

MAKE YOUR **2002** SITE SELL!

Building Targeted Traffic

So... you've got a **great product**.

And your Web site is a virtual **sales machine**.

Time for the third and final piece to the Web sales puzzle...

Attracting targeted traffic to your Web site.

In the main volume of **MYSS! 2002**, you learned that to thrive on the Web,
you only have to win at three points, each **under your control...**

1) develop a great product

2) write a Web site that SELLS

3) attract targeted customers to the site.

If you succeed at all three steps, **you will succeed. Period.**

This volume of **MYSS! 2002** completes the package.

From product... to a site that SELLS... to attracting targeted traffic,

you will be in control of what it takes to SELL.

1. Intro to Building Traffic

Traffic. It's the life-line of your business. You know you need it. But the question is... how do you get it?

Methodical trial-and-error was how I built traffic, in the beginning. Starting from scratch, I tried just about everything possible. Once something **worked**, I perfected it.

And that's when my traffic stats really started to soar. From a struggling 3,000 visits per week, traffic rocketed to 50-60,000 per week... with half the effort it took to reach the 3,000 mark.

Sales, of course, increased proportionately. Why? Very simple answer... my methods were attracting **only targeted customers -- people with an interest in what I was selling.**



This Traffic-Building Volume concentrates on **what works**. Other techniques are only mentioned briefly, for the sake of completeness (and to steer you clear of them!).

You'll learn how to build targeted traffic **in the most time and money-efficient ways possible**. We'll cover...

- critical and effective **online** methods
- best "bang-for-your-buck" **offline** strategies
- useless time-wasting techniques -- save heaps of time by avoiding these.



And we'll devote **special** attention to Search Engines...

... the single most important, cost-effective traffic-building method of all!

This volume of **MYSS! 2002** includes everything you need to know to attract motivated, interested customers to your site via the Search Engines. **And** how to do it powerfully and **ethically**, in such a way that even the most sensitive, stringent

Search Engine won't object. **Actually...**



... they'll love the way you do it.

SiteSell.com gets most of its traffic from affiliate referrals -- we'll cover this technique, as well. I don't have to worry about creating engine-optimized pages for SiteSell sites because...

1) our customer is very "generic"... (i.e., anyone with involvement in e-commerce). Search Engines work best when your product has a very **narrow** target market (such as "penny mining stock investors" for PennyGold). Affiliate programs, on the other hand, function ideally when the target market is broad.

Thousands of SiteSell affiliates work the engines, reaching their own particular niches for us... and share in our revenues. The result?...

Site traffic quickly soared to over 1 million visits a week. But... as you'll see shortly, "hits" are **not** an important measuring unit -- companies use them to impress people (as I just did!).

So let's boil that down to a "real number"... our affiliate partners boost traffic to over 50,000 unique visitors per week. That's not bad for a small company like ours (we place in the top 6,000 sites on the Net).

Since we value our affiliates as partners, there's a second reason that we don't actively work the Search Engines (although we do experiment to stay on the cutting edge)...

2) working the Search Engines would put us in direct competition with our affiliates. And that's not fair. **We do not compete with our partners-in-sales.**

Updated examples for **both** Search Engines and affiliate programs are included in **MYSSI 2002**. So... if you have a **niche product to sell**, you're ready to master the engines. And if your **business is broad-based**, plan to grow a powerful affiliate program. For either scenario, the "how-to" is outlined in easy-to-follow steps.

Bottom line?...

This special Traffic-Building Volume shows you how to bring **targeted traffic to your site... cleanly, simply, and with deadly effectiveness.**

Ready? Let's get going...



1.1. So What Do We Know **For Sure?**

You know the old adage that goes, "You get 80% of the benefit with 20% of the effort?" Well, with Search Engines, **it's more like 90-10** for sales-oriented sites!

By far, the most cost-efficient way to reach targeted customers is via the [Search Engines](#) (SEs) and [directories](#). It's the backbone of Internet marketing. It is **the way** to attract hundreds of new, targeted prospects each and every day.

Many surveys have studied how surfers find and hit your site. SEs and directories are consistently at the top. Here's the order of importance (in decreasing order)...

- **SEs and Directories** -- SEs and directories are the single most important way that visitors will reach you. And they're free. So it's no contest when it comes to measuring cost-effectiveness.
- **Links from other Web sites** -- links from other sites are a close second, in terms of raw visits to **all** sites. But, as we'll see, link exchanging is simply not practical or beneficial in most competitive business situations. **And they cost you a "link out."**
- **Printed media** -- this is the **strongest offline way** that visitors use to find your site.
- **Friends via word of mouth ([Viral Marketing](#))** -- this is actually **not** a result of promotion. It comes from selling great products at a great price, and treating your customers like royalty. Do that and your customer will tell 2 friends, **each of whom will tell 2 friends...**



... and so on, and so on.

