



# Internet Marketing

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## Understanding the Internet And the World Wide Web

The Internet is the mother of all networks, connecting computers around the globe. The World Wide Web (or Web) connects the contents from computer files ("pages") all over the world and links them together in a "web." Sites on the Web can offer text, graphics, sound, and video. The World Wide Web is where most consumer and business-to-business activity takes place on the Internet (or Net). The "front door" for your business, service, or organization is your Web "homepage."

From a business point of view, the Internet enables businesses to electronically communicate with potential customers to generate interest and/or sales. It can serve as your electronic brochure, demonstration area, and 24-hour-a-day storefront. From a user's point of view, the Internet is a tool to find information, communicate with people all over the world, and obtain a variety of products and services. From both points of view, these activities can take place quickly, easily and relatively inexpensively.

The Web has given birth to endless catch phrases many of which are synonymous with one another. For example, Internet Marketing, Online Marketing, Web Marketing, and Net Marketing all mean the same thing: Doing business on the World Wide Web. The prefix "cyber" originated during the development of cybernetics in the 1940s. Since the Web became part of the Internet in 1991, "cyber" is used to denote activities that while "real," take place in a "virtual" space; for example, cybercrime, cybercustomer, cyberpunk, cybersex, cyberspace, and cyberspeak.

## Formulating an Internet Strategy

Online and off, the bottom line is that marketing needs a well-thought-out plan, supported by data that reinforces your decisions. Internet statistics (widely available online and easily found using search engines) matched with what you know about your customer base will determine your online presence and marketing campaign strategies.

This chapter is dedicated to providing you with a running jump on the information you need (and where you can find it on the Web) that will enable you to formulate a well-targeted and successful Internet marketing strategy.

## Three Basic Principles

ICI/Softmail Direct ([www.softmail.com](http://www.softmail.com)), a media marketing communications company, offers three examples of how you can enhance your overall

marketing plan and increase the return on your Internet marketing efforts by accounting for three basic principles:

"Objectives are your goals: what do you want to accomplish with your Internet marketing plan? Strategy is how you approach achieving your goals. Tactics are the tools you use to implement your strategy. These are independent principles--yet dependent upon each other--and each needs to be addressed in your overall marketing plan."

"Example 1.

-- Objective: Sell products on the Internet.

-- Strategy: Create a Web site to sell products.

-- Tactic: Launch an integrated order-processing Web site by end of first quarter. Use direct mail and other traditional methods to promote the site.

Example 2.

-- Objective: Conduct an online customer survey.

-- Strategy: Drive customers to a designated URL (Internet address) that contains the survey.

-- Tactic: Launch an e-mail campaign to drive people to the survey URL--provide an incentive, set a deadline.

Example 3.

-- Objective: Increase company branding online.

-- Strategy: Publish company collateral on the Web.

-- Tactic: Convert company brochures to HTML (Hypertext Markup Language, used to create links in Web documents) and render company logo for Internet publishing."

## The Online Business Climate

As of 1998, an estimated 20 to 50 million people are clicking around the Web on a regular basis. That's a big range, "but big at both ends," reports Mary Meeker in the Morgan Stanley Internet Advertising Report. She adds "...and it's especially compelling since we believe there were only about 8 million users one year ago." Based on a FIND/SVP research report showing 41.5 million people in the U.S. used the Internet in a 30 day period, Michael Tchong, founder of the industry insider newsletter Iconocast, ([www.iconocast.com](http://www.iconocast.com)) did the math and says the numbers roughly translate into one new user every 1.8 seconds.

The key to Internet Marketing is motivating potential buyers to beat a path to your Web site "front door." The Internet and the World Wide Web are designed to transmit information. The

best way to attract users is to offer "information value" on your Web pages, so people will want to frequently click to your site.

The Internet has changed the behavior of growing numbers of people. Most Internet users (though not all) watch less television, read fewer newspapers, and listen less to radio-- usually because they enjoy spending their free time browsing the Internet.

#### SHOW ME THE NUMBERS: INTERNET USER DEMOGRAPHICS

1 in 10 Internet users are under 18 years old

1 in 4 Internet users have bought online

65% of online purchasers have used their credit cards online

37 years is the median age

45% are female

54% are baby boomers

30% are Generation Xers

16% are 50+ years old

64% are college-educated

68% are married

51% have a head of household income exceeding \$50,000

50% hold professional or managerial positions

60% of all Internet users access business information

60% are online more than 2 hours a week

50% have Internet access at work

--Information compiled from Nielsen Media Research, FIND/SVP, Forrester Research, Richard Hoy Reports ([www.tenagra.com](http://www.tenagra.com)), and "The State of the Net" by Peter Clemente, McGraw-Hill, 1998 (based on Emerging Technologies Research Group/Cyber Dialogue, Inc. findings).

The answer to the burning question "Can my company make money on the Internet" is likely yes. The answer to the next question "Can my company be profitable on the Internet?" is maybe, in time, if you do everything right.

Someday, many people will make millions of dollars with their online businesses. Today the majority of large commercial Web

sites are an expense in real dollars, paid out in anticipation this will someday translate into increased sales figures, also in real dollars. For many smaller businesses, the dream has already come true: trade publications are chock-full of "success stories" from little companies that have experienced sales growth, increased market share, and gained valuable visibility by going on the Web.

## Setting Up Your Own Online Business

One of the great advantages of the business community's Internet land rush is that you no longer have to go it alone. An entire new industry exists to help you get on the Internet. You can't read a business magazine without reading ads for Web consulting services, off-the-shelf software, how-to books, computer conferences, and trade shows.

Plenty of software programs and books will tell you how to do it all: Design a Web page, program in Hypertext Mark Up Language (HTML) or build from scratch all the software you'll need to communicate with customers, serve clients, accept and fulfill purchase orders, or track the cost/benefit ratio of your Internet marketing program.

Smart organizations rely on outside talent to do much of the necessary work. It is usually cost effective to purchase software tools, contract with an Internet Service Provider for access to networking machinery, and hire content experts or Web page designers who can create Web sites with a professional, polished appearance.

Most Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer packages of services, some for as little as \$20 a month, that include Web page set up, and online advertising opportunities.

There are even specialty firms (such as [www.translate.com](http://www.translate.com)) to translate your English-language Web pages into German, Spanish, French or Chinese to help you reach a global audience.

## What Sells on the Web

Major business successes on the Internet have been in supporting functions such as public relations, marketing, providing online information resources, and building relationships between businesses and their community.

If you want to try direct sales over the Web, examine the guidelines below to determine if your product is a good match for direct sales over the Internet.

While meeting one or more of these criteria is by no means a guarantee that a product will sell well on the Internet, we advise our clients that they will have a much more difficult time if they do not meet at least one of the criteria:

\* The product appeals to the technologically savvy.

- \* The product is a computer related item.
- \* The product appeals to a broad segment of the Internet user base (typically but by no means exclusively educated North American males under the age of 40).
- \* The product appeals to a wide geographic audience.
- \* The product is a specialty item that can be otherwise difficult to locate, particularly if it is a collectible or item about which people are passionate.
- \* The product purchase is an "informed purchase" -- it is typically purchased based on information rather than hyperbole.
- \* The product can be purchased over the Internet less expensively than otherwise.
- \* If a product is very inexpensive (i.e. under \$20) you may also find that even if you can successfully sell it over the Web you will have difficulty recouping your investment in time and money required to establish and maintain your presence. However, some have been very successful (e.g. specialty T-shirts) with low price items.

The Tenagra Corporation, a full-service, award-winning Internet agency (<http://marketing.tenagra.com/sells.html>). (Reprinted with permission.)

## Your Online Objectives: Sales, Marketing, Information, Or Public Relations?

"If there is only one reason to put your business on the Web, it's to create a brand awareness among an audience that is not likely to encounter your brand anywhere else

but cyberspace."

--Bob Heyman, Partner in Charge of Audience Development, U.S. Web

To help determine realistic objectives on the Net, consider what you can hope to get from creating a site.

## Marketing Consumer Products, Information, and Services

If you're promoting a consumer product, a lively and interactive Web site can be a vehicle for new product launches and help keep your product name visible in this new and exciting marketplace. Shopping by computer now offers the same comfort level to buyers who have no qualms about giving their credit card number when ordering by phone or mail.

Secure financial transactions are easy if your company links with an online bank such as CyberCash ([www.cybercash.com](http://www.cybercash.com)) or DigiCash ([www.digicash.com](http://www.digicash.com)). These services have replaced the need to install expensive, cumbersome security systems yourself. If you plan an online catalog, an array of off-

the-shelf software program products will let your customers scan product offerings, generate order forms, and pay electronically. As a bonus you can also get back a list that shows all the products the customer looked at--then rejected--while browsing your site.

If you sell products, information or services business-to-business, a product information Web site can be your 24-hour sales tool to potential customers all around the globe. Add ordering functions--and direct delivery if your product is something like a software program or online trade publication--and your Web site can make money while you sleep.

## How and Why to Register Your Domain Name -- Now!

Companies establish Internet presence with domain names that function as an individual business address for the "front door" of your homepage. This is the "www.yourbusiness.com" address.

A good domain name, like any good business name, is catchy and easy to remember. If you owned a nightclub called "Bob's Blues Club," for example, a good domain name might be [www.bobsbluesclub.com](http://www.bobsbluesclub.com) or, better yet, [www.bobsblues.com](http://www.bobsblues.com). A name like [www.bluesclub.com](http://www.bluesclub.com) is too generic: it doesn't identify the one owned by Bob, and worse, the name may already be in use by another blues club owner. That's why you should register your domain name as soon as possible.

