in a single day doesn't mean that that social bookmarking site will allow you to do that. So, always read the terms of agreements on these sites to see what is allowed to be used and what is not.

What Kind Of Application Should You Use?

Basically, you want something that will help you either promote yourself online or to create content and links across the web. These are the two areas of Internet marketing that can be really repetitive and time consuming. So, if you find things that help you to do that, you will be able to concentrate on developing good content and then using the applications to do the social marketing.

There are always services that you can buy to submit your content to various places, but these can get you blacklisted by Google or labeled as a spammer. So, be careful when you use third-party services to do some of your Internet marketing. You want to know where your links are going out to and how your image is being perceived online. You don't want to spend enormous amounts of time and money creating wonderfully interesting content only to have someone else spam it all over the web and get you banned from social

networking sites or downgraded by Google. It's a fine line between promoting yourself and spamming.

Media And Applications For Social Marketing

The applications you use will most likely be geared towards the social network you are on and the media you are using (articles, video, audio). If you are trying to take information from your website and promote it all over the web to generate traffic back to your site, then you have more options than if you are in Facebook and are promoting some content in their interface. They will have terms of service that limit exactly how you can go about promoting yourself. If you fail to abide by the terms of the service agreement, you end up banned.

So, let's go over first some of the software applications that can help promote various forms of digital media on the web.

Article Marketing

Content is still king, even if it may seem old-fashioned. Search engines still need some sort of text and tags to be able to efficiently crawl a page and index it properly. So, while you may be tempted to forgo article marketing - don't! Submitting multiple articles to article directories is still a very slick way to generate more traffic. Google still crawls these sites extensively and they are a great way to make yourself an expert on any topic!

Ezinearticles.com is probably the most recognized site for submitting articles to ramp up your traffic. The way you do this is to use the article to highlight some feature of the topic of your products or services. Then, in the biography box, you can add your name and one or two links to outside websites. Be careful that you don't link to a sales page as this is against the terms of their agreement. However, you can link to an informational page that has a link to go to a sales page. So, there's always a way around some tough guidelines geared to keep people from marketing these sites.

You can submit multiple articles to different sites using third party services and applications. Many will format the article to abide by the guidelines of the site you choose. Articleblaster.com is one such application that you can use in demo version to try out for free. Or you can try website versions that allow you to submit free articles that they subsequently publish to others, like submitarticlesfree.com.

Video Marketing

Videos grab people's attention because they are short, they don't require any effort to view, and they can be entertaining, instructive, and novel. YouTube is the most well-known video archive with tons of videos being produced by

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ordinary people every day. These types of promotional content has a real potential to go viral on the web, if it becomes highly popular. However, YouTube is not the only video website out there. You will want to submit your video to multiple sites, but this can quickly turn into a lot of work. That's because the search engines need descriptions and tags with the videos to be able to tell what's in the video. So, every time you submit a video, you have to redo all the content around it too, for the search engines. An application that can help you with your video submissions is called TubeMogul. This is a particularly effective tool for video submissions but it also helps with the bookmarking of them too. Now, you can submit your videos to many different sites without having to do it all manually. This gives you more time to concentrate on the actual content of the video and less on the repetitive marketing tasks.

Podcasts

Podcasts are just audio files that can be downloaded and played on portable MP3 players or Ipods. You can develop these audio files with your own equipment and upload them to your site. This attracts people who like to hear things on the go. The increase in people with Ipods has created a huge demand for new podcasts. You can use a podcast to create music, engage a powerful audio tutorial, and more. It's really not that hard to do and it's well worth it to capture attention, particularly from the younger generation (if that's your demographic).

After you create the content, you still want to market it all over the Internet to get a wide exposure. If you do this one by one, it can become quite a chore. So use the application called PodSubmitter to cut down on the work that you have to do to properly market your podcasts. It will help you to submit to about 50 directories. The only caveat is that when they link to your podcast on your site, you have to give them a reciprocal link on your site. It may not cost money, but it will cost you a bit of time, regardless. However, it's still far less time than if you submitted your podcasts one by one and had to locate all the directories yourself.