- **TV** -- as an offline technique, TV is **less popular than printed media**. It's easier to stuff a newspaper ad with the URL into your jeans than to remember one from a TV commercial that you saw last night!
- **E-mail signatures (i.e., sig files)** -- these are not that popular, but easy to do, and free! It's worth the few minutes it takes to design an effective sig file.
- **Usenet Newsgroups** -- newsgroups may be useful, if there is a great fit with your product. They are becoming less and less important for business.



So what techniques will be **conspicuous by their absence** in our future discussions **and probably not worth the time and money involved?**...

- **Unsolicited e-mail** -- I suspect that spammers try it, fail and then quit. The problem is that there is a never-ending supply of new spammers willing to give it a whirl.
- **Banner advertising** -- is this a surprise? I never click on them, do you?
- **Opt-in mailing list or e-zine** -- this technique is **not** meant to generate a **first visit**. However, don't discount it completely...

The opt-in method captures the person who is very close to delivering your **MWR**. It allows you to **build a relationship** with that person until he is **comfortable enough** to buy from you.

So while the opt-in mailing list/e-zine won't really explode your traffic stats, it **will** show where it counts... **sales**.

Bottom line? **Until you master the SEs, time spent elsewhere is ill-spent.**



1.2. #1 Traffic-Building Reminder

Remember when you developed a [thumbnail profile](#) for your target market(s)?
Picture that person sitting at home...



...relaxing in her easy chair. From here on in, whatever she does, there are only **two** possibilities...

- 1) She is **not** looking for your product.
- 2) She **is** looking for your product.

Brilliant, eh? Wait, don't leave me... **this obvious split is critical** for building traffic.



Let's assume she's not looking for what you offer, but that she **does** need your product -- that's why you've included her in your thumbnail sketch in the first place! Maybe she **knows** she needs it, maybe she doesn't. That's not important.

Here's what **is** important... **How do you get your product in front of her eyeballs?**

Whether you use **online or offline** methods, you have to ask **and** answer these kinds of questions...

- Where does she work?
- What does she do for fun?
- What does she read?
- Where and how does she travel?
- **From the time she wakes up to the time she goes to bed, whatever she does, what does she see and hear?**

As you develop this “activity log,” you’ll learn that she reads specialized-niche magazines in the offline world, subscribes to e-zines and visits Web sites when online. She travels. Certain radio and TV shows reach her.

You have to **find** those places she visits, the journals she reads, the mailing lists to which she contributes, and then figure out how to get your message in front of her... in an **ethical** manner.

You need to discover the most cost-effective way to get your message in front of the “not-actively-looking-but-receptive” target market.



Now let’s assume that **she is hunting** for exactly what your Widg-O-Matic delivers. When she looks, she must find **you**, right?

Right!

This volume focuses primarily on “hunting these hunters.”

After all, someone who is actively looking for something **is** going to buy it when she finds it... and we want it to be from **you**! The non-hunters, even if they could use a Widg-O-Matic, do not yet have the motivation to look. And if motivation is low, it’s going to take more time and money to get the sale.



After all, how many times have **you seen or heard an ad for a...**



... superduper “read faster in 90 days” learn-at-home course? Didn’t you think, “Boy, that would be great if I could read and retain five times faster?” Did you do anything about it, though?

Nope!

Today, however, you **are** looking for a “speed reading” course on the Web. You enter “speed reading” into browser, and up pops that same company that wasted its money on the radio ad.

Since you did the looking, you are obviously a **motivated, targeted** customer. And “Speed-Reading Is Us, Inc.” has a much better chance to sell you!

Moral of the story? **It’s much more cost-effective if you concentrate first on the “hunters.” Make sure they find you.**

Remember these **two very different ways** that you and your prospect will meet...



1) ...You find her.



2) ... She finds you.

Whoops! This only makes sense if you, the reader, are **male**. After all, if you’re a guy reading this, doesn’t the second scenario (above) look like a **much easier “sell”** to you?

If you’re a woman...



1) ...You find him.



2) ... He finds you.

From the female point of view, doesn’t # 2 look like the better process?

No matter **which** traffic-building technique you choose, balance the required **time, work and expense** against the **number and motivation** of the visitors you attract.



2. Online Ways to Build Traffic

Let's get right to the point and summarize the most important way to build traffic with 13 little letters...

S-E-A-R-C-H E-N-G-I-N-E-S.

Why? Because if you work the Search Engines (SEs) well, **here's what you get...**

- They bring mountains of **traffic**.
- It's **targeted** traffic -- people are interested in what you're selling.
- High rankings on a search result page add to your **credibility**. There's an implied "credential" to showing up on the first page.
- When **customers find you**, they hit your site with an **open, interested mindset**. They feel smart.
- But best of all, Search Engines are just plain "**do-able**." Follow the advice in this chapter -- **if you do, you will succeed with the Search Engines**.