Registration is done through InterNIC (<http://www.internic.net>). The cost of registration is \$70 per name for the first two years, with a renewal fee of \$35 each year thereafter. Check for names in use at the InterNic Web site. Domain names are registered on a first-come, first-serve basis. Your domain name becomes your property and can be bought and sold.

Since many names are taken, brainstorm to come up with at least three catchy, names for your Web site, to submit as alternatives. Cute contractions (such as [AmCig.com](http://AmCig.com) for American Cigar Company) are better than blah initials like [ACC.com](http://ACC.com). Punctuation symbols such as ampersand or exclamation point cannot be in a domain name, since these symbols are used by computers to give linking directions.

If you're a business, use "com" in your name; this is the designation for a commercial site. Other designations are "org" for a non-profit and "edu" for a college or school.

## Non-Profit Organizations

If you are a non-profit, a Web site can generate an e-mailing list for a new pool of donor money, or provide an inexpensive way to contact a geographically dispersed community that your organization wants to serve. The Internet was designed originally as a way to quickly move information: In terms of speed and cost it beats the pants off the old printed-folded-stamped-and-mailed newsletter.

All organizations have in common the need to reach out to a potentially larger customer/client base. For some, the reach is global. Of course, if you're selling blocks of ice, your customer

base reaches only as far as your trucks can deliver the product before it melts. But then again, a new customer living just down the road might not even know that you sell ice--unless he or she finds you on the Internet, at your new Web site, [www.iceblocks.com](http://www.iceblocks.com).

## Public Relations

Fortune 500 companies routinely spend millions of dollars on advertising--a gamble they can justify if someone can correlate the appearance of a certain radio jingle or TV spot with an obvious increase in sales.

These same companies, and many smaller ones, also spend a lot on "public relations"--usually far harder to translate those dollars into direct sales. They write it off as the cost of doing business--just as the owner of a music store in a small town might write off the cost of placing an ad in the program for the local High School's theater production of "Oklahoma!"

Archive copies of your press releases on your site. Print your Web address on all hard copies and note that the release can be downloaded from your site.

Generating goodwill in the community is always good business. Attracting the praise of the press is well worth its weight in print ad pages. In your Internet marketing plan, is your goal direct sales? Or would you be content with the goal of developing a gleaming reputation in the new community that is made of up of high-tech users of the Internet?

## NON-PROFIT CASE STUDY

[www.exploratorium.org](http://www.exploratorium.org)

### A Children's Museum Shines Its Image Online

The Exploratorium is a hands-on science museum for children. Housed in San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts, the Exploratorium's entry into the World Wide Web seemed, says Manager of Consumer Products Kurt Feichtmeir, "a natural extension of our outreach educational philosophy, rather than a business venture."

Three full-time Web employees work with the rest of the 200 educators, designers and scientists on the museum's staff to create lively, interactive games and imaginative text and picture pages based on how-to science projects ("make your own salt volcano") or tied to science news or to current museum displays. Popular with kids and with science-savvy adults, the site has drawn as many as a million hits per week with sophisticated programming--for example a live video "Webcast" of the century's last complete solar eclipse.

"This has opened the world to us, beyond anything we could have imagined," Feichtmeir says. "We get perhaps 500,000 to 600,000 visitors each year through our doors, yet millions of people who will never set foot in our museum are finding us, through the Internet."

The museum includes its Web address on everything it prints, from student bookmarks to press releases, but does no overt promotion.

"Our site gets a lot of buzz, and we've won lots of awards, for example a Webbie, which is like an Oscar for Web pages," Feichtmeir says. "We're also on a lot of 'cool site lists' or 'top ten lists', and we're recommended in magazines because our content is suitable for children."

Reciprocal links to the site from other non-profits, such as the Peoria Astronomical Society and the Science Learning Network, a consortium of science museums around the country, also ferry Web traffic. The site's high profile means that the museum gets many requests per week for links. Requests for links to the site are handled by the Webmaster; links out of the Exploratorium site are handled by Feichtmeir.

"We don't accept advertising and we don't want to link out so much that our pages will be cluttered," he says. Corporate underwriters who fund some of the special programming on the Exploratorium Web site get links, "in a public broadcasting sponsorship kind of way," Feichtmeir notes. For example, a notice thanking 3Com for its help in funding a network upgrade segues gracefully into a technical explanation of "asynchronous transfer protocols," in language a 12-year old can understand.

One of the pitfalls for non-profits who provide such an information-rich Web site, he adds, is that other Web developers often assume they can annex the material at will.

"People contact us and say they're creating a CD-ROM and would like to copy entire pages off our Web site," says Feichtmeir. "After all, if it's on the Internet, it must be free, right? A common request is this note on my desk from a woman in Texas who is writing a science textbook, and wants to use an image downloaded from our Web site. It will be a commercial book that retails for about \$32. But I know that when I call her and ask for \$150 as a permission fee, she's going to fall off her chair."

What's even more common "are people who want to link to just a piece of our site, and block the rest of it out. We're pretty firm about that. If you want to link to our site, you have to link to all of it."

Fending off commercial co-option on one hand, Feichtmeier's department is now mulling ways to turn the site into a revenue source. A planned link to the Exploratorium's book and gift shop, which sells the museum's own lines of family science books is expected to be successful as soon as they can provide a secure server to process credit cards.

"There was no business incentive in the beginning," Feichtmeir says. "We've always looked at this as a promotional vehicle. But now there is more interest in looking at some business models that make sense."

## Budgeting: How Much Does It Cost?

Launching a business Web site can cost as little as a thousand dollars-- for a simple Web page that directs potential clients to your office address and telephone number--to many tens of thousands of dollars per year to support an interactive, constantly updated service that can handle secure financial transactions via customer credit cards at a rapid rate.

Here are some questions to ask when setting up a budget:

1. Do I (or anyone on staff) have the computer skills and available time to set up and/or maintain a Web site?

If not, consider contracting Web site development to a freelance firm that will design pages, register your domain, submit it to search indexes, and promote the site with online publicity. They will also help you select an ISP and set up an account relationship that suits your needs. Fees run \$35 to \$200 per hour.

2. Does my organizational site have adequate computer power, and dedicated phone lines that can be used for high-speed telecommunications?

The minimum hardware requirements to handle a Web site operation in-house are as follows:

-- One computer, MAC or PC, that can run a multi-tasking operating system (OS) such as DOS, Windows NT, UNIX, WINDOWS 95, WINDOWS 98 or Apple Macintosh System 7.5 or greater. This computer needs at least 16 megabytes of random access memory (RAM) to handle the graphical interface needs of Web browsing.

-- The computer's hard drive should have at least one gigabit, to allow storage room for graphics and some color photographs. The more digital storage you have, the better.

-- To connect to a phone line, you need a modem, a computer/phone interface able to handle high volume bitstreams. Many computers have internal modems.

Ideally, this computer and modem platform should be used only for your Web page activities. Using the same machine for company e-mail, for example, will slow down traffic into and out of your Web site.

-- A high-speed phone line, such as a T1 leased line or ISDN from your local phone company, to handle large data streams to and from your site with ease. You will want such a line if you are running the Web site from your in-house computer, or if you are connecting your substantial in-house database to a server maintained by your ISP.

Basic charges range from \$50 per month for ISDN to several thousand dollars for your own leased line. Business-based ISPs will often bundle in the cost of a high speed "dedicated" phone line that runs from your business to theirs, and charge you by usage, by the month, or both.

3. Is there any reason I need my own server computer?

Probably not. For most organizations it makes sense to have your ISP be your host server. Hardware headaches become

their problem, not yours. It's their job to keep up with new software upgrades and technical breakthroughs, and if the system goes down for more than a day you can generally receive a discount on your monthly fees.

However, if your site will offer a large database of different products, and this information will need to be frequently updated by price or availability, it is better to have all data stored at a computer at your site, where your own computer staff can input the changes quickly.

Many businesses are now happy to turn all their Web-business files over to a host server in whom they have confidence. A good ISP routinely "backs up" (makes a spare copy of) client files in the event of a power outage or system crash. The older concerns about the security of customer credit card numbers, and the ability of unauthorized, joyriding programmers ("hackers") to break into and steal or destroy important company files seem to be falling by the wayside as ISPs and the Web business community develop password-protected, encrypted, and secure transaction software.

## Choosing An ISP

Any Internet Service Provider (ISP)--from giants like Earthlink to small regional firms--can set up a corporate account. The only technical requirements are an ability to run Web browser software such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer with a serial interface protocol (SLIP) or point-to-point protocol (PPP).

The advantage of choosing an ISP based in your area is that it's a lot easier to get a live person on the telephone--or in person--when you need technical support.

Ask the ISP how it manages backup plans (in case electricity goes out or master computers go down); what security measures are in place to prevent theft of information, credit card frauds, etc. Live 24-hour support by on-site staff is a must.

Choose an ISP that is big enough to handle your phone service concerns, from installation to phone line emergencies: Most businesses do not have the time, staff or savvy to troubleshoot phone line problems themselves.

Find out how much it costs for file storage space on the server. If the ISP offers business packages that include "click-through" tracking reports, site traffic logs, or Web page design services, get samples and customer referrals.

## Creating Your Web Budget

No one can say exactly how much money you should spend to develop an Internet marketing plan. Costs vary according to need. If you serve many simultaneous users, run real-time audio or video applications, and offer online ordering and e-mail confirmation, your costs will be higher than a business that

uses its homepage as a billboard to post product offerings, with static pictures and print descriptions.