Strategies To Use Applications With Social Media

No matter what media you use, you will follow the same strategy of submitting to multiple sites to help build a large Internet presence. A typical process for any article, video, or podcast would be as follows:

1. Create the social media,
2. Set up the media on your website or blog,
3. Install submission software, if necessary, or visit site for submission,
4. Identify which sites to market through application and whether you need accounts there first,

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5. Visit all the sites you need to add accounts and profiles to and add them,
6. Add the links in the directories using the software,
7. Make sure the media is properly categorized and tagged,
8. Add keywords to the title and description,
9. Reply to comments on your submitted media,
10. Always add your website URL to all media, whether it is in the author bio, the end of a video, or as a final sound bite on your podcast.

Another way to create more traffic is to offer an incentive for that call to action to visit your site at the end. Maybe you can offer them a discount coupon, a free report or ebook. Once you understand your audience, you will be able to figure out what is the most attractive incentive you can offer them to come to your site and subscribe to your feeds.

Another factor that can affect how many people actually make it back to your site is the length of the URL they have to remember. You want your website URLs to be short, sweet, and memorable. Otherwise, they may try to get to your site several times and give up if they don't land there. Remember that with video and audios, they can't really cut and past video and sound bites into the address locator on their browser. They have to either remember it right or write it down and then try and plug it into the URL locator. Obviously, there is far more room for error this way when you are using videos and podcasts to help you increase your traffic. So, pay close attention to make sure that you are providing a URL that can be easily remembered and used when the time comes for them to hop back to your website.

For videos, you want to be brief. People are used to short mini-segments of information that they can view as they multitask. You do want to include an introduction on the video so that while it is loading the screen is actually marketing you or your business. At the end, you want to offer a final screen with your website URL and some incentive offer or special program you might have coming up to get them to go to your site.

For audio podcasts, you want to make sure the volume is set correctly to a medium level. Try to make sure your voice is pleasant and not fumbling for words. You want to follow a script that is light and entertaining. Being too serious or too commercial will lose you listeners. At the end, have a call to action to go and visit your website. If you don't ask, people won't know that you want them to do anything. So, ask and give them an incentive for doing what you ask so that they will follow through.

The types of social content that goes viral are usually ones that are funny, controversial, or entertaining in some fashion. Long-winded technical explanations don't do that well as YouTube videos. If you want to do viral marketing in different media, your best bet is to go check out what is already being successful online and then try to emulate their strategies. Keep in mind that it should fit your marketing niche and be appropriate for your image

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though. In this final chapter, we will help you get an idea of what your competitors are doing and how to use that knowledge to beat them at their own game.

10

Market Research: Stalk The Competition

Internet marketers are always learning new tricks to build traffic. Many people have been doing this sort of thing for years now and can quickly generate interest by posting videos or other content on the web. Those are the people who are usually competing for you for eyeballs, especially if they are in your market niche. So, first you want to get a good idea of who is ranking at the top of Google using the keywords you've targeted, and then you want to find ways to copy them so that people searching for their content find yours instead.

This can be done with articles, videos, any type of social media. It doesn't take a whole lot of smarts, and it can be very effective because much of the work of attracting attention is already done for you. You just have to hijack that attention back to your site instead.

How To Be An Expert Copy Cat

The first thing you do is go to the Google search engine and insert the keyword you are targeting. Then browse the first five pages of the search results to see who has gotten top ranking. These are the people who you are competing against.

Knowing that, you can start visiting their sites to see if you can find a way to use their popularity to increase your own. The simple way to do that is to go each site and see if they have a blog you can comment on, a discussion forum you can add to, or any other way to get your name in their site, with an appropriate link back to your website, if possible.

The next thing you want to do is create copy that is very similar to what they are using to be successful. You want to use similar keywords and similar topics. You don't want to outright plagiarize, but you do want to paraphrase and re-market the same content that worked for them.

Next, you want to find out who linked to these sites and content which made them go up in the Google ranking. Again, you use the Google search engine and type in "link:<http://competitorurl.com>"

This will give you an idea of who has linked to them. Here you are interested in seeing which social marketing sites are helping them to rank better. And then, you go into those sites and add your own bookmark or link there to

confuse people into going to your site and also to bring up the ranking on your content too. If you happen to be looking at a YouTube video, you would find the links at the Statistics & Data section given in YouTube for each video, instead of Google. Either way, you want to know who is linking and then try to get yourself listed there too.