I spent months studying how the SEs work. Then I put that theory into practice. PennyGold, a narrow-niche site if there ever was one, grew from a few thousand visits per week to as high as 60,000 visits per week, mostly via the SEs.

Building traffic this way is, **by far, the** most time and cash-efficient method to attract targeted customers. Of course, if you have to spend months riding the learning curve, it's not really a time-saver. **This volume helps you "cut straight to the chase."**

You really **can** get a great ranking at the Search Engines (i.e., the first page of search results)... without using any tricks, or less-than-honest tinkering. Build highly-optimized SE-friendly Web pages, and you will "score well" for several different [keywords](#).

Search Engines are so important that I devote [an entire chapter just for them](#).

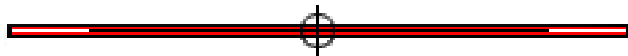
Other strategies fade into the shadows due to the SEs' powerful beams of light.

We'll start with the real...



...time-wasters, "tried and true" ways to get the **least results** for the **most time (and money)**.

Why not! Then there's only way one way to go after that... **UP!** 😊



2.1. Time and Money Wasters

The following traffic-building techniques can be summarized in two words... **don't bother**. They will waste your valuable time and money, and more importantly, they won't generate any worthwhile income.

Skip the drum roll.

Here are the **least efficient ways to build traffic...**



2.1.1. Banner Ads

Banner "click-through" rates have plunged, from 5-10% when they first emerged, to a dismal 0.3%. On a run of a thousand banners, this translates into a miserly **3 visitors** to your site.

Terrible.

And the cost per visitor? On a general site, advertising costs range between \$15 to \$25, per thousand impressions. In other words, Yahoo! will charge you \$15 to \$25 to **show your banner** 1,000 times -- this cost is called the **CPM (cost per thousand** -- thousand is "mille" in French).

OK. Let's assume you pay a \$20 CPM. **That means, if you get...**

- 3 visitors from those 1,000 impressions, it costs you \$6.67 per visitor.
- 5 visitors, it costs you \$4 per visitor.
- 10 visitors, it costs you \$2 per visitor.

How about advertising on a specialized site? Good question! Advertising costs are much higher, generally around \$50 CPM. Okay, back to our little experiment again. **If you get...**

- 3 visitors from those 1,000 impressions, it costs you \$16.66 per visitor.
- 5 visitors, it costs you \$10 per visitor.
- 10 visitors, it costs you \$5 per visitor.

That's not great. Really not great. In fact, it's simply **too, too expensive**.

Banner advertising makes no sense at all, unless you have a fantastic **Conversion Rate (CR)** as well as a **HUGE** profit on each sale. Even then, there are a million **better** and (more importantly) **cheaper** ways to drive traffic to your site.



So what's the problem? Why is the banner ad "dead?"

Three **BIG** reasons...

1) People have become so **desensitized** to flashing ads, **they don't even look at them any more**. Some even go so far as to download shareware programs that actually prevent banners from being displayed. And of course, they all have something in common -- **they feel "pitched."**

2) **Pay-Per-Click-Search-Engines** and other "pay-per-performance" models have made the banner ad an impractical traffic-generating strategy. Why fork out big bucks for visitors who **might** come to your Web site, when you can get guaranteed results, even with a tight budget?

3) The dot-com shakedown means there's less disposable income to access. Marketers must choose the "biggest bank for the buck" means of advertising.

So what's the bottom line on banners?

Simple. **There are better and more effective ways to spend your advertising dollars online.**

However, we can't just ignore banners all together...

You'll often hear Internet gurus discuss the role of the banner ad in "**branding**," a powerful advertising process.

And in fact, recent research by **AdRelevance** indicates that a large majority of online advertising **is not** geared towards getting a visitor's click-through. It's about "building the brand"...



CyberAtlas

http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,,5941_508951,00.html

So what does branding involve? We'll use an example to demonstrate...

If I see your ad often enough as I surf my way around the Net, eventually your company name or product will percolate down into my subconscious. Next time I need what you're selling -- ZING! **Your company's name will be the first one to POP into my mind.**

But there **is** a speed bump on this route. The exact number of times a person has to see your ad before it makes a **lasting impression** is something the marketing experts are heatedly debating. Some say 7. Others say 10. Still others say 13.

And that's with all things being equal. You still need to factor in the effectiveness of the banner, the sales message, yada, yada, yada.

Yes, banners are a great branding tool. Wonderful, in fact. But they are completely useless to the little gal (or guy). Why?

