

# Web Watcher

BY GLENN FLEISHMAN



## Attention, Please!

DRAWING TRAFFIC TO A WEB SITE used to involve posting messages in a number of places and leaving it at that. Now, with commercialization of the Internet complete, publishers have a variety of options—some free, some not. There are three general methods you can use: search-engine listings, virtual press campaigns, and advertising.

Being listed in search engines is an old-standby approach, but it has become trickier as more and more people report that their sites sometimes don't "stick" (that is, they get dropped by the search engines), so they have to check their listings and occasionally resubmit their sites. Although search engines might find your site and list it automatically (by using "spiders" that check every hypertext link on every site in their database), this can take a long time. To speed things up, submit your listing request directly.

Start by compiling a list of search engines. Next, obtain and follow their submission guidelines. Once you do get listed, check and recheck your listing—monthly is best. On most search engines you can even enter your site and see how many links they have listed. If your site is missing, you'll have to resubmit.

You can conduct an in-house virtual press campaign or hire an outside firm—the best-known one is NetPOST ([www.netpost.com](http://www.netpost.com)). These campaigns should follow real-world principles of good writing and target-press identification. In addition,

they should follow the Net principle of one-to-one marketing: each press release should be individually tailored with a cover letter explaining why the information might be relevant to the person receiving it. Without this, most editors will toss releases, assuming that unsolicited ones contain no useful information.

Press campaigns are most helpful for sites that have something significant to announce and are hoping to get media coverage. But be realistic about what kind of coverage you're likely to get—a new Netscape browser is front-page news in many cities, for instance; a publishing house going online might get coverage in *Publishers Weekly* and maybe a few book-related sites.

Advertising might be more affordable than you've been led to believe—there are some bargains out there. To spot the good deals, you'll need to understand how ad prices are structured. Costs for Web advertising pretty much follow the conventional approach of charging by CPM, or cost per thousand impressions. So buying 100,000 impressions (so that your ad will be displayed 100,000 times) with a CPM of \$20 costs \$2,000.

Several companies have recently started offering ad auction networks, in which unsold inventories of impressions—ones that sites know they can deliver but haven't filled—are sold for low prices.

There are also barter networks (the granddaddy of which is Link-

Exchange), in which you trade impressions on your Web site for appearances elsewhere. These barterers are usually based on a ratio, like two impressions on your site equal one paid impression on another. But before you sign up for this, consider what kinds of ads the networks are running—some deal in ads for hardcore pornographic sites, and your garden-center clients might look askance at such ads showing up at the top of their pages.

In addition to Web-based advertising, there's always conventional advertising. If you do any, don't forget to include your Web site and e-mail addresses—even if the ad isn't specifically about your site. And if you don't spend conventional ad dollars now, you might want to begin research on how to promote your site where potential customers (especially highly wired ones) live.

For all kinds of nitty-gritty details on everything discussed in this article, see Don Sellers's *Getting Hits* (ISBN 0-201-68815-8) from Peachpit Press ([www.peachpit.com](http://www.peachpit.com)).

Whatever strategy you end up using, don't let the novelty of your Web site keep you from heeding these tried-and-true rules of advertising: start by figuring out who you're trying to reach, tailor your message to them, and focus on promotional approaches that'll reach your audience most effectively. ♦

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