



The Naked Truth About Web Site Promotion

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This ebook explains the various options for promoting your web site and the pros and cons of each, based on the author's own 20 years of marketing experience. He used computers before the advent of the first desktop PC and used modem communications before the Internet, as we know it today, was born.



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Introduction

Creating a web site is a bit like putting up a poster in a railway tunnel in the Rocky Mountains: nobody has a hope in hell of finding it unless you tell them where it is, and unless it has something very useful and relevant to say, they will neither make the effort to look for it nor stay long to read it. Luckily for us, the 'effort' involved in finding a site – once you know its location – is a good deal less than in trekking the Rockies.

It therefore follows that as a budding web site marketer, the very least you should do – and the *first* thing you should do – is submit your URL (web site address starting `http://`) to the major search engines.

(If you are new to the Internet, you might like to [read this](#) before going any further.)

Search Engines

Search engines are the Librarians–On–Steroids of the Internet. They spend all their time visiting web sites and indexing them in order to make their content available to visitors. Without search engines, the Internet would be nothing more than a writhing mass of dark virtual corridors filled with even darker doorways, down which would wander millions of confused and lost souls, desperately seeking something...

There are at present no more than two dozen major search engines, plus innumerable smaller ones, plus thousands of relatively insignificant 'directories' that often try to pass themselves off as search engines.

Your first job – and your most important one – is to visit all the major engines and tell them about your site. Although you can use [site submission software](#), they each have slightly different requirements and vary somewhat in their classification of sites, so it is best to submit them individually by putting in your information manually. Your site will be indexed in due course and with any luck it should appear in the rankings in anything from a few days to a couple of months. That is why it should be your first job – you will not get overnight results.

Before you start submitting and to save repetitive typing, create a simple text file (using NotePad or other text editor) containing the following information:

- Your site URL (web site address starting http://....)
- Your site TITLE (the title of your site, not its web address)
- Your site DESCRIPTION (20–30 words describing the content of your site without puffery, over–capitalization or exclamations!!!)
- Your KEY WORDS (words relevant to your site that you expect people to search on)
- Your NAME
- Your POSTAL ADDRESS (some engines ask for this)
- Your EMAIL ADDRESS

If you want to submit your site now, click on each of the following links in turn and add your site information by copying and pasting from your text file: (and you really should read the rest of this article first!)

[AltaVista](#)

[Excite](#)

[Google](#)

[HotBot](#)

[Go/InfoSeek](#)

[Lycos](#)

[Northern Light](#)

[All the Web](#)

[Yahoo](#)

Using Site Submission Software

You can submit your site details using an **automated submission service** (hosted on a web site) or **auto-submission software** that resides on your PC. I recommend you use one or the other on a regular basis – about once per month – for submitting to the *minor* engines and directories, for two reasons: first, there are too many of them to submit to manually without getting a severe case of writer's cramp, and second, most of them will never bring you much in the way of traffic anyway, so why waste hours doing something by hand that can be done in minutes by efficient software? Most of your traffic will come from the major engines, so it *is* worth spending a little time submitting to them individually.

One of the best web-based services can be found [here](#) and blasts your URL to over 20,000 search engines and directories.

Probably the best downloadable site submission software that also contains many useful tools for tuning your site for best rankings is [SubmitWolf](#) . You can download a [free trial version](#) by clicking on the link. Once you see what it does and how well it does it, you will very likely want to keep it.

WHY FOLLOW THE PACK ...

An excellent web-based submission service can be found by clicking [here](#). Fill in the form and your site details will be sent to all the known search engines plus a huge number of 'classified' and 'FFA' sites (see below for definitions).

Be warned – whichever submission system you use, you will receive a *lot* of confirmation emails – so I strongly suggest you don't give your main email address as a contact.