Imagine the size and expense of an advertising campaign that will get your ad

in front of people's eyeballs 7 or more times -- across the breadth of the entire Internet.

Phew! Exactly.

Small companies simply cannot afford this sort of financial commitment. You need millions of dollars. And very few of us have that kind of spare change in our pockets.

[SIDEBAR]

Not so coincidentally, whenever you read that banners are really great for branding, it's written by someone with a vested interest in selling banner advertising!

This situation reminds me of a famous old offline business saying...

"I know that I'm wasting half of my advertising dollars...
... I just don't know which half!"

But the Net has changed all that. Advertising is now trackable -- stats **do** tell you what works and what doesn't. You can be the judge!

Luckily, there **is** a way banners can be used to help brand your product across the entire Net -- **and only for the cost it takes to create them.**

How?

By implementing an [affiliate program](#), and allowing partners **to use banners** as part of their own advertising strategy. Sure, the best affiliates will recognize the importance of text links and personal recommendations, but for many affiliates, participation in your program will consist of nothing more than posting your banner on their site.

Effective? **Nope.** But it **IS** better than nothing. And the more people come across your brand (even in banner format)...

The better it is for you!

Still feeling adventurous and want to advertise with banners? Here's an overview of the process...

- 1) Design a [banner ad](#) that will catch the eye of your target customer.
- 2) Negotiate a deal with the Web site.
- 3) Place a banner on a Web site **that your target is likely to visit.**
- 4) Banner compels visitor to click-through to your site.
- 5) Receive and measure click-throughs (and orders)
- 6) Evaluate the campaign.
- 7) Improve the results.

[**SIDEBAR**]

A small but potent tip to make your banner campaign more efficient...**geo-target!**

Put yourself in this scenario... You sell pre-owned cars in San Francisco. Your business is booming and your Web site is up and running. A modest-size banner campaign has begun.

How valuable is your banner ad to a surfer from Australia? That's a totally wasted impression. Your business focuses on people in the greater San Fran area so you **only** want to advertise to them.

And now you can! **Geo-target** your ads through I.P. addresses. Let me explain...

Each country (and its regions) have an assigned series of I.P. addresses which makes it easy to track visitors' origins. All you have to do is set up your site so that only surfers from San Francisco see your banner ads! ([More later.](#))

OK, reach for the biggest gains that you can with your banner campaign. Follow this advice...

1) Rivet eyeballs to your design.

i) **Depart from the typical** -- be high impact, visually striking, and consistent with your marketing theme.

ii) **Use subtle animation** (especially horizontal movement) to get attention --

however, it must be a part of the ad, not a gimmick.

iii) Keep loading time to a minimum -- keep the banner size as small as possible (**max.** = 10K, under 7K best). If the page itself is huge and painfully slow, visitors will give up before they even see your banner -- but you're still charged for the impression!

iv) Reduce competition. Are you the **only** ad on the page, and **where** will it be placed?



2) Negotiate a deal. Negotiate, **negotiate**, **negotiate**.

What more can I say? Show some serious, long-term intentions. Negotiate hard on price. You'll get a break.

And if you can't cut much of a deal price-wise, negotiate on placement location. Maybe you can get your banner on the top **and** bottom of the page for the same price! Be in the spotlight!

Web sites can charge in one of three ways...

i) per-impression -- banner pops up, you pay

ii) per click-through -- viewer clicks on banner, you pay

iii) per-sale -- viewer buys, you pay.

Per impression means you are paying for a banner's **exposure**, whether your prospect actually looks at it or not. Ask about what is being done to ensure that a banner is seen before a reader scrolls or clicks away.

Banner vendors dislike the last two models (from above). If there are no click-throughs or sales, they don't receive income. Vendors feel that they are being penalized if a banner (which they did not create) is ineffective.

A pay-per-click-through fee structure is probably the **fairest compromise**. It guarantees that a prospect has seen the ad, but no sale is required. If you can negotiate a click-through deal, design your banners to "qualify" your prospect (i.e., "weed out" non-targets).

[**SIDEBAR**]

Search Engines sell banners according to keywords.

For example, PennyGold buys the keyword -- "pennystocks" -- from a SE. From now on, when a searcher uses that keyword at that Search Engine, the PG banner pops up. Direct target! Even though this strategy costs more than a rotation of banners, it's worth it.

Check it out yourself. Go to one of the Search Engines. Punch in "pennystocks" and hit "SEARCH." What banner do you see? Is it related, semi-related or unrelated to "pennystocks"? Hit "Refresh" or "Reload," or "Next 10." Check the banner again... related or unrelated?

If the majority of banners are related to the topic, your competitors are already there, and your bargaining position with the SEs is weak. But don't waste this golden opportunity. Study the banners carefully. What do they do right? **Do it better!**

If the banners are totally unrelated, **no one is buying this word.** You should be able to negotiate a better rate... maybe even get a jump on the competition.