Understanding Demographics

You will also want to know who are the people that showed such interest in these competitors. That's your target demographic too. You can do this for the competitor and for the links they go to. All you have to do is visit Alexa.com to get a good insight into the demographics of any site online.

Alexa.com

At Alexa.com you can insert the URL of any site on the Internet and search the traffic rankings by selecting that option. It will come up with the site and a brief description of what that site is about. That already tells you something about what kind of people your competitors and their links are attracting. Maybe it is a technology site or a business site, whichever, you now have that little piece of information stored away as one of the types of people who frequent your competitors' sites.

Under that you will see a breakdown of the traffic by country. This gives you an idea of the national demographic you may be targeting. You may think all sites are geared towards the US market, but that's not so. Once you understood who is coming to visit your competitors' sites, you will have a better understanding of how to build and market your own sites.

One last way to find places that can help you drive traffic to your site with Alexa.com is to use their Top 500 Sites list. It gives you a breakdown of which sites have the most traffic, separated by country of origin. This will allow you to target these sites to add comments, contribute content, and generally try to elbow your way into the limelight. It is located here: http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_500 .

Quantacast.com

To further your understanding, you will want to visit quantacast.com for more market research on your competitors and their links. This site gives you a much better breakdown of the demographics in very minute detail. So, once you have some good candidates to research further, you add them to market research list you will do on Quantacast.com. All you have to do is type in the URL of the link you are interested in researching, and Quantacast can let you know what the gender, age, ethnicity, income, and college education is for all the people visiting that site. It will also give you the monthly traffic frequency too.

If you are looking for demographics, Quantacast.com is a goldmine of information!

Quantacast also has a very nice feature that allows you to see the other sites the audience that likes the link you are investigating also likes online. This gives you a handy-dandy way to find even more sites to research to see how they are attracting their visitors. Not only that, but you can visit these sites like you did the original site and see if there is any way you can add a comment, a link, or any other interaction that can drive traffic from those sites back to your site. And, don't limit your contributions to these sites to small things, if the return might be high. Think about submitting videos and podcasts too if that's allowed.

Strategies For Market Research

The best way to do market research is to stalk your competitors and see what they're doing. There are a number of different ways you can get that information and then use it to your advantage. It does take work and persistence. However, think how quickly your traffic can grow if you manage to find a site that is quickly building their audience and your content, along with backlinks to your site, is plastered all over their pages. You will quickly zoom up the ladder of visibility and you will see the results of your efforts.

Here is a step-by-step way to approach your market research in a methodical manner so as to use your time to the best advantage:

1. Understand your market niche and keywords you are targeting,
2. Go to Google and type in the keyword to find your competitors on the first five search result pages,
3. Visit each of these to see if you can add content and backlinks to the site to increase your traffic,
4. Take note of the most popular topics/content on these sites so you can later copy them,
5. Target a few of these for copy cat efforts,
6. Check out those few for their target market by visiting Alexa.com,
7. Use Quantacast.com to find out more about the demographics of these sites and what other sites might have an interest in that content,
8. Build content that is very similar to the sites you've targeted,
9. Submit it to the same people who linked to those sites, using similar keywords, titles, etc,
10. Reply to comments and build a buzz around your content.

Conclusion

As you can see the major strategies all had one thing in common. You want to saturate the Internet with your content, either through commenting, ratings, backlinks, or original content. That content should be in various media: articles, videos, podcasts, emails, and more. You want that content to highlight your area of expertise and to generate traffic for you through multiple sites. You want it to be attractive to search engines, using keywords that have been researched through competitors use or the keyword tool. You want your content available through blogs, websites, RSS feeds and anything that people online will want to use repeatedly.

You want to link to people who are popular already so that their momentum carries you to the top with less work. You want to be at the leading edge of the tools available to cut down your work and give each action more power to attract attention. You want to be able to understand the motivations of people who are visiting sites over and over again and cater to those motivations. And, you want to make it extremely easy for those visitors to sign up for repeated updates and continuous contact with you to convert that traffic to dollar signs.