Your budget will consider the following Web service costs, depending upon your needs:

Internet Service Provider

Hardware

Telephone charges, including T1 link

Design costs

Software development

Off-the-shelf software applications

Management of content

Training

Consulting

Installation

Server maintenance

Programming

Secure server for financial transactions

The features you offer on your site also determine cost.

Consider this checklist of features:

Unique URL (address)

Cybermall or storefront

Electronic commerce/financial transactions

Shopping cart software

Online catalogs

Direct order procedures

Static databases

Multimedia

Telephony

Audio

Video

FTP

Forms

Chat rooms

VRML

Statistics

Customer tracking

E-mail response and forwarding

Java (a programming language) applications

Animation

Security

Shared or private server

Veteran Web marketer Bob Heyman uses a simple rule of thumb to estimate the cost of a Web site during its first year: add up all the costs entailed in buying the hardware, services and staffing for initially setting up a Web site (including hourly labor from your own employees) and multiply the total by 3.

Here's how it works: Let's say you arrive at a modest budget of \$15,000. Now add to that figure another \$15,000. This is the estimated cost for reviewing, re-tooling and re-working your Web site after some weeks or months of feedback and analysis to find out what's working and what doesn't work. Since it is money well spent to fix mistakes, you won't want to under budget this portion.

Finally, add a third \$15,000 to your first year's budget. This is the sum you should set aside to adequately advertise and spread the word that you've got a Web site. This money and person-hours pays for both online publicity (such as submitting your URL to search engines such as Yahoo!) and for conventional media (such as new business cards with your Web site address, and trade press releases). Remember that letting the online audience find you easily is the key to a successful Web business. Without promotion, the coolest Web site is nothing more than a bright neon sign set up in your basement--worthless if no one else can see it.

Even if you have a small business or a non-profit organization, and feel you can only budget \$2,000 dollars to get an online presence, take a deep breath and commit \$6,000. As with any

business expense, it's better to come in under budget than to abandon a project because you've run out of money to do the job right.

## Sample Budget for a Simple In-House Web Site

### Start-Up Costs

Domain Name Registration: \$70 for the first two years.  
Annual renewals: \$35.

Web site Design (Freelance): \$10,000.

ISP Sign-up Fee: (\$100)

Advertising and Promotion for site launch (Freelance): \$10,000.

Estimated staff/executive time, hourly: \$15,000.

So, your start up costs might be in the neighborhood of \$35,000. Notice these are mostly labor costs, including staff or your own hours. Start up costs would be reduced if you let your ISP design your page for you; designing the page yourself might cost more in staff hours.

Ongoing costs for managing the Internet portion of your marketing strategy include:

- 1) monthly rentals and rates for host server and phone lines;
- 2) hourly labor costs for employees or freelancers hired to update your Web site content as needed, and troubleshoot problems that arise with your ISP/host server;
- 3) full or part-time wages for employees that may be required if the site business entails customer support, online sales transactions, online product delivery, chat hosting, etc.;
- 4) purchasing hardware or software upgrades; and
- 5) expenses for advertising and publicity to continue to direct new users to your Web site.

### First Year Ongoing Costs

Domain name renewal: \$35 a year after the first two years

Monthly ISP Fees for data storage and service: \$500 per month

Updates and changes to Web site Design and Content  
(Freelance): \$300 month

Publicity (postage, printing, other in-house expenses): \$350 per  
quarter

Estimated staff/executive time, hourly: \$15,000.

In this case, operating costs for first year, second year and beyond might be \$26,000 per year. Costs for monthly data storage and service will vary by the ISP and also vary by the extent or complexity of your site. A simple site that does not have to be frequently updated or changed will cost less.

Set aside time to review and analyze your Internet operations. Spend at least one hour a week browsing the Web. Use the time not only to click on to your own site (to see if it's working properly) but to search and examine competitors' sites. You can also hunt for related sites worth linking to, or, browse around for examples of well-designed screen pages to inspire or improve your own Web site.

Analyze monthly server logs to make sure you're getting enough bang for your Internet bucks. SEE the section, "Analyzing Web Traffic And Effectiveness" below for ways to do this economically.)

#### BOOTSTRAP YOUR WEB SITE

Want to test the waters before taking the big money plunge into the Internet? If you only need a basic site where you want to communicate with your customers, sell one or two items, or just catalog your offerings, why not keep it simple and try the "Get rich slow" track?

Most business-based Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can tailor a soup-to-nuts package for you that includes Web page set up, server storage, online advertising opportunities, and the software you need to directly sell products over the Web for a nominal monthly charge. When shopping for ISPs, ask for references (Web sites as well as names) to check if other clients are satisfied with their service.

At the very least, as part of your monthly access fee, most ISPs offer you limited server space for your Web files. Off-the-shelf software programs costing under \$100, such as Claris Home-Page, Adobe PageMill, or Microsoft FrontPage enable you to create and manage a Web site without learning HTML.

The site may not be as bright and sparkling as one created by a professional designer, but it will be serviceable. As in all cases, use Web listings and real-world promotions to drive traffic to the site. This go-it-alone approach saves you money and time and, most importantly, functions as preliminary market research. If people blaze a trail to your site and respond to your offerings, you have the "go ahead" to upgrade and expand.

SEE Question #2. under Budgeting: How Much Does It Cost? above for the minimum hardware requirements to handle a Web site operation in-house.

## Find Your Competitors Online

Market research for your Internet business includes looking at what your competitors and clients are already doing online.

Their Web site address may be in their advertisements. If you don't have the address, look it up at [www.wmo.com](http://www.wmo.com), a Web site that cross-references URLs and company names.

Explore your entire field to discover all the competing companies and products that you may not know about. Use the online indexes created by directory companies such as Yahoo! ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)) or Lycos ([www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)). They constantly troll the Internet for new Web sites which they then categorize and index within their own Web site.

Unlike news database services (such as Lexis/Nexis), directory companies' provide information free. There are also specialized directories that gather commercial Web sites. BizNet ([www.biznet.com](http://www.biznet.com)) is a good example of a specialized directory within a general field. (SEE Resources in the Appendix for a listing of corporate intelligence sites.)

The most desirable Internet prospect is someone actively seeking specific information. The search begins with search engines. The more you understand how search engines work, the better able you will be to name, design, and advertise your Web site so that motivated individuals land on your homepage.

To use a search engine follow the on -screen directions which are different for each directory service. Type in keywords. Then click on an on-screen "search" button. Within seconds, a list that "matches" your keyword request appears. The more specific your search parameters, the more successful your search will be.

### Popular Search Engines

AltaVista ([www.altavista.digital.com](http://www.altavista.digital.com))

Excite ([www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com))

HotBot ([www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com))

InfoSeek ([www.infoseek.com](http://www.infoseek.com))

Lycos ([www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com))

Yahoo ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com))

NOTE: Meta-engines such as Dogpile at [www.dogpile.com](http://www.dogpile.com) or Beaucoup! at <http://www.beaucoup.com/engines.html> will search many of the above engines simultaneously on a single request.

## Planning and Developing Web Site Content and Services Positioning: Successful Business Models Online

### From Small Simple Sites to Complex Empires

#### Information, Please Web site

Since people browsing the Web are usually looking for specific information, offering a Web site with specific helpful data is a popular way for a business or organization to make its name on the World Wide Web. The information you provide could be free recipes, if your company sells food products. If you make and sell kites, a Web site that lists kite-flying instructions, the best parks and beaches to fly kites, addresses for kite-flying clubs and a personal story, with photos, about your visit to the annual Kite Festival in Tokyo.

#### Create a Guest Book and a Reason to Register

Such a friendly, low-key business site might also become profitable if you request that visitors sign in to a "guest book" or submit their e-mail address to get on a list for mailings to inform them of your new kite products, a special sale, or a kite show coming up in Kalamazoo where you will have a sales booth. To encourage them to give you their address, you might offer a contest (a free custom kite) or the opportunity to download blueprints to make a small kite.

To encourage traffic, set up links with Web sites run by amateur kite-flying clubs or even the Tokyo Tourist Board. You might also profit by running small banner ads (a sponsorship strip that runs along the bottom of your Web page) for a kite magazine, in exchange for cash or free print advertising space (for more on this, see the section "Strategic Partnerships"). This is just one example of how to integrate your Web marketing into your overall business marketing plan.

The role your Web site serves is to establish brand awareness and goodwill. You can do this best by providing accurate and timely information, updating your content on a regular, weekly, if not daily, basis.

Information Web sites also suit non-profits hoping to disseminate late-breaking news, comprehensive source lists, and position statements to journalists and interested parties. Such sites can be simple in design but will have lots of "information value" to a seeking audience.

#### Online Brochures

Some Web sites are static catalogs of product offerings, with pictures and print descriptions of product features. If your product is unique or esoteric, this may be sufficient. However, if your competitor has got an online catalog with direct-order

functions, this site will look dated.

#### Vanity Web site

You put up a Web page just because your competitors have one. Or because your boss has commanded "get us on that Internet thing." Or you think it would be cool to have "xyzbusiness.com" printed on your business cards.

There's nothing wrong with a vanity site. Plenty of people have them, even if they use them to post scanned-in snapshots of their grand-children. A simple homepage has "information value" to the casual browsing visitor if it includes some way for the visitor to contact you: A listing of your e-mail address, street or mailing address, and a telephone number, at the very least.

A vanity site can perform one very important function: it can serve as a marker that establishes your domain name. If you're not yet sure what kind of business you want to do on the Internet, or future funding is uncertain, the best course of action may be to create a very simple site with a polished-looking homepage, and park it on an business-based ISP that will allow room for growth when you need it.