Of course, if you can get your site **listed** at the top of a search results page by mastering the SE's algorithm, you can get the same results for free. And a listing on a search results page is **far more valuable** than a banner ad on that same page!

3) Place a banner ad on a site visited by your target market.

You can either...

- i) do it yourself -- if you know what you're doing, you can negotiate a better rate
- ii) purchase through your ad agency (for those within a budget).

However you do it, your core target market must make up most of the audience for this site.

Get the bull's eye!

4) Be creative. Get the click-through.

All the [rules of good sales writing](#) apply, but **you've got a problem**. You have to cram it all...



... into a teeny little container!

Here's how to **maximize** your click-through rate...

- Your banner must set the tone. Design it to appeal to the viewer.
- Use a single, benefits-oriented **headline**. There's not much space in a banner ad. Your headline will usually double as your offer -- make it audience-appropriate and compelling.
- Offer something for **free** -- you can even put a free subscription form on the banner. When they click, they subscribe **and** proceed to the site!
- [Hit with your biggest USP gun.](#)
- Teasers and intrigue are effective -- pull the viewer to your site.
- Ask a provocative, yet selling, question. Or use an incomplete thought -- a phrase that begs to be...
- Use a graphic that will "stand out," and fits the theme.
- Sex sells -- maybe I'll put up a banner with a gorgeous babe and ask..

"Want to know how to make your site sell...



... without putting **me** on a banner?" 😏

- Create urgency (“Last Day!” or “Limited Time Offer”).
- Your **call to action** must be clear and strong -- **get the click!**...
 - **Tell them** -- “Click Here!”
 - Button-style graphic makes it clear what to do -- click!
 - Blue border around the ad implies “clickability.”
 - Add a clickable text link just below the banner.
- The overall tone and message of the ad must be **appropriate** for the audience.
- Interactive banners can be very effective.
- Use compelling “click me” **ALT** text for those surfers who turn “graphics off.”

OK, ready? Think you’ve got a banner that compels a click-through? **Take the acid test...**

Be the customer... **Would you click on your banner?** Be honest -- think of the thousands of banners that you don’t click! **What would make you click on yours?**



5) Receive and measure click-throughs (and orders)

Ask your banner vendor to provide you with a **real-time stats page** -- one that reveals the following, for **each** banner...

- the number of impressions -- i.e., the number of times they showed that banner
- the number of click-throughs -- i.e., the number of times visitors clicked on it
- the calculated click-through rate.

You must be able to verify these numbers. Here’s the best way...

For **each** banner ad at **each** banner vendor, create a **unique** blank Web page. When a visitor sees your ad and clicks through, she goes to that unique page (**Receiving Page**).

When she hits that page, a [CGI script](#) does the following...

i) It keeps track of the number of times this page has been visited (daily, weekly, monthly and yearly totals). Since that page is **unique** for a certain banner placed with a certain vendor, you can now keep score of your click-throughs.

ii) It [redirects](#) your visitor to a preset page (usually the **Opening Page**) from your Web site. Your customer **never sees** the blank receiving page.

iii) It sets a [cookie](#) for each visitor. Since that visitor now has a cookie, you can track her response to your site (ex., purchase, subscription, etc.), both on the current visit **and** on future visits. Yes, you can measure **actual sales**, even if the sale occurs a week later!



6) Calculate whether it's worth it or not. You know how much the banners cost you. And you know what they generated. Was the cost worth it?

Are you making an acceptable profit? Acceptable profit may be “break-even” if you attribute extra value to the lifetime value of a new customer. Or it may even be a loss if you are simply trying to generate subscriptions for a newsletter, or build brand awareness.

The key point is... **you must have an iron-clad way to measure the return generated by your advertising dollar.**



7) Improve the results -- Be systematic in your testing/tracking. Use the banner vendor's stat page. Keep effective ads (high click-through), and drop the others.

Banners burn out -- ask the vendor how long a banner remains effective. Watch for signs of burnout and be ready to rotate a new and even better banner into the mix.

Look ahead -- if you keep the good banners, and replace the bad with better ones, **could your banner program become profitable long-term?**



To learn more about banners, visit...



Banner Tips

<http://www.bannertips.com/>

and...



ClickZ Today

<http://www.clickz.com/cgi-bin/gt/archives/topic.html?track=32>

ClickZ has taken down its superb banner critiquing site, Microscope. Luckily, the articles remain in the archives for your perusal!



Bottom Line?...

Forget about banners. They're expensive (especially compared to the SEs!). The click-through rate is low. **People come in with an attitude...**



...“OK, ya got me here -- waddayagot?”