Ranking Rules

Getting the highest possible ranking for your site for relevant keywords is probably considered the blackest art on the web. The problem is that each search engine has its own set of rules and to make it more fun, they don't tell you what the rules are! However, there are some basics that you should take note of:

- Only use keywords that are *directly relevant* to your site's contents (you are likely to be penalised for ignoring this, so if your site is about different ways of making cheese sandwiches, it probably should not have 'sex' as a keyword...)
- Do not repeat any keyword more than three times in your list
- Do make sure the title of your site is neither too long (max about 25 words) or too short (not enough information for searches) and drop in a keyword or two
- Do use at least your 3 main keywords in the first couple of paragraphs of text on your site's front page (index.html)
- Do place all required <HEAD> information (title, description, keywords) on every page of your site, in that order
- Don't try to cheat by placing repetitive keywords in 'invisible' type on your page – search engines can detect cheats like this
- Do include likely search *phrases* in your keywords, as well as individual words (e.g. use "ebook publishing" as well as "ebooks")
- Do establish mutual links with as many other sites as possible, as this will improve your 'link popularity' rating on some search engines (and is the best reason to submit to minor directories)
- Do join relevant WebRings/SiteRings for the same reason (see below)

Newsgroups

Newsgroups have always been an important feature of the Internet as they are one of the primary means of communicating with other users informally and exchanging information. Next to IRC (Internet Relay Chat – or chat rooms) they are the nearest thing to real-time discussion and are therefore fast-moving, up-to-date reference sources for millions of users.

I would strongly recommend identifying the key newsgroups relevant to your field and establishing a regular presence. Start by ‘lurking’ – just hanging out and reading other people’s messages until you get a flavour of the group. Read their rules and FAQ if available.

It is vital to become acquainted with the general etiquette of newsroom posting, as well as the particular rules – whether formally declared or not – of any particular newsgroup before posting.

Look out for questions posted by other users that you can answer. When you do answer, it is usually considered OK to add a short ‘signature’ after your name that may contain the URL to your site. This is a good way to advertise without being too blatant. Do check, though – some newsgroups frown even on this practice. By all means post questions of your own, making sure they are on-topic for that group. Nothing invites ‘flames’ (angry, often defamatory, usually illiterate retorts) more than off-topic posts and blatant advertising. You have been warned. Reserve one of your email addresses (you do have several, don’t you?) for newsgroup postings, as you will undoubtedly receive some [spam](#).

If you use Outlook Express as your email client, it has a newsreader built into it. Just hit the button and request a list of available newsgroups from your ISP. Most other email software has a similar feature, or you can find offline newsreaders at many ‘freebie’ sites, including the wonderful completelyfreesoftware.com .

Egroups & Ezines

Egroups operate in a different way to newsgroups in that subscribers receive messages (or daily digests of messages) direct by email. Some groups allow postings by subscribers, while others are 'announcement' lists with messages posted only by their operator (AKA 'moderator'). They also differ in that anyone can set up an egroup for even a handful of members, whereas a considerable amount of canvassing is required to set up a newsgroup.

Many egroups accept articles relevant to their list, and you should seriously consider writing articles for this purpose, as some have a very large circulation and a keen appetite for good material. Keep articles short and snappy, relevant and fresh. You can (and should) put a short signature at the end with a link to your site and/or email address, but the article must be more than just a puff for you.

It could also be worth considering starting your own egroup and publishing your own 'ezine' – a regular bulletin sent to subscribers containing short articles and announcements, etc. This is fairly easy to set up using one of the biggest egroup hosts on the web, <http://www.egroups.com> or <http://www.ListBot.com>.

Sustaining a high quality, readable ezine is a lot harder than setting one up. Unless you really have nothing else to do and you are a prolific, entertaining and knowledgeable writer with an inexhaustible supply of material, then don't try to publish more frequently than once – at most twice – per month. Most likely you will have only a few readers when you start and if you want them to remain loyal and spread the word, you must keep them interested from the first issue.

(I am compiling a new ebook on this subject – check the [HyperBooks](#) site regularly.)

Opt-in Lists

These work in a very similar way to egroups in that you 'subscribe' to them and receive messages to your email box. The main difference is that they are mostly un-moderated and 'free for all', which means that anyone can post unlimited advertising messages to them – and believe me, they do! In fact they do so in such vast – and ever-increasing – numbers, that I really cannot recommend you use them anymore.

As an experiment, I recently subscribed myself to eight of these opt-in lists and promptly received no fewer than 3,000 – yes, that's three thousand – emails within the following 24 hours. If I had spent even 10 seconds reading each message, it would have taken me more than 8 hours to get through them, by which time there would have been another thousand or so to deal with.