#### Business-To-Business Sales

Online catalogs can sell to a customer base that spreads far beyond the territory of your earthbound sales force. A business Web page can also help your salespeople. Having your products and their features viewed online eliminates the hasty and costly mailings of product spec sheets, which the customer may actually prefer to easily view on their home-office computer screen. Once into your Web site, the customer could generate a purchase order or sales form to e-mail or fax the order. A live salesperson can follow up a pending order by e-mail, fax, or phone.

Depending on what you sell, electronic payment through CyberCash or CommerceNet or other form of electronic transaction through a conventional bank is an option. Since commercial sales are often made with a 30-day or similar payment policy, the bill for online sales can be a printed invoice that is mailed to the buyer's accounts payable department.

#### Protecting Intellectual Property on the Web

Some people believe original content created for the Internet is in the public domain. Not so. Legally, the Internet, like a newspaper, is considered "publishing." Ownership of published material, under U.S. Copyright law, belongs to the author or creator. It doesn't matter that it's technically easy to download. Copying content without a given permission, especially if it carries a copyright notice, exposes your organization to legal liability.

Protect your own valuable Web site content, such as catalog copy, with a registered copyright. The basic fee is \$20. To copyright your Web pages properly, put a copyright notice on screen (i.e., © 1999 Fancyboots Inc.) and register your original material, text and pictures, with the U.S. Copyright Office within one year.

The U.S. Copyright office lets you file electronically. You'll find more information at their Web site (<http://loc.gov/copyright>) or by calling U.S. Copyright Office in Washington at (202)707-5959 and asking for an "Information Specialist."

### Online Sales of Information/Data Services/Software

This field may be dominated by industry giants such as Lexis/Nexis, Dow Jones, and Microsoft, but there are many small businesses that didn't exist years ago, that are also making money on the Internet by supplying people with updated and specific information.

These companies collect and sell business data: Lists of sales prospects, job leads, e-mail address lists, hot stock market tips, niche industry newsletters. The latest trend in the information-product business are companies that sell software programs through Web sites, delivering them digitally to customer's computers on demand.

Historically, such Web sites first have offered their data streams gratis, then switched into paid services when their customer base had grown large enough--and their reputations strong enough--to motivate frequent users to pay.

A more common way to make money on information sites is to provide other businesses with opportunities for electronic advertising, typically paired with a link to the sponsoring firm's site.

Since a great deal of information can be delivered digitally as text, it's easy for a customer to download it from the vendor. Using any sort of electronic billing system, it is quite easy to create a pay-as-you-download setup. Or you can bill "subscribers" monthly or yearly as if it was print.

A paid-information site succeeds when income received exceeds the cost of acquiring data, storing data and delivering it. This kind of business is simple enough that it can be run out of someone's home. Many electronic newsletters are run out of a computer on somebody's kitchen table. Having input keys close at hand is indeed critical, if what you're selling is late-breaking news.

### Online Catalogs

Everybody from Spiegel to Frederick's of Hollywood is putting their sales on line. To the customer, online shopping is a lot like browsing through a mail-order catalog. The advantage to you the vendor is that you don't have to print an expensive packet of pages, suffer the agonies of bulk-rate mailing, or pay \$X per CPM (cost per thousand) for a mailing list of prospects.

The disadvantage of online catalogs is that you have to be able to lure enough customers to clicking onto your screen pages,

and keep them entertained enough to shop it through. Scanned-in color pictures, contests and giveaways help. To see what a successful online catalog looks like, check out the general interest bookstore at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and the discount computer bookstore at [www.bookpool.com](http://www.bookpool.com).

## Your Online Showroom

A Web site acts like a nonlinear catalog--people jump around to find what they want. Software can track which pages your customers and prospects look at. Suppose your software reports thousands of hits on the "customer comments" page and few on the "specifications page." This would lead an astute marketing person (you) to emphasize customer comments in your literature and elsewhere.

Break up your information into bite-sized pieces and put them on different, but linked pages. Your information will download faster and retain your customer's interest longer. Minimize graphics for fast screen draws. Reserve elaborate graphics for later pages after the viewer has selected a specific product. At that point, your potential customers are presumably willing to wait a little longer for the download because they are getting something they have requested.

## Do Something for Your Customers

Your site can perform unique functions unlike any other sales literature. For example, you can allow your customer to configure your product for their individual needs. Mercedes-Benz (choose "configurator" at [www.mercedes.com](http://www.mercedes.com)) allows you to choose model, color, interior, and various other options. You develop a complete specification for the exact car you want to buy, and then, you submit it to a local dealer.

If applicable, demonstrate how your product works with animation. At the very least, provide a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section, providing succinct answers to common customer questions.

--Burke Franklin, President and CEO,  
JIAN Tools for Software, Inc.

Business ISPs offer a menu of selling and billing tools. Costs are low and features often bundled. A popular feature in sales software is the "shopping cart" which allows customers to browse a catalog, pick out certain items, or take them out again before they approach the cashier. The same software program keeps complete track of each customer's shopping experience, resulting in a log that reveals to the vendor which products were considered and rejected--a valuable marketing tool!

The modern method of having customers pay for products is to use an electronic banking system such as CyberCash ([www.cybercash.com](http://www.cybercash.com)). It is easy for merchants to sign up; individual buyers must register to get a number and password that is like a credit card, linked to a real ATM or credit card account at a normal bank. A similar system is DigiCash which provides each customer with a "digital signature" for authorization ([www.digicash.com](http://www.digicash.com)).

Major credit card companies have also set up protocols for electronic buying. If your company has already had experience with credit-card phone orders, you may feel comfortable setting up your own secure transaction service. Since some of your customers may not be comfortable typing in their credit card numbers over the computer, you should also make available an alternative phone number (toll free, of course) where they will reach a real person to gently take the order verbally. Or have alternative arrangements so the customer can order by fax or by mail, using their own computer-generated order form.

### Your Ordering System Must be Secure and Simple

Reassure your customers at every step of the way that you do everything possible to secure their credit card transactions:

"Your credit card transaction is secured by XYZ encryption backed by the CIA firewall technology and transmitted directly to our system without passing GO..."

See Amazon.com for an excellent example of how to deal with this issue.

Credit card transactions are not as big an issue as they have been made out to be. The real credit card problem is ensuring that you have a legitimate credit card belonging to a bona fide customer before you ship any product. Engage the services or software of companies like Digital River ([www.digitalriver.com](http://www.digitalriver.com)) or CyberSource ([www.cybersource.com](http://www.cybersource.com)) who have developed elaborate credit card screen systems to protect you, the merchant, from credit card crooks.

--Burke Franklin, President and CEO,  
JIAN Tools for Software, Inc.

### Tricks To Running A Successful Online Catalog

Don't run the whole catalog as a single, lengthy electronic document. If you sell boots, break up categories such as "Riding Boots" "Hiking Boots" "Snow Boots" "Cowboy Boots" and give each one a separate Web page. This makes it easier to link the "Riding Boots" Web site to outside sites of interest to horse fanciers, while "Hiking Boots" can be linked to sites that appeal to hikers. Naturally, you'll link all your sites together too, but you will have five times the chance to attract someone who's browsing the search engines to look for boots. SEE "Popular Search Engines" on page 171.

### FOLLOW THE DIRECT RESPONSE MASTERS

"If you want your site to be successful, imitate the techniques of popular catalogs. Some of the most successful Web sites are those developed by direct marketers such as Dell Computer and The Sharper Image. Your Web site is an opportunity to show customers everything they might need to make a buying decision. All of your copy must sell. Use sub-headlines that make a benefit statement. Make your text descriptive and rich in adjectives as well as specifics. Almost all of the classic direct response marketing techniques in the "real" world apply to selling over the Internet."

--Burke Franklin, President and CEO, JIAN Tools for Software, Inc.

CONSUMER PRODUCT CASE STUDY  
www.reel.com

## You Are What You Watch: A Film Site Watches Viewers Who Buy

Stuart Skorman knows a business expansion opportunity when he sees one. In 1985, he created his own Empire: a string of video rental stores on the East Coast. Ten years later he sold to the even larger Blockbuster Video chain, then relocated to California, where he couldn't help but launch yet another video store.

His store near the U.C. Berkeley campus is the actual front for a virtual new venture selling movie videos over the Internet. Click on [www.reel.com](http://www.reel.com) and you're transported to a cineaste's paradise: buy new films at 15 to 20 percent off the retail price, purchase "used" movies for under \$5, or rent movie cassettes for even less (rental costs are \$4.50 for 1-4 cassettes, plus shipping, with a seven day return policy.)

The sales selection is driven by a powerful search engine that allows customers to search for a movie by title, by director. Clair V., a "movie matching" program employing "collaborative filtering" uses a viewer's previous selections to predict and suggest other titles she or he might like.

"It replicates the experience of a really good video store," says Web site publicist Nicki Dugan. "For example, if you really love 'Breakfast at Tiffany's,' a good store clerk might suggest a contemporary version or some other Audrey Hepburn film. This takes the process a little further using more creative matches that are less than obvious."

To a frequent user, the suggestions made by the collaborative filter, Clair V., can seem eerily intuitive. Created by Entertainment Decisions, a Chicago software developer, Claire V. registers the viewer's choices and based on what other viewers with the same preferences have rented or bought, reel.com makes specific recommendations whenever the user re-visits the site's homepage. This process is dubbed Reel Genius™ and Entertainment Decisions and reel.com hope to refine the audience-tracking program for other Internet sales sites.