If you come across an **extremely targeted site that sells banners**, contract for a one-month trial run. They'll say they don't sell for just a month, but **insist...**

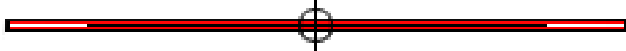
“Hey, I'm serious here. But why should I lock myself in for six months if the first month proves that this is not a viable marketing tool for my business? On the other hand, if it's successful, you'll have a happy, long-term customer. How about it?”

These days, they'll probably jump at a paying customer.

Experiment with different banners. Rotate at least 3 or 4 during the month.

As you measure the returns of your campaign, you'll know whether or not banners will be part of your long-term strategy.

But unless you have money to burn, **focus on free traffic-building methods, and Pay-Per-Click Search Engines first.**



2.1.2. Banner Exchange via Banner Networks

You can exchange links, and you can buy banners, so it stands to reason that you can **exchange banners**. Companies which facilitate this exchange are evolving into full-blown "banner networks."

For more info...



LinkExchange

<http://www.bcentral.com/services/bn/default.asp>



Safe-Audit

<http://www.safe-audit.com/>



SmartAge.com

<http://www.smartage.com/>

A major downside to banner exchange? Customers click a banner on your site and leave it before they get to your **Order Page**. I prefer to keep the customers I have worked so hard to attract.

You usually have to include a "LinkExchange" notification under the banner, which makes you look rather "small fry." This hurts your credibility -- you don't see Microsoft using link exchanges.

Plus, you'll often need to display two banners on your site, in order to receive credit for one banner exposure elsewhere on the network.

If your main purpose for joining an exchange is to build site traffic, you can fully expect to see the dawn of a new ice age before it happens.

Bottom line?

Not a viable alternative for serious businesses with major ambitions.



Banner Advertising Networks are companies that manage your banner campaign on the Web. These services often represent hundreds of merchants, and use this "group" force to bargain better deals with the banner vendors...



24/7 Media

<http://www.247media.com/>



engage

<http://www.engage.com/>



Bpath

<http://www.bpath.com/>



ValueClick

<http://www.valueclick.com/>

ValueClick's service is slightly more expensive because it works on a per click-through basis.



2.1.3. E-mail Marketing

As tempting as it might be, never [spam](#). I can't be any blunter.

It doesn't work. And you'll die a brutal, cyber-death.

Oh yes, one other thing...

Spam by any other name is still spam. That includes **UCE**, (unsolicited commercial e-mail) and the “**reply**” **messages** generated by the free-for-all-links and classified pages.

Unless a customer specifically gives you permission to contact her (for example, by filling out a form on your Web site), don't!

Ask yourself this question... **do you like receiving spam?**

[SIDEBAR]

These days, it's in **your** best interests to make sure all your mailing lists are “**double-opt-in.**”

Simply having a surfer enter an e-mail address into your online form is not a guarantee you won't be accused of the deadliest Net sin of all -- spamming. Here's a common example of what can happen...

A malicious competitor could visit your site and subscribe to your e-zine using the e-mail address of a rabid anti-spammer. When your autoresponder unwittingly fires off the latest copy of your newsletter to this person, he goes right through the roof.

Protesting your innocence will do nothing -- since he didn't specifically ask to receive your newsletter, he'll claim that you **are** spamming him. You'll argue that it was not your doing. But...

While you're off pleading your case to your Web host, your competitor is raking in the profits.

A double opt-in list works like this...

Once a subscriber signs up for your newsletter online, she receives a confirmation e-mail, which she must respond to, if she is to be added to the list. The confirmation is very simple... it usually involves simply clicking on a link or hitting the reply-to button.

If you're just starting out, you might want to try single opt-in. As you grow, you may want to switch to double... especially if you get burnt.

It **is** possible to buy targeted lists of individuals **who have specifically requested to receive your type of communication**. This is acceptable behavior, and works much like direct mail marketing. These people **voluntarily give their addresses to companies, in return for goodies**. The companies, in turn, sell the lists.

How targeted and motivated do you think they are?

Presently, advertising costs range from \$0.10 to \$0.30 per subscriber, and depending on the quality of the service, "claim" click-through rates from 5-15%. You'll often find minimum start-up campaign rates, which generally hover around \$1,000.

Let's do a little math to find out if this is such a **hot** deal...

List subscriptions are often sold [CPM](#), or per 1000 impressions. So your cost to advertise via opt-in e-mail ranges from \$100 to \$300 for every 1000 people who receive your message.

For the lower end of the scale (\$100)...

- 5% click-through rate means 50 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$2.
- 10% click-through rate means 100 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$1.
- 15% click-through rate means 150 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$0.66.



For the higher end of this scale (\$300)...