The problem (from the reader's point of view) is that software is now available that submits ads to these lists automatically, and you can bet that most of those messages were sent by autosubmitters to all eight lists, so there is huge duplication, triplication, quadruplication, etc of information, most of which is garbage. If you want to try it for yourself, I have two pieces of advice:

- DO NOT use your main email address to subscribe – set up another one just for this purpose (preferably web-based)
- Only subscribe to one or two lists at a time

Targeted Lists

Another relative newcomer with great potential. This system revolves around people checking boxes on a web form to receive email advertising on subjects they select, for which they are increasingly often paid a few cents per message read. You – as an advertiser – will have to pay a fee per reader to get your message onto the system, but at least you know that:

1. recipients have asked to receive information on your subject, and
2. are therefore much more likely to read and act on it, and
3. they are not going to complain about being ‘spammed’

I am not generally given to making predictions, but I will risk an opinion that this form of advertising will become much more popular on the web, as it has big advantages to both seller and buyer.



Find out how it works by putting yourself on the receiving end of the advertising first. Go to the MintMail site and sign up, check some categories and you will be paid a few cents per email you read. Tell a few friends about it and you will earn more money.

As an advertiser looking for targeted customers, go to MintMail, click the button marked ‘advertisers’ and you will see how it works from the other end. This form of advertising may look expensive at first glance, but remember that *all the recipients have asked to receive your ads and they are paid to read them* – which means they are warmed up ready for you. If your advertising is well prepared, you will certainly get a much higher response than from a cold list.

Reciprocal Links

You should, as a longer-term project, establish a network of links to your site from other *relevant but non-competing sites* on a *quid pro quo* basis. This will not only produce more visitors to your site, but also help to improve your rankings in search engines by increasing 'link popularity' ratings.

Many sites have a 'links' page, listing other sites likely to be of interest to their readers. They vary enormously in ease of use, comprehensiveness of coverage and quality of design. It is easy enough to add such a page to your site and add a selection of your favourite links – to sites who reciprocate by adding you to their links.

There is an excellent little free program that makes this job a breeze. It's called [Link Crafter](#) and it works like a mini search engine – it goes out onto the web to find sites relevant to yours by means of keywords, then extracts email addresses from those sites and provides a simple means to email webmasters suggesting reciprocal links. The time saved over doing this job manually is immense and I highly recommend it.

You can download Link Crafter free from [here](#).

WebRings and SiteRings

These terms are interchangeable and refer to a system of linking sites on related subjects by means of a series of buttons displayed on the front page of all member sites. Thus a visitor to one site in the ring has quick access to all the others.

If you do publish free ebooks on your site, one ring potentially worth joining is the FreeBooks SiteRing accessed from the [HyperBooks](#) site.

You can also start your own, which gives you an opportunity to advertise your site to all other SiteRing members, as well as the power to include or exclude particular sites.

SiteRings can be set up from [BraveNet](#), which also has one of the most comprehensive selections of webmaster tools and freebies anywhere on the net. If you have a web site that you want to liven up, I recommend you check this out – click on the banner or [this link](#). You can add an amazing range of services to your site and you can also join their affiliate program and earn some money.



Banner Advertising

You can't be on the net more than a couple of minutes before you come across banner ads by the dozen trying to find news ways to grab your attention. The standard 468x60 pixel banner is ubiquitous – often animated, often with tricky little pull-downs and any number of other gimmicks – always there in your face.

How many do you actually click on? How many do you end up buying from? Chances are, not many – but that doesn't necessarily mean they are a waste of time. They are a fact of net life and everyone knows they are ads, whatever they look like, so they are just part of the scenery. Every so often you and I click one and we go somewhere, look at some stuff, maybe spend some money – maybe not – and come back or go off somewhere else. And so what if the click-through rates are low – if they bring in a few reasonably well-targeted customers, they're doing their job. After all, marketing on the net is a numbers game – get your banner in front of millions and a few hundred or a few thousand may be interested enough to click through.