None of this is brain surgery, but it does take some attention to target your efforts where they will show the most benefit to you. While good content will always be in demand, if no one knows it's on your site, it might as well be hidden under a mattress offline. It has to be promoted, it has to be networked, and it has to use the power of the Internet to propagate itself. Once you start to get the hang of this, you will have automated many of the ways to do this and you will be able to see opportunities that others cannot see to make traffic go from big name sites to your own.

As the traffic rolls in, it will become clear that dominating the Internet is not as hard as it seems. It just takes careful strategizing and some knowledge of the mechanics in play to boost your site into the major headlines of at least a few major players. When that happens, their magic rubs off on you and you can become a major player in your own right.

Resources

Applications

Podsubmitter – If you have podcasts you want to submit to multiple sites, you can do it with Podsubmitter. It will allow you to submit to up to 55 directories for free. It is located at: <http://www.podsubmitter.com> .

Submitarticlesfree – An online place to submit a free article and have it published in various places around the web. Make sure you can use your own author bio and link for it to have the desired effect. It is located here: <http://www.submitarticlesfree.com> .

TubeMogul – This site allows you to syndicate your videos to multiple sites at one time. It can also help you bookmark them. TubeMogul can help with some market research too as it tracks people viewing videos. It is located here: <http://www.tubemogul.com> .

Blog Platforms

Wordpress – This is the premiere blogging platform with plenty of widgets and add-ins to make your blog stand out. You can use Wordpress.org if you want to use your own hosting site, or you can use Wordpress.com for a limited type of blog and use your own domain name with it for the best results. It is located here: <http://www.wordpress.com> . Or for the version you install on your own domain, you can go here: <http://www.wordpress.org>

Blogger – Another well-known blogging platform. It allows you to use Google Adsense. It is not as integrated with other blogs on the same site, like Wordpress, so it can be harder to generate cross-traffic. It is located here: <http://www.blogger.com> .

Blog Plug-Ins

All In One SEO Pack – This plug-in helps to generate descriptions and keywords automatically that are SEO friendly to attract search engine traffic. It is located here: <http://wp.uberdose.com/2007/03/24/all-in-one-seo-pack/>

SimpleTags – Another plug-in that allows you generate tags for your blog entries. This one focuses on Technorati tags though. It is located here: <http://www.broobles.com/scripts/simpletags/> .

Classified Ads

Craigslist.com – This site is like a giant garage sale online. You can advertise almost anything you want online here for free. It is separated by geographic regions so that your post won't show outside the region you submit it to. However, you can post multiple ads in different regions, if they are sufficiently different. It is located here: <http://www.craigslist.com> .

Facebook Classified Ads – In facebook, there is an area called the Marketplace where you can post classified ads for free. They will be made visible either by the networks you are in or to your circle of friends. It is located within the Facebook interface.

Groups

Yahoo! Groups – This search engine also serves as a portal for some social networking. Yahoo! Groups are very popular places and easily searched by category. The interface is not that customizable. You do have the option to get a daily digest, separate emails, or no notice of updates to the group. It is located here: <http://groups.yahoo.com/?ch=web&pub=fp-us&t=fp&sec=link&slk=defaultrough> .

Google Groups – They allow much more customization of the interface. You can search groups by categories here too. You can even set up shared web pages in the group. It is located here: <http://groups.google.com/> .

Facebook Groups - You have to join Facebook to join one of their groups. Once you build a profile in Facebook, you can start looking through the groups available to join on the left-hand menu on the old interface, and on the right-hand menu on the new Facebook interface. They allow you to network more on Facebook and build your circle of friends through interaction on this site. It is located within Facebook, after you join here: <http://www.facebook.com> .

Market Research Tools

Alexa – Find the traffic rankings of sites online. This site uses its own toolbar to gain statistics on various sites, so while it's a good representation, it's not

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100% accurate. It depends on if the visitor to your site had an Alexa toolbar installed as to whether they count them as traffic. However, it can be a great way to do market research on your competitors traffic patterns and see when they are going up and when they are going down. It is located at:

<http://www.alexa.com> .