Approximately 15,000 people visit the Web site each day, many of them attracted by constantly changing "hot" film lists, live-action video movie trailers, and a participatory film club. Dubbed Cinema U., this section offers online lectures and bulletin board discussions led by well-known film critics such as Andrew Sarris and Molly Haskell.

Cassettes by the thousands are sold each month. Nearly 100,000 film titles are inventoried at the Berkeley location, where a staff of 15 handle shipping and billing. Credit card transactions are securely encrypted; customers still leery of typing in credit card numbers can phone or fax their orders.

With so much invested in staff, inventory, Web technology and content (writer and reviewer fees) the Web operation leans heavily on the storefront's retail sales "until the site becomes self sufficient."

There was no splashy launch. Instead, the company let its strategic partners spread the word. Led and financed by executives who have done well in other franchise businesses, Reel LLC made cross-link deals with the Internet Movie Database, Mr. Showbiz, Film.com, Hollywood Online, Web

TV, and Yahoo! to position [www.reel.com](http://www.reel.com) as either a "preferred" or exclusive link for movie cassette purchases. While some of those deals involved on-screen banner advertising, the company waited a full year before placing its first print ad, in *Movieline Magazine*.

Stuart Skorman says "Customer service is my mantra" and to this end [reel.com](http://reel.com) employs 40 writers and consultants, all avid film buffs, who review and help further refine the filtering/recommendation process. If a title is out of print, [reel.com](http://reel.com) uses its national network of dealers to scare up a copy.

The [reel.com](http://reel.com) site is worth exploring for its use of psychographics to help sell product. [Reel.com's](http://reel.com) order are increasing at the rate of 20% per month. If "you are what you watch," it may be worth noting that in his on-screen bio, CFO David Barnard admits his favorite flick is "The Color of Money."

## Publicity/Entertainment/Event Site

Major corporations sometimes set up a Web page to tout a particular product: a film opening from Paramount, a hot TV show on the CBS network, the latest line of Chrysler cars. Expect a real dog and pony show: singing, dancing graphics, real-time video or animation, stereo sound, 3-D images. Checking out these Web pages can be very useful if you'd like to see what state-of-the-art Web designers are doing, even if you can't afford them.

What other designers know is that sometimes you can copy some of those bells and whistles by copying the source code using Web browser software. Site copying is quite common among designers, but remember that large corporations do take the trouble to copyright their Web page designs, and may have three or four floors of legal department to find you and haul you into Federal Court for copyright infringement if your Web page looks a little too similar to a copyrighted page.

There is no law against borrowing marketing strategies. Take the time to analyze how entertainment sites are so adept at linking to commercial sponsors, which in the case of a movie premiere might be a fast food chain or a soft drink.

There's no reason you can't do the same for your own events. Remember Bob's Blues Club? If Bob's Web page, [www.bobsblues.com](http://www.bobsblues.com), is being used to list upcoming harmonica concert dates and performances, Bob may be able to sell an advertising banner at the bottom of the page to a local music store that sells harmonicas, or to a record company. Bob might even be able to coax the local distributor from which he buys beer to sponsor a weekly concert date update page--if his distributor's boss wants "to get in on that Internet thing."

## Tools and Resources: Many Are Free

Since the Internet was designed to carry information, it is no surprise that a lot of data about internet marketing is readily accessed if you already have a computer.

Business sources on the World Wide Web include specialized directories, online business magazines, pricey newsletters e-mailed to you direct, and companies touting software or services related to Web commerce. Many online companies offer good information for free; they typically also carry product pitches, paid advertising or promotional links to clients that have paid to reach a business audience.

Non-profit Web sites and those run by long-standing amateur computer-user clubs, as the Berkeley Mac User's Group (BMUG), make available not only free advice but free software as well. This is called "shareware" and it has a long tradition in computer communities. You can get the software sent to you on a computer disk; more commonly today the entire software product can be e-mailed to you or directly downloaded from the Internet.

Don't discount a shareware product just because it is offered for free; many computer professionals feel that products developed by avid yet amateur computer can be as good, or better, than a commercial software product that was rushed to store shelves before it was completely de-bugged.

One measure of the value given to freely distributed shareware is the fact that companies that sell business related software products, such as iCat and Microsoft, routinely offer free "samples" of new products and free product upgrades through their Web sites, as a loss leader to entice people to buy other software products in their product lines.

SEE Resources in the Appendix for Where to Find Marketing Information on the Web, Product Companies for Business-to-Business sites, Online Service Companies, and ISP information.

## Customer Service and the Web

The cost of offering 24-hour customer service with a Web site can be measured against the cost saved by not hiring staff to answer customer questions by telephone.

Companies that sell complicated products with lots of product specifications (such as cars or computers) save on printing costs when they put their spec sheets and how-to manuals online. Another plus is that visitors to the customer service part of a Web site may be enticed to notice or purchase a second product, or, at least, be induced to leave an e-mail address to add to your direct mail, e-mail list.

A common model is a Web page that directs customers to a FAQ (frequently asked questions) file. The other end of the scale is a sophisticated system such as Federal Express tracking that allows FedEx clients to find package delivery status, day or night, instead of talking to a live customer service representative. Some sites make it possible to have real-time computer "chats" with representatives.

The more high-tech your business is, the more likely your customers will appreciate a quick online response to their queries.

## This Hotline's No Turkey

For decades, the company that markets Butterball turkeys for Thanksgiving dinner has offered a toll-free hotline phone service during the holiday season. The "Butterball Turkey Information Line" is staffed with motherly-sounding women who answer turkey-cooking questions for frazzled homemakers.

By 1997, when you called the toll-free number at any time other than the Thanksgiving/Christmas season, you got a recorded message directing you to Butterball's Web site instead. During the holiday season, all radio, TV and print advertisements for Butterball turkeys also direct harried cooks to the Web address.

The results? During the month of November in 1997, the telephone hotline logged over two million phone calls; during the same period, Butterball's Web site tracked over five million hits. It must be said, popular as the Web site is, customer demand in 1998 by non-computer users led Butterball to re-establish the telephone hotline (1-800-288-8372) all year around.

Butterball's Web site was designed, installed and is updated by the Butterball's corporate public relations firm, which prefers to remain nameless in the manner of all good corporate PR firms. And as befits a corporation selling an icon of American cuisine, the content of the Butterball site is likewise conservative, directing visitors to recipes and FAQ (frequently asked questions) file to answer common cooking queries.

There are a few pages on company history and products, and an invitation to join a mailing list for a newsletter. "Turkey University" offers a cooking class that is updated daily during November, and goes on break once Turkey Day passes.

Off season, the Web site is as dead as a picked-over turkey carcass. Oh sure, you can listen to a real audio clip of a real gobbling turkey or read about memorable moments on the turkey hotline history. However, aside from some tips about barbecuing turkey on the grill during the summer, there's not a lot the corporation wants or needs to say. If anybody needs turkey help, the Web pages list a telephone number for customer complaints and information. That number is answered during normal business hours and worried turkey cooks can get transferred to a home economist on staff.

So why bother? For Butterball, the Web site performs an important function by handling customer service overflow during peak season. And that's enough, because the company doesn't have to hire or train scores more of motherly-sounding consultants for the telephone hotline.

The site also provides a valuable Web presence during the height of turkey-buying season, putting the poultry brand name before a new generation of cooks.

"Because we got on the Internet early on, it's allowed us to basically own Thanksgiving online," says the PR agency's executive in charge of the Butterball Web page. "Last year, for example, we got valuable editorial coverage for free from Yahoo!, which posted the Butterball address on its homepage during most of November."

It's an upward spiral of positive, free publicity; newspaper food sections hoping to hop on the Internet bandwagon eagerly print Butterball's Web site address; consumer computer magazines and online news organizations casting about for seasonal content publish it, too. Any resulting surge of "hits" moves the Butterball site into directory lists for the week's "most

visited" or "most popular" sites, and this in turn draws even more "hits" from curious visitors.

Over 1,000 Web pages have been given permission to link into Butterball's site. Most of the linking sites are "personal" Web pages that document family Thanksgiving celebrations, with pictures and audio; others were created by cooking schools, kitchenware suppliers and home cooks eager to distribute recipes and share cooking advice.

By contrast, the only outward link is to Netscape--and that is an invitation to download the latest version of its browser software, the better to appreciate the color photos of plump, brown roasted turkeys that decorate the Butterball Web site.

## Web Site Design: A Very Brief Primer

"Making a Web page is like herding cats."

-- Andreas Ramos, "Hands On Web Design"

There are two ways to create a Web page. The slow way is to do it yourself, by typing in the hyperlinking codes as HTML or "tags" around simple computer text. The tags, which are combinations of letters, numbers and symbols, are similar to old fashioned typesetting codes. It is possible to create a nice Web site this way with varied text sizes, graphics, scanned-in color pictures, even sound and motion with these typed codes, but it's fussy work.

Software HTML editors, HTML converters, screen page templates and page-making software such as Adobe's PageMill make the job easier, and you can buy plenty of off-the-shelf software and manuals for sophisticated Web page design. When you are done, your ISP will give you the additional information or software you need to test the hyperlinks through the server before your official launch.

The fast way to design a Web page is to let someone else do it. Your ISP may be able to recommend local Web artists or an agency to you. You'll probably want to work with someone who is available for face to face meetings. A reliable designer is expected to offer a sample portfolio, client references, timetables, mockups, and a budget, and have a background in advertising or marketing as well.

If you're using an agency that contracts design work to freelancers, make sure you meet the designer who will do the work before you commit to a contract. The executive in charge of publicity or marketing should work closely with the designer, to ensure the Web site mirrors the look and intention of the organization's overall business marketing plans.