Everyone should have at least a couple of banners plugging their site, if only so they can play the banner exchange game, in which you agree to host a rotating selection of other banners in exchange for exposure for your banner on other sites. There are many banner exchanges you can join – here's a few to try:

[Clickhouse](#) [Impressionz \(UK\)](#) [LinkSynergy](#)

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

This is a relatively recent and rapidly growing development whereby advertisers pay a fixed amount (between a fraction of a US cent up to a couple cents) each time someone clicks through to your site having found it by searching on the PPC engine. You buy or bid for keywords and therefore your ranking can be established by pre-payment rather than other less predictable factors such as keyword relevance. This means that, by careful keyword selection, you can ensure close targeting of your visitors from such PPCs. I recommend this on a trial basis with careful tracking of visitors and sales.

[GoTo](#) is a well-known player in this field – they get a huge number of hits and if you want targeted traffic in volume, check them out. A relative newcomer that shows promise is [HootingOwl](#).



A low-entry-cost option for webmasters on a tight budget is provided by [BrainFox](#), which enables you to open an account for as little as \$5 and bid for keywords from as little as \$0.001 (one tenth of one cent).



Classified Advertising

Classifieds come in a variety of guises on the web. The so-called FFA (Free For All) sites were once useful, but now are so heavily 'spammed' by autosubmitters that hardly anyone reads them any more, and your ad will disappear from view within hours – or even minutes – of posting. There is a way to make the FFA system work for you, and that is by hosting your own FFA page. To read more about this, including instructions on setting up your own FFA page, [click here](#).

One of the best true classified ads systems on the web, with the facility to post regionally, nationally or internationally is operated by [AdLandPro](#) – you can see it in action and register for your own customisable classifieds page by clicking [here](#).



Another classified system that seems under-used at present, but that has great potential can be found [here](#).

Ebooks

Giving away free information from web sites in the form of ebooks is becoming more popular as a means of (a) attracting visitors, and (b) disseminating your sales message in a form readable off-line.

Not all ebooks are free, of course – many writers of both fiction and non-fiction use e-publishing to reach a worldwide audience. If you can write clearly on your pet subject, or research (without plagiarising) subjects of interest to you and your site visitors, you can put together a simple ebook (or short ereport) and make it available for download from your site. Of course, your ebook will contain links back to your site.

If you want to investigate using this excellent marketing tool further, visit the [HyperBooks](#) site and download the free ebook, ***“How to Start a Highly Profitable Internet Publishing Business”***.

I also suggest you also download some very useful shareware called [EbookCompiler](#). This neat program enables you to compile any number of HTML files and graphics into a compact, self-installing ebook. It also creates an icon on the recipient's desktop with your ebook title beneath it so it won't get buried among the other dozen downloads they did that day.

Viral Marketing

This is the newest, most hyped, one of the most effective – certainly the sneakiest – way to get your message around the net. It has nothing to do with spreading viruses, but the name derives from the way viruses travel from PC to PC via by direct email contact between sender and receiver.

Here's the way it works, in a nutshell:

1. The marketer (that's you) creates a file (like this one) containing some useful and/or interesting information, including an advertising message and a link to their site.
2. They send it to people (having asked their permission first, of course) and/or load it onto their website for free downloading by anyone interested.
3. Recipients then pass the file on to their friends, who pass it on to their friends, who post it on newsgroups, and so on until it finds its way (sometimes very quickly) into the PCs of thousands of potential readers.

Viral marketing is most effective when people have a good reason to pass on the file. The best reason of all (for most people) is that they will make some money for themselves by passing it on.

The more observant among you will have noticed that this ereport is an example of viral marketing in action. Many of the links are to my site or to affiliate programs that I have vetted and found to be good quality and worth promoting. I hope you will find them useful, informative and profitable if you decide to follow up on them. If you have followed my argument so far, you will now be expecting a sales pitch, do here it is – **if you would like to benefit from this viral marketing exercise without having to spend a cent on programming or advertising, here's what you do:**

STEP 1. Just below, you will find links to some of the best programs on the web that I can personally recommend for quality of product, well-conceived affiliate program and consistency of earnings. They are all free to join at 'entry level', and to make maximum income you may have to upgrade to paid membership when this system starts to produce results for you. **To participate, you need to join at least one of them**, but as they are free, I strongly suggest you join all three.