Quantacast – If you want a bird's eye view of different competitors or audience demographics, use Quantacast. You can get a breakdown of gender, age, education level, and income of the people visiting sites online. This can be very helpful in figuring out which audiences your competitors have targeted and which you should be targeting too. This is located at: <http://www.quantacast.com> .

News Feed Aggregators

My Yahoo – This aggregator is so easy to use that many people don't even know that they are using news feeds. It's a matter of simply searching through categories and feed titles and then choosing to insert them into your My yahoo page. It's not obvious that what people are inserting are feeds, except for the feed icon. It can allow you to list news feed of your interests that updates automatically on one page. Then, you just visit your my yahoo page for the news you want, and nothing else. It is located here at: <http://my.yahoo.com> .

Newsgator - This aggregator works with Microsoft Outlook. The Newsgator Online RSS feed is a software package that is free to download and use on your desktop and there is even a mobile version available for cell phones. It is located here: <http://www.newsgator.com> .

Yahoo Pipes - This aggregator helps you compile RSS feeds from other RSS feeds and put them into a pipe. You have the option to search for feeds, combine them any way you like. This pipe can then be outputted as another RSS feed that you can use to deliver fresh content to your readers. It is located here: <http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/> .

Search Engines

Google.com – The major search engine online. It has a Google Adsense program that allows people to monetize their content and creates opportunities for advertisers. The search rankings are very competitive and based on an algorithm developed by Google software engineers and programmed into code. It is located here: <http://www.Google.com> .

Yahoo! - This is another leading search engine. It also uses its own algorithm to determine ranking. They do use different criteria so you can

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rank higher here than in Google. It does not have a monetization program like Google. However, it does have some aspects of social networking on the site, including groups, feed readers, email, and more. It is located here: <http://www.yahoo.com> .

StumbleUpon – This is a search engine and social bookmarking site all rolled into one. They use a rating system that is driven by people visiting sites, recommending them, and categorizing them and tagging them. These are then served up to other people in a random fashion called “stumbling the web.” It has a great capability to increase your traffic. It is located here: <http://www.stumbleupon.com> .

Ezclassifieds - This site offers people the ability to create classified ad programs to use in affiliate programs. They offer a way to help you make classified ads very quickly for specific products or geographic regions. You share 50% of the revenues generated from the classified ads. It is located here: <http://www.ezclassifieds.com> .

Social Bookmarking Sites

Delicious – Also known as del.icio.us. It offers a toolbar to be able to quickly tag your own sites or others on the web. It can give you the ability to create tag clouds that you can insert into blogs and other media online. It is located here: <http://delicious.com> .

Digg – This site makes it very easy to rate and comment bookmarked pages of news. They also have the categories of bookmarks separated by the media type for easier searching. It is a widely used social bookmarking site. Getting on the front page of Digg is a sure way to traffic heaven! It is located here: <http://www.digg.com> .

Social Networking Sites

Facebook – This was developed for the collegiate market and later expanded to professionals as these people graduated from college. The interface is clean and crisp, without a lot of extraneous stuff. It allows people to connect with others in their own network. It offers a profile and several ways to market yourself to your friends, although you are not allowed to spam marketing hype on your profile or elsewhere. It has many applications you can add to boost your profile or add marketing features to your profile. It is located here: <http://www.facebook.com> .

LinkedIn - This social networking site has a far more business-like and professional flavor. It is noted for helping people network to find new jobs or business opportunities. It is located here: <http://www.linkedin.com> .

MySpace – This site is for a younger, louder, generation. It allows much more flexibility with the profile in terms of customization of colors, backgrounds, and more. It attracts a lot of teenagers. You can have a profile here and another at Facebook. It doesn't matter how many social networking sites you belong to. It is located here: <http://www.myspace.com> .

Squidoo – This site allows you to define your brand and even promote and market products. It is more of a marketer's social network and is based on the creation of lenses that are focal points of interest that you want to highlight about your personal expertise or your business. It is located here: <http://www.squidoo.com> .

Twitter – A social networking site with minute-by-minute updates, if that's what you like. It's unlike the other sites, but hugely popular, particularly for mobile phone updates. Well worth investigating at: <http://www.twitter.com> .