- 5% click-through rate means 50 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$6.
- 10% click-through rate means 100 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$3.
- 15% click-through rate means 150 visitors to your site, each one costing you \$1.50

Whoa! Doesn't look like such a great deal now, does it?



Okay, now take the math one step further. Let's say you achieved a 10% click-through rate on a list that cost you \$0.30 per subscriber. That's 100 visitors for \$300. If your **CR** is 1%, you'll make 1 sale from this campaign -- and you need to make a \$300 profit on that sale to break even. A **CR** of 5% means you'll get 5 sales, with a \$60 profit-per-sale needed to break even.

Fortunately, there's a much better way to advertise. [Later on](#), I'll show you exactly how to figure out what each visitor is worth to you and how to work the fringes at the [Pay-Per-Click Search Engines](#) (either by hand or with [Site Build It! Manager](#)), to generate hundreds, even thousands of low cost targeted keywords.

If you are still considering opt-in e-mail as an advertising option, **it's important you choose a list provider that is beyond reproach.**

It's safe to assume every person reading this book has received opt-in e-mail from a mailing list they never "opted-into." That's spam, plain and simple.

And if you buy opt-in advertising from a company that has obtained or built its list unethically, you are guilty of spamming, as well. Yes, even if you bought the list in good faith! So a reputable opt-in list provider is an absolute must.

Here's a small list of the better ones...



PostMasterDirect.com

<http://www.postmasterdirect.com/>



Topica

<http://www.topica.com/advertise/>



MyPoints

<http://www.corp.mypoints.com/media/>



Yesmail.com

<http://www.yesmail.com/>

There is, however, one powerful and ethical way to market using e-mail... [opt-in e-mail marketing](#). I mention it here because many people feel it's a way to build

traffic. It is... **but that's not the ideal focus.**

Use opt-in e-mail as a **sales tool and a long term relationship-builder**, not as a **traffic-builder**. Traffic is incidental.



2.1.4. Two-Way E-media

Two-way e-media (unmoderated mailing lists, newsgroups and forums) suffer from “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t” syndrome...

- **If the members are loosely regulated** (ex., the biz and miscellaneous newsgroups), **anything goes**. Sure you can post your message. But everyone else can, too -- so it's flooded. **No one pays any attention!**
- **If the group is serious, it will have strict, self-enforced rules.** Post anything that smells commercial, and **you'll be...**



... flamed! It takes a long time to build up a relationship with a group like this, to the point where you can gently pitch them. Why bother trying to fool people, anyway?

Forget about coddling to these groups. If you have a genuine interest and **want** to participate for non-commercial reasons, great! But **don't try to cultivate them for your own business purposes.**

Besides, the number of people you reach **just isn't worth the time involved.** You have to contribute regularly to have any chance of even a small response. Which means you have to read everyone's postings every day.

And the **spam** that you'll get from all the e-mail collectors puts the final nail in the coffin.

Bottom line?...

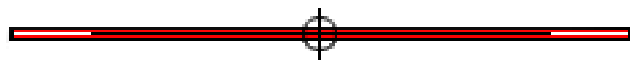
Great... if you have a natural passion and **want** to contribute out of sheer interest.

Bad... if you view this as a marketing tool -- unless there is an **extremely good fit** between your business goals and the interests of a group.

For most businesses, it is generally not worth the effort.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Some people still swear by posting to these groups. Just in case you have a special reason to believe that this could be an efficient way for you to build traffic, I have included a more detailed “**how to**” **discussion in the [glossary](#)**.



2.1.5. Classified Ad Services

Thousands of classified ad services have sprouted lately. They range from those offered by established newspapers on the Web to pure classified ads sites like...



Excite Classifieds

<http://classifieds.excite.com/>

And...



Yahoo! Classifieds

<http://classifieds.yahoo.com/>

For a comprehensive list of Classified Web sites, see...



Yahoo! Listings of Classified Sites

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Business and Economy/Classifieds/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Classifieds/)

Like a bad infestation, “free-for-all” classified ad sites have popped-up across the

Net in big numbers. They are nothing more than a evolution of the free-for-all-links page scam.

Basically, the service works like this... First, you sign up, and receive your own free classified ad site. Then you allow visitors to post their ads for free. In exchange, you get to send them your spam.

Automated services can post classified ads to thousands of such services, bringing a barrage of spam into mailboxes worldwide.

And traffic? Nope. Nary a one. The only people who visit these pages are those posting their own messages. How interested are they in **your** pitch?

The moral of the story is a simple one...

Don't bother submitting, or implementing a "free-for-all-classified" site.