## Top Tips for Good Web Site Design

1. Design pages that download fast. Instead of full-scanned photos or large and complicated logos, choose smaller text sizes or simpler treatments that reveal your message quickly once a potential customer has clicked on your

URL.

2. Design sites even your grandmother could navigate. Go for uncluttered pages, with on-screen "buttons" or text bars that allow a visitor to easily click to material that's imbedded more deeply in your site.

3. Design sites to be accessible. Test hyperlink connections with all known browser programs. Don't neglect Lynx, a text-only browser system, or you may shut out computer users with older hardware or folks in other countries.

4. Design for repeat visits to your sites. Most browser software offers computer users the chance to "bookmark" sites in a list file so they can return quickly. Be sure your homepage design and hyperlinking software makes it easy to "bookmark" in all known browsers.

5. Design for updates to keep your content fresh. Repeat visitors expect updated content, even if it's only a few price changes for "This Week's Sale." Your homepage can stay the same if it's got a "What's New!" or "What's On Sale!" button or bar that connects to the updated content on a different page.

To be a savvy buyer of design services, read a short book on pagemaking basics, such as "Hands On Web Site Design" by Andreas Ramos. Ramos also has a Web site ([www.andreas.com](http://www.andreas.com)) offering free templates, free helpful software, and how-to advice for do-it-yourselfers. SEE Resources in the Appendix for additional titles.

## Advertising/Promoting Your Web Site

"We are in the business of leading horses to water."

-- Bob Heyman, [Cypernautics/US Web](#)

Because the Internet and the World Wide Web is large and electronic, it looks like a mass medium. It's not. A true mass medium, such as radio or television, broadcasts a single message at one time to a large group of listeners who happen to be listening or viewing at that time. If you put a paid advertisement for the ice blocks you sell on your local TV station at 4:30 pm on a Tuesday afternoon, this single message reaches all the people watching reruns of "Mayberry RFD" at that time.

Internet communication only happens when someone browsing on the Web deliberately looks for you (by typing in your domain name, [www.iceblocks.com](http://www.iceblocks.com)) or is hunting through a search engine to see what's available and indexed under "ice." Or that person happens to be browsing the Web looking for something else, and happens to notice [www.iceblocks.com](http://www.iceblocks.com) embedded as a keyword in bold-face type, and on a whim decides to click on it.

There are plenty of computer users who log on and drift or "surf" aimlessly, looking for excitement and entertainment on the Web. But core users are those that Internet marketers like to refer to as "active seekers."

They may be looking for you because they need ice blocks. Now that you have spent time and money to create a Web site, you must make sure your Web site is easy for "active seekers" as well as "surfers" to find.

## Simple, but Crucial, Steps For Online Promotion

1. Nail down your domain name, registering it as soon as possible with InterNIC by going to [www.internic.net](http://www.internic.net) and following the screen directions. SEE the "How to Register Your Domain Name" below.

Don't, however, be tempted to start putting your URL or Web site address on business cards, stationary or advertisements until your site is up and running. As tempting as it is, and despite very good reasons (you ran out of business cards months ago, the deadline for the trade ad is next week) it is quite likely your site takes longer than expected to get all the bugs out. If a customer tries to click to your site and finds nothing--then what? Don't expect they will try again. You also don't want your competitors checking you out while your pages are in disarray.

2. Once up and running, register your Web site with online directories and search engines such as Yahoo! and Lycos. The most popular search engines offer to list your URLs and Web pages at no charge. Visit their pages and follow the directions for "Add URL" or "Submit" and fill out an on-screen form of information. Along with your domain name, you also have the opportunity to register individual Web pages within your site, separating them out with what's called a META tag. A META tag provides a "name" or "Title" for each Web page (which will also have a different URL) and an abstract made of keywords for the master index.

Make the most out of this free publicity by choosing the META tag keywords and page titles that will help potential clients find your site fast. The more specific, the better, If you are selling cowboy boots in Los Angeles, from a Web page at [www.fancyboots.com](http://www.fancyboots.com), good keywords in a META tag to submit to AltaVista might be `<META name="keywords" content "boots, shoes, cowboys,horses, rodeo, Rodeo Drive">`. The title of your page might be submitted as `<META name="description" content= "Now You Can Buy Cowboy Boots of The Stars.">`

The number of keywords, length of page names and the number of URLs you can submit at one time depends on the directory company. The directory company will check out your site and place your Web site in an appropriate category where its visitors can find it, such as under Companies, Products or Services. On popular directories, there is always a backlog of sites wanting to register, so it takes about two weeks after registration for a site to be officially listed.

Some online business directories also allow you to register information about your business at no charge. Examples include Four11, an Internet phone book ([www.four11.com](http://www.four11.com)) and the free classified ad services such as [www.netclassifieds.com](http://www.netclassifieds.com). To speed up this process, you can get automated software programs such as Submit-It.

3. Start generating an e-mail list for a press release you'll send to announce your new Web site. Your online publicity list would include e-mail addresses of both electronic and print trade magazines in your field, and related consumer print publications. (You may wish to call or write the editors first to see if they accept press releases via e-mail.)

Gather up all the business cards you've been collecting, and add any e-mail addresses to your press list. If you or your staff have already talked with these people through other channels, they will probably be interested (or at least not offended) when getting an e-mail notice about your new site.

4. Include your Web site and e-mail address in all your company literature, including business cards, stationery, brochures, catalogs, and print ads. Include it in all TV and radio spots.

If you or your staff are already using e-mail, put your Web site address in your signature file at the bottom of each posting. This is like having a little advertisement for your site whenever you send an e-mail message or reply to someone else's e-mail.

Keep your signature line short, just a line or two, with text instead of graphics. Otherwise, someone who's reading for e-mail message may clip off or quit the signature line if it goes off to another page or takes too long to download.

5. Hire a freelance PR consultant or work with your company's public relations and advertising department to make sure your Web site is always included whenever you do a conventional publicity campaign.

The conventional tools of the publicist--mass mailings, follow up phone calls, media interviews in trade press, photo opportunities in local press--should never be ignored.

6. Explore different ways to spread the news within the Internet community itself. Paid advertising on other sites, linking with other sites, and cautious posting to non-commercial sites such as newsgroups and chat groups can all help direct traffic to your Web site's front door.

Digitize your company logo so you can easily transmit it for publicity use. If you don't have time to do online PR, hire a firm to promote your Web sites. One example is Multimedia Marketing Group at [www.mmgco.com](http://www.mmgco.com). You'll find others

through Yahoo!, under "Announcement Services" in the category "Computers and the Internet." SEE also "Internet Resources" in the Resources section of the Appendix.

INFORMATION PUBLISHING CASE STUDY  
www.gardens.com

## A Gardening News Business Grows Towards Profitability

Believe it or not, there are gardeners in California's Silicon Valley, and increasing numbers of them click in on a regular basis to The Bay Area Gardener, a Web site dedicated to regional gardening news.

Carol Moholt, proprietor, Webmistress and sole employee, funded the site from the savings of what she calls a "mini-golden parachute" after ten years working in multimedia training for Apple Computer Company.

At first, Moholt moved cautiously, paying independent consultants for special help in graphics design and technical support. She pays writers for content-- perhaps one reason why her resulting pages have gotten not just good reviews but enthusiastic links from far larger sites, such as Yahoo!, Time Life's Virtual Garden, and the spider programs dedicated to gardening that are scattered across the globe.

"Everyone comments that the Bay Area Gardener is so simple to see and so easy to navigate," Moholt says. "I spent months mapping out what I was going to put on the site and what I wasn't going to put on it."

What make the cut are comprehensive listings of seminars, classes, flower shows, horticultural society meetings and special gardening related events, plus commentary from local garden writers. Local sources for plants and supplies are indexed in a separate section, with outward links only if she feels the connection has high information value.

"As a person with a marketing background I have a hard time with the concept of enticing my readers to go someplace else," she says. "And since I am a regional site, I politely decline any requests for links unless they are regional."

When the Bay Area Gardener began attracting more than 300 visitors a week, she began to pursue advertisers. Using a shareware page-tracking program called Webtracks, she garnered data on which sections of her Website attracted the most visitors. "This is the information that can tell the advertisers where to put the ads, so they feel they're getting a better return on their investment," she explains. In the first week, she received five calls from companies that wanted to advertise.

The more specific a content site, the more a Web publisher can command in ad sales. General sites may get less than \$10 per thousand "page impressions"--a term for how many times a screen page, with an ad, is downloaded to someone's home computer. But sites that show demographics can command between \$50 and \$150 per thousand, a figure comparable to specialty print media.

With her tracking program Moholt can show she's getting up to 50,000 impressions per month; when Time-Life's Virtual Garden Website ceased operation in late 1997, it only claimed 100,000 impressions per month.

"For a small, regional site to do even half as well shows we're reaching a critical mass," she says.

To promote the site, Moholt registered with search engines. "I also aligned myself with a regional Yahoo! group and I think that extra push helped." She distributes a press kit at regional gardening shows. She posted an announcement of her site in some gardening newsgroups, but points out that she had been a participating member in these forums for years, "not just some Johnny-come-lately, trying to dump an ad."

She found the newsgroup postings less helpful ("only the people reading that week saw it") than the print ads she ran in gardening magazines. In fact, one of her regrets is that she hasn't spent as much as she'd like for print ads: "they're very useful and draw lots of responses."

