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Developing a Web traffic strategy >

Executive Summary:

There are a number of ways to maximize your Web traffic and get your message spread.



Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

By Janeson Keeley

Before your business Web site can help your business grow, you have to attract prospective customers or clients to it. Unfortunately, the adage, "If you build it, they will come," does not apply to Web sites.

There are five potential sources of visitors to your Web site: search engines, pay-per-click campaigns, direct referrals, site referrals, and social media. An effective Web traffic strategy taps into as many of these sources as possible.

When a business wants to increase its Web site traffic, "being number one on Google" is often the first goal. In many cases, high search engine rankings can be achieved through search engine optimization efforts for specific search terms. "A well-researched list of targeted keywords is essential," says Linda Martin, Web Communications Coordinator for Hollins University, which has been actively using SEO strategies since 2001.

However, it is difficult to get high search engine rankings for very general and very popular terms. In these cases, pay-per-click campaigns can be helpful. Martin reports, "Hollins started PPC programs with Google and Yahoo SEM in 2002-03 to increase search engine visibility for very competitive terms. We now get traffic on terms for which it would be difficult to rank high in the search engines."

Direct referral is a powerful, but overlooked, method of driving traffic to your Web site.

This occurs when a visitor sees, hears of or guesses at your Web site URL (address) and types it directly into the browser. To take advantage of this, "be sure to include your URL on all on signs, ads, and promotional materials for your business," recommends Salem graphic designer, Sue England.

Site referral occurs when a visitor clicks on a link to your Web site from a Web site other than a search engine. You can increase your site referrals by having your site listed in on-line business directories, related Web sites, and business partner sites. Your Web site should also include content to which other sites will want to link.

Social media has recently become a major source of traffic to Web sites. Roanoke blogger Heather Jacobson notes that, "When you integrate your site into your social media efforts, your potential reach and traffic increase exponentially."

Once you have developed and implemented a strategy, you need to monitor the results and determine if the increased traffic is actually resulting in more business. If it isn't, then you may need to improve the Web site itself.

Thomas Becher, president of tba (the becher agency) explains: "You need to have compelling content that gets noticed, and you need to analyze where your traffic comes from so you can constantly adapt the content. Analyzing your results using free tools [such as Google Analytics] is a proactive way to measure who's reading your site, who's linking to it, and what they're looking for." 