STEP 2. Having joined, you will receive a membership number from each, or a URL to a website created for your marketing purposes. You need to send me an email by clicking [here](#) and include in the body of the message:

- ◆ Your name and preferred email address
- ◆ the names of the programs you have joined,
- ◆ all your new numbers and URLs

STEP 3. (This is my bit) I will compile a new copy of this ereport containing your links to these three programs (or however many you join) and email it to you within (usually) 48 hours. I currently make no charge for this service, although I may do so soon.

STEP 4. You then (with permission) email it to friends and contacts, load it onto your web site (I will show you how if necessary) and when visitors read about the power of viral marketing, the more forward-thinking among them will sign up under you!

Here are the links:

[LINK 1](#) The Newbie Club is – you guessed – a club for net newcomers. Loads of plain-language, jargon-free help for anyone who feels confused, bemused or bewildered by the Internet or by computers.



[LINK 2](#) Click this banner if you want to join one of the best organised, most professionally promoted affiliate programs on the web. A source of valuable information and income for anyone who wants their own home-based, low-cost business.



[LINK 3](#) If you are serious about promoting a web site, but don't have a big pot of cash to fund your venture, The Simple System is your dream come true. Follow their guidance and you will have a successful site.



Simple, isn't it? I'm sure I don't need to spell out to you why this method is so much more powerful than just advertising in the normal way for people to join your money-making programs – the benefits must be obvious by now.

The above offer is open until I become so overwhelmed by people wanting me to compile ereports that I have to call a halt. After all, I do have a business to run and more books to write!

Even if you choose not to take advantage of this offer, you have my permission to pass this file on to anyone who may be interested, as long as you do not spam and you don't make a charge for it.

You can, of course, use the viral marketing technique in your own way. The marketing possibilities of ebooks and ereports have hardly been scratched yet and are only limited by your creativity. You can see how I have put this ereport together: it is free, it is (I hope) useful and informative, and it contains links – some of them to affiliate programs which will earn me a few bucks. So use this technique, stir in some ingredients of your own and see what you can do with it.

Notes For Newbies

There is nothing shameful about being a newcomer to the Internet – or ‘newbie’, as they are often referred to – everyone has to start somewhere. The Newbie Club is one of the best places to start – its free and easy to use, and will provide lots of help.



First of all, you need a website and at least one email address (preferably three or more). There are many free web space providers on the net, but most of them clutter up your site with banners and pop-ups which make it look unprofessional. It is worth paying a reasonable fee to be hosted on a decently fast server with no intrusive advertising, and one place you can go for this is [CreateASite](#) who also provide a very easy-to-use, live web page creator that is better than most. Another low-cost web host is [Hypermart](#), which also has efficient page builder software.

If you happen to live in the UK, a good choice is [FreeNetName](#), who not only host your site for free, they also allow you to register a .uk domain name for free.

There are so many free email services around that links to them seem superfluous, especially because if you have managed to download and read this file, you almost certainly have at least one address already. The reason you need at least three is because, as soon as you spend any serious time on the web and start filling forms and clicking ‘free newsletter’ buttons you will start to see an exponential growth in the number of emails you receive. Having several possible destinations for them can save a lot of confusion and wading through lists of headers to find what you are looking for. I recommend

as a minimum that you keep one address purely for personal communications between yourself and your friends and family, one as a main contact for business use, one for free newsletters and one (preferably web-based to avoid clogging your pop mailbox) for fielding responses to FFA, search engines and similar submissions.

SPAM or UCE (Unsolicited Commercial Email) is the practice of sending advertising messages to companies, newsgroups or individuals without first asking permission. DO NOT SPAM if you want your reputation on the net to remain untarnished. The least you will get is a lot of angry emails – the worst is having your email account closed down and being served with a lawsuit.

I repeat, DON'T DO IT!

(If you hopped here from the top of this article, [click here](#) to go back.)

Summary

The Internet is still in its infancy and we are all still learning how this fascinating new medium can best be used, not only for commercial purposes but also to enhance and facilitate human communication and understanding. It will grow and develop in ways we can barely glimpse right now, opening up new possibilities, new opportunities and new perspectives (*apologies for sounding like Tony Blair!*).

Whatever you decide to do, I wish you success!

Phil Chandler
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