Moholt spends about 20 hours a week updating content on her site. This still leaves her plenty of time to garden at home, and ponder new ways to integrate advertising. A check at her Website shows she's moved away from banner ads to what she calls "bridge pages," which mingle ad information and content on a single page in the manner of print magazines.

## Use News Groups and Mailing Lists to Draw Traffic to Your Site

One of the oldest and most venerated part of the Internet is its long tradition of non-commercial forums calls newsgroups. There are about 15,000 discussion forums, on all sorts of subjects, from general politics to serious technical exchanges. Some of the discussions have gone on for decades or more, and their archives include files known as FAQs (for "frequently asked questions").

The kind of information you find is often quite specific and the people who use newsgroups visit them often to read, reply or start new discussions by e-mailing a message, called a posting, to the group.

If you make and repair aeolian harps, it's quite likely you'll find an aeolian harp newsgroup if you look in a general index such as Lycos or [www.dejanews.com](http://www.dejanews.com). It can be very tempting to send your e-mail press release to a newsgroup--after all, where else could you find all those people who are so interested in harps?

**Don't Do It! At Least Read This First.**

Posting a commercial message into a newsgroup is a lot like handing out your business cards at a cocktail party or at a church social. Sometimes the occasion seems appropriate, often it is not.

The non-commercial nature of the Internet itself remains zealously guarded. If you send a blatant, unsolicited advertising message into a group of users who are "chatting" over their computers in real time, or having a specific discussion through an e-mail news group or user group, you're likely to get a very angry response: a host of nasty reply messages (this is called

"flaming") or sufficient technical sabotage to shut down your computer.

The best way to find out is to spend a lot of time reading what other people are posting about aeolian harps. Even if you consider yourself the biggest harp expert on the planet, sit on your hands and don't dare even type in any sort of response until you've spent a few weeks monitoring the group. Be sure to read the FAQ section. Each newsgroup has its own etiquette and rules for posting, and most frown on any blatant commercial self-promotion. If you break the rules you will only earn the scorn of all those potential harp customers.

The time-honored way to publicize your business is to monitor the group for a while, then gradually participate in the discussions as an individual. If you have added your organization's Web site address to your signature file, interested parties will notice it at the bottom of each posted comment you make.

E-mail the newsgroup host or monitor to inquire if business-related information is permitted. If it looks like the coast is clear to make an announcement, be subtle and low key:

"I've noticed a lot of discussion of about acrylic versus catgut harp strings lately. Our store sells both kinds. Would anybody be interested in seeing the technical details from an acoustic comparison test we did at Carnegie Hall last year? You can find it on our Web site [www.coolharps.com](http://www.coolharps.com). Or, if you like I can e-mail you the report if you send me a blank reply at my e-mail, [joe@coolharps.com](mailto:joe@coolharps.com)."

This works because you are offering "information value"--a solid enticement to lure harpists to your online store.

## Mailing Lists

Mailing lists of e-mail addresses are compiled and sold just like postal addresses and can be just as useful for the direct-mail approach. For a sampling of what's available, check out mailing list directories such as Liszt ([www.liszt.com](http://www.liszt.com)) or CataList ([www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html](http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html)).

You can also compile your own e-mailing list by sifting through what's you've got already in terms of business cards and customer stationery. The advantage of an e-mail list over a postal mail list is that you don't have to pay for printing or postage: even the simplest e-mail programs allow you to post one message to a screen full of addresses you've collected.

Always make sure your Web pages provide an opportunity for visitors to "sign in" to a mailing list. Most of them know they'll probably get a commercial message in their e-mailbox later on. Encourage them to sign on by offering a "special" price sheet, a

printed catalog or some other goodie or freebie.

Web etiquette (called "netiquette") demands sensitivity, though. Never broadly post a commercial message to large numbers of people just because you've got your hands on a large public mailing list. This is not merely "junk e-mail." It's called "spamming" and considered highly unprofessional.

## Chat Rooms

Another type of discussion group is called the chat room. In chat rooms, online conversations can take place in real time. People just type in their comments which appear on a screen in a main room that everyone can read, or can click into a side room for a more specific and private conversation. Chat rooms for kids, for people interested in online pornography, lonely hearts clubs and hobby groups abound; some chats go on 24-hours-a-day, others can be set up for specific times.

Posting a commercial message during a live chat also depends on the rules of the chat. There is usually a person who monitors the chats. You can usually contact them by e-mail and ask if businesses may post.

Don't be surprised if a reply comes back suggesting that your company purchase an online ad or sponsor a chat site. This is like sponsoring a golf tournament or Little League team, and a very good way to get your Web site noticed by a desired target audience.

## Advertising Media Buying on the Web

"...the market you are advertising to is not just a crowd, but a passing parade."

--David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*

While the popular search engines such as Yahoo!, Lycos, Alta Vista, or Excite will list and index your Web site for free, they also offer the chance to advertise on their pages. Depending on how many thousands of dollars you would like to spend, your ad appears as a box, banner, image icon on the index pages. All someone has to do is click on the ad and they will be immediately linked to your homepage. Current prices range from \$25 to \$50 per thousand "impressions" which are usually logged when a visitor clicks onto a page that holds your ad.

## HOW TO SELECT KEYWORDS FOR LINKING TO YOUR SITE

Proximity is the secret. Choose keywords that tie-in closely with the product sold on your site. More importantly, select them from the perspective of the average user.

Pretend you are an average user and potential patron of your site. What would you most likely type into a search engine? Suppose you want to advertise a firm of architects. Is the keyword "architecture" as good as "architect"? Probably not. When the average user looks for an architect, is s/he more likely to type in "architect" or "architecture"? The only people I can see typing in "architecture" are architects themselves or a 5th grader writing a report on his favorite career of the day.

Choosing "architect" over "architecture" could make the difference between a successful campaign and a mediocre one. Ideally, you want to use both words for branding and to drive traffic to your site. You want to convey to your audience that architecture in all of its forms is directly connected to your architecture firm.

Mike Reynolds (miker@lycos.com) from *Seven Steps to Advertising on the Internet: A Beginner's Guide to Advertising on Lycos*.

Other information sites, such as online magazines and entertainment Web sites, also sell advertising that you can buy as you would any media. Ask the site for a media kit that gives information on prices, traffic and visitor demographics. Ask for contact names and references of other satisfied customers. Make sure to request a media kit from any Web site that a competitor is advertising on--this will give you some idea what similar businesses are paying. And remember that all prices are negotiable.

Some services are priced per "click through," meaning the number of times a visitor not only sees your ad but clicks on it to reach your Web site. Servers can software to measure this. Off the shelf software is also available from firms such as Accipter, Accrue, Broadvision, I/PRO, Intersé, and NetCount. This category of software studies and analyzes patterns in anonymous users' behavior and use that information to improve the site, surmise visitor demographics, and personalize content for users on-the-fly.

As with print advertising, a good Web ad is one that can be quickly read and understood. Go for text on top. A big fat logo or a color picture may take too long time to download--the visitor may just get impatient, quit, and reverse-click away from you.

Remember that the object of the ad is to steer them to your front-door homepage--you'll have more time to sell once they get there. Even a simple suggestion like "Click Here Now!" has been proven to drive up click-through rates by as much as 30 percent.

For small firms, one way to get a toe into advertising on the Internet is to share the space on a banner ad that runs along the top of a Web page. This is called banner swapping: you run a banner for someone else's business or site on your Web page, they run a banner on their site that advertises you. Check out the Link Exchange at [www.linkexchange.com](http://www.linkexchange.com) for more about banner swapping.

Note: MarketingBuilder Interactive includes an Internet Co-Marketing Agreement file in the Sales & Strategic Alliances folder to facilitate such a swap.

#### ONLINE MEANS "UP-TO-DATE"

Make sure that your dates (including copyright notices) are current. Review your site's content and links at least once per month. You've hired bright people to develop your site. They are motivated, creative, and proactive but perhaps inexperienced in the language and techniques of direct response marketing. These technicalities are your responsibility and they may be overlooked unless you do it yourself.

--Burke Franklin, President and CEO, JIAN Tools for Software, Inc.

#### Analyzing Web Site Traffic: Ads That Click!

To help you analyze the numbers, get Web tracking software to help you translate server logs into plain English.

Even if you trust your server, "click through" numbers and log reports can be unreliable tools. Experts estimate the variance is at least 5 percent, and can be as high as 30 percent.

Independent Web monitoring agencies, such as Internet Advertising Bureau which is trying to be like TV's Neilson's or Arbitron, will also give you numbers to mull to see if you are getting enough "hits" when you use paid advertising. SEE "Resources" in the Appendix for a list of Web monitoring agencies.

But even these tools can be unreliable. If a visitor clicks onto your Web site in response to an ad, then becomes impatient while waiting for the picture to download, they will quit before they see the whole ad page.

Or a user may be searching an index site by text only, with the graphics turned off, so they even if they click onto your advertisement in the course of searching they may not view it, just cruise past it. And of course they won't see your banner at all. But some ad-tracking software would consider this a "click-through."

AdKnowlege is an example of tracking software that counts an ad "impression" by the number of times 100 percent of your ad graphics are downloaded--not just the number of attempted tries. The Palo Alto, California-based online ad services company also maintains a database called MarketMatch that lists details about commercial sites that accept advertising. For a discussion of tracking software for advertising, see the Online Advertising Discussion list ([www.o-a.com/](http://www.o-a.com/)).

At the end of the month or year, if you've kept your track of your Web business, you should have a good idea of how much

new business came in via Internet marketing, and how much it cost you to get those new clients. The hard figures will speak for themselves.

If you are a non-profit and your goal was not to sell but to reach more people, visitor rates and click-through rates may be enough to justify the money spent.

