

Reaching Your Customers In An Audience of Millions

Driving traffic to your web site can be challenging. Driving high quality traffic -- real paying customers -- can seem nearly impossible. How do you get your web site in front of the right audience? This article provides tactics for marketing on the World Wide Web by exploiting search engines like Yahoo!, Google and AltaVista.

Search engines use two primary methods for building and organizing their collection of web pages. The first is a technique known as "spidering", which uses scripts that scour the Web, gathering and indexing web pages automatically. The second method involves manually entering web pages into the search engine based on selected words and phrases ("key words") and preferred sort order. As a web site owner, you have control over both of these methods.

To take advantage of spidering, you can designate specific key words that describe your site by adding special META tags to the underlying HTML code of your web pages. For example, if you own a pet store, your best key words (those most frequently entered by potential customers) will be things like "dog", "cat", "pet food", etc. Add these words to all of your web pages using META tags. There is no guarantee that you will be placed optimally in search results, and some search engine spiders do not acknowledge META tags, but it's a small price to pay for additional control over your site.

Want even more control? For a fee, many search engines will proactively include your page and key words in their index. This new form of web marketing, known as "pay-for-placement", allows web site owners to get their site listed higher up in the search results for the key words they select. This improved visibility increases the chances of your link getting clicked on in the often overwhelming list of search results. You can be charged for the better placement as well as the clicks on your link. Although it sounds like fees might stack up quickly for this type of service, pay-for-placement can actually be more cost efficient than wayward clicks from banner advertising.

A tip on choosing key words for either META tags or pay-for-placement: Think of generic as well as unique terms that are relevant to your niche. Using the pet store example again, although "cat", "dog" and "pets" might seem to be the most obvious key words to use, "pet food", "grooming supplies" and "flea collars" will drive more qualified traffic to your site based on your core business.

Despite the brouhaha over crumbling "dot com" companies, the Internet still serves as a powerful venue for marketing your business. Being smart about your marketing means the difference between paying customers and random surfers.

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