Goodwill, an established brand presence in a new market, publicity value and the potential for true business growth in future years may be harder to estimate. But in your overall marketing plans.

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS CASE STUDY  
www.uspinc.com

### A \$3 Million Start-Up Goes Online for \$1400.

United Scientific Products Incorporated [USP Inc.] sells disposable supplies to laboratories that do biomedical research: everything from talc-free rubber gloves to miniature test tubes used to hold samples of human DNA. A nationally-distributed print catalog showcases over 500 such products; more than 400 products can be scrutinized and ordered through the company's Web site.

While "only a fraction of one percent" of the company's \$3 million annual sales come through the Internet, USP Inc. President and founder, Morten Wellhaven, says the Web site already pays for itself. Monthly costs are little more than the \$19.95 server fee charged by BEST, their business-minded ISP, and the entire price tag for setting up the site was a mere \$1,300, plus \$100 for the domain registration fee to InterNIC.

"This was something I knew our company had to learn," says Wellhaven, "but I also wanted to do it cheaply."

A vendor recommended a small Web consulting firm ("two college kids, really") who found and contacted the ISP, handled the domain name registration, and submitted the URL to Yahoo and nine other big search engines. They designed the Web page to guide a visitor through a catalog of scanned-in product drawings and text specifications. An off-the-shelf shopping cart program allows visitors to create a purchase-order form that is then either e-mailed, faxed or printed out and snail mailed to company headquarters in San Leandro, California, where eight front-office employees and a warehouse staff of 30 process and ship orders.

"We don't have the ability to do secure financial transfers over our site, but we don't need it," Wellhaven explains, "as most of our customers already have accounts with us."

The site gets about a dozen hits per day, "but 80 percent of the visits result in an order. We don't get casual interest--people use our site to check a product number or look at product specs."

Wellhaven says it takes one employee "30 minutes a day" to respond to e-mail queries and process the orders that come over the Web. "When the day comes that I'm dedicating half a person's time to the computer, we'll do something more complicated," he says. "For example, we have a button that says 'click here for sales specials.' Right now it just leads to a page that says, 'Call this toll-free number to get today's specials.' "

Wellhaven says one thing he insisted on was that his company's toll-free number appear on every single Web page. "A live person always answers the phone, because customer service is a big deal with us."

He's also been adept at integrating the Web page into USP Inc.'s overall marketing plan, even stipulating a page design in company colors of red and black. A flyer describing the new site accompanied a new product launch announcement mailed to an "A" list of 15,000. An advertising card sent to 75,000 additional names also announced the new Web site. With a target audience of high-tech lab workers and university researchers, potential customers are already likely to be familiar with the Internet.

"The Web address appears on every invoice, every ad, every print piece we send out," Wellhaven says.

Strategic links are with vendors, non-competitors who run technical Web sites and only deal wholesale. "The link to us is a service to the vendor and to the potential customer, who can then buy the product directly through us," says Wellhaven.

The Web site has also earned respect for this feisty startup firm. "One of my vendors told one of my salesmen that a competitor was complaining about us," Wellhaven says. "The vendor defended us, saying we were just a small company. But the competitor shot back at him: 'Not anymore. They have a Web site now!'"

## Linking With Strategic Partners

The days of free, reciprocal links are over. While it is still possible to arrange for a link by simply calling up a related site and arranging for a (virtual) handshake deal, if your site is a business you may be asked to pay for a link.

This payment may be cash, for which you may get a banner ad, box or button link to your site. On informational, non-commercial or non-profit sites you may simply get a sponsor line if you're sponsoring this week's news or a today's live chat session--but someone will be able to click on your Web site by clicking on your keyword link, bold-faced in the sponsor line.

Among smaller companies, and between commercial sites and non-commercial sites, you may not be hit up for cash at all. Rather, you will be asked to provide a bigger banner, a bigger button, or more icon links than what the other sites says they'll give to you. The bigger and more popular the other site is, the more you will be expected to give away. Ever year, someone ups the ante on linking strategies.

To contact a possible link or partner, e-mail them. Write or call only if you do not get a response in a reasonable time. If you can't figure out who or where to e-mail, query the InterNIC with a "Whois" search on the domain name: [www.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois](http://www.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois).

Links bring visitors to your Web pages, but they also lead them away. So you need to be very careful who you link to. You may

hope to sell a lot of leather cowboy boots, but do you want to be linked with another boot seller before your customer has the opportunity to see or purchase additional western wear from you? On the other hand, would you pay to be linked there?

## Extra! Extra! The Invasion of the Intranets!

These days it's not enough to have a world wide Web site: you've got to have an "Intranet" or "Extranet" network. Don't let the buzzwords throw you; you probably already have the capability to get these on line.

"Intranet" is an internal company communications network that allows all employees to access information and documents they need in their workday.

With office, home or laptop computers, employees use Internet access to stay connected when they are telecommuting alone on the road, or when they are combining their brain power on a single project that involves staff from geographically distant places.

Intranets can also bring into the fold outsiders, such as vendors and consultants, to share your database. A computer network created specifically to share certain kinds of information, such as inventory or product shipping histories, with outsiders is called an "Extranet."

One excellent example of an Extranet is the computerized shipping data made available by Federal Express to the clients of its package shipping business. On request, clients can receive a floppy disk that helps them retrieve the shipping histories of packages, through their own office computers. Such clients enjoy the security of checking on their en route deliveries when desired, and Federal Express saves staffing dollars whenever the clients do the checking on their own. The database is an Extranet-only version of a database that is linked to a small part of the Intranet computer system that links Federal Express offices nationwide.

A routine use of Intranets is a computer link between dealers and wholesalers. For example: a furniture manufacturer uses an Intranet to allow sales reps at 500 dealer outlets to find out which dining room tables are in stock, and which have to be back-ordered. Calling up this information on screen helps the sales rep close a deal with a customer who wants a table by Christmas--or else. More complicated setups allow dealers to order products that will be shipped to clients, factory-direct.

To set up an Intranet or Extranet, you'll need a "firewall"--the computer term for a security system that separates the more public areas of your computer network from files which hold private information, such as payroll or mailing lists. With a firewall, only users with passwords can access computer files.

Simple security systems are sold as off-the-shelf software. If your database is more complicated than a simple updating of inventory, you'll also need to design and coordinate data flow. Don't worry, you can hire someone to do this: U.S.Web ([www.usweb.com](http://www.usweb.com)) is one example of a consulting company that develops Websites and builds Intranet/Extranet networks for business users.

## Getting Return Business: Using Strategic Partners & Retailers Wisely

Logical strategic partners for linking include print publications

that are already part of your advertising budget, or companies that sell related products. A site that sells riding saddles and tack would be a good link for if your site sells cowboy boots. But if the tack site already has linked with another boot-seller, you'll have to work harder to woo visitors to your site, not your competitors.

Since users may often dizzily jump from site to site, smart Web site designers always offer a visitor a chance to "bookmark" or save your page URLs in their own browser software memory. An on-screen note like "Click Here to Bookmark this Page" or "You're Leaving Our Site Now --Please Save Our URL by Clicking Here so You Can Come Back Easily" is appreciated.

The cybermall--a group approach where many small businesses cluster together behind the "front door" of a mall-type Web site--is falling out of favor. Rather than linking a lot of disparate businesses together, it makes more sense to join a group that concentrates on a content category or business niche; for example, a big automotive site such as DealerNet at [www.dealernet.com](http://www.dealernet.com).

Joining a cybermall can be helpful if your business or service is one that is limited geographically. If you run a car repair shop in San Francisco, it's unlikely that you will find a customer in Santa Fe. But a regional Web site such as [www.sfcitysearch.com](http://www.sfcitysearch.com) is likely to be browsed by San Franciscans looking for local service companies.

The little cyber strip mall companies are quite aggressive about getting advertising, so consider the cost of being included in what is essentially an online phone book. Since money talks in these operations, another repair shop that pays the cybermall more for advertising is likely to get a better position at the top of the list on a page that features auto services. The other company may also have an ad so big on that page that your Web site address has to go on the next page, where it will not be immediately seen--or might never be noticed at all.

Keep browsing the Web yourself, checking out search engines and newsgroups for new sites that may be good to link with. Sometimes it is worth it to link out to a site that will not link back, if only to provide your own visitors the opportunity to find that link through you. This is one way to enhance the "information value" of even a modest site.

Do this enough and you become a big fish even if your pond (or kitchen table computer site) is small. For example, Joe, working at [www.coolharps.com](http://www.coolharps.com), might set up outward links to all sites he finds mentioned in the aeolian harp newsgroup. He builds an authoritative base site that will certainly be bookmarked by all who share a consuming passion for aeolian harps.

When linking without formal permission, Web etiquette

demands that you must delete the link if the owner of the other site requests it. (This is rare, but it happens.) It is also good manners to link only with the second site's front-door homepage--not to one of their information sites--to avoid giving the impression that you are co-opting, stealing or otherwise appropriating copyrighted material.

For more strategies for links and advertising, check out the Web Marketing Information Center ([www.wilsonWeb.com/Webmarket/](http://www.wilsonWeb.com/Webmarket/)) and strategy books such as "Getting Hits: The Definitive Guide to Promoting Your Web site," by Don Sellers.

The growth of the Net is not a fluke or a fad, but the consequence of unleashing the power of individual creativity. If it were an economy, it would be the triumph of the free market over central planning. In music, jazz over Bach. Democracy over dictatorship.

--The Internet: The Accidental Superhighway, The Economist,  
July 1, 1995