For the most part, even the more reputable classified ad services are inappropriate for business purposes. **Here are the problems...**

- 1) They are more oriented for consumer-to-consumer "one off" sales -- useful for buying and selling a used car, but not much use for selling software.
- 2) There are too many get-rich-quick schemes, which cheapen your image.
- 3) Get ready to receive a lot of spam and scam!
- 4) You'll receive very few serious responses. **I never look at these ads. Do you?**



2.1.6. Sweepstakes and Promotions

Sweepstakes and promotions must help attain your **MWR**. If they don't achieve this goal, forget about them. The two can create a lot of work for a one-shot deal. And potential legal headaches, too. Unless you can think of a strong synergy for your business, they not worth the trouble.

Think about it...

If you offer to give away money, you might end up with the cash-hounds, and little else. They are **not** potential customers. Total value to you? Nil.

So plan your strategy well, if you want to try this route. Know clearly “what’s in it” for your visitor. And then execute your sweepstakes/promotion carefully. Everything you do on the Net can make or break your reputation.



The following companies will be happy to co-promote, partner, or even build your sweepstakes from the ground up...



Winning Ways Online Sweepstakes

<http://www.onlinesweeps.com/>



SweepstakesBuilder

<http://www.sweepstakesbuilder.com/>



Sweepstakes Online

<http://www.sweepstakesonline.com/>



My first sweepstakes experiment had as its prize an in-depth review and analysis of the winning contestant’s Web site (by yours truly -- blush!).

The prize was supposed to attract the type of customer that we wanted. But in the end, the sweepstakes contest was merely a distraction. It might have even hurt sales.

Of course, I don't give up easily. I decided to try the sweepstakes again. This time, the prize offers two free years of **Site Build It!** -- approximately US\$800 in value.

We use it as a powerful traffic-building tool for **5 Pillar Affiliates**. You can't find the sweepstakes by linking to it from anywhere within the site -- it can only be accessed through an affiliate's promotion.

Try it now. Visit...



Site Build It! Sweepstakes
<http://sweeps.sitesell.com/>

See **how** this sweepstake multiplies the affiliate's traffic? It's fascinating to watch. When people visit through an affiliate's link, they send a referral e-mail to a few friends (to enter the Sweeps), who do the same, and so on... and so on.

Guess what? Every single visitor will visit **through the original affiliate's coded link!**

The results? Much, much, better...

- **No distractions** from the site.
- SiteSell.com gets visitors that it would **not** receive otherwise.
- And since the prize **is** the product, those who enter are **targeted** potential customers.



We receive 300-500 visitors to the Contest Page daily. And when a visitor reaches that page, we use a "javascript pop-under" to place our **www** page underneath. (Click on the link above to see this in action.) This introduces the visitor to all of our products.

The viral "refer-a-friend" aspect, combined with the affiliates' gain in their own visitor rates, has converted the **SBI!** sweepstakes into a nice traffic-builder for us.

We have plans to add an extra twist to this -- it may even be in place by the time you read this.

Want to see how another contest qualifies its visitors? Visit...



Lobster Direct

<http://www.lobsterdirect.com/home.html>

Use your free draw or sweepstakes to help attain your Backup Response.
Here's how...

Offer a prize of significant perceived value that will both interest and qualify your visitor. In exchange for a chance at winning the prize, **your visitor must enter her e-mail address and agree to receive your newsletter.**

Your newsletter, by the way, is the same vessel in which you announce the winners -- so your customer will actually have to read it to see if she's won!

This gives you the opportunity to provide her with compelling content, and most importantly, your gentle sales pitch. Best of all, she won't opt-out, because if she does, she'll never know if she's the lucky winner!

[SIDEBAR]

You may wish to expand the refer-a-friend viral marketing technique as we did with the **SBI!** sweeps. Allow your visitor one contest entry for each friend she recommends to your site. However, **do not automatically sign up** these new referrals to your newsletter, or you're going to be in trouble.

That's spamming -- since they did not specifically agree to receive it. Let them decide for themselves if they'd like to be on your mailing list!



2.1.7. Buying Keyword-Related Ads

Some Search Engines and directories sell **text ads on their search results page**. The ads must be related to a specific keyword. Are surfers clicking on these ads?

Nope. And so far, no one has figured out how to change the situation.

MSN search dropped their keyword-related ad model because... well, it wasn't getting any click-throughs.

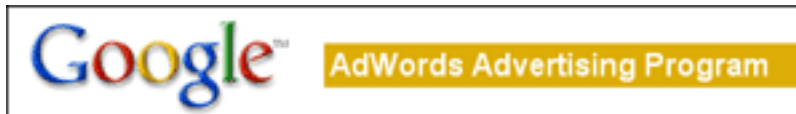
AskJeeves tried, and they couldn't get it right either.

What does this mean?

The use of keyword-related ads, for all intents and purposes, is a **banner ad campaign**. Most people don't click. They hardly even glance at the ads in the right hand column.



Google has been experimenting with a similar sort of program...



Google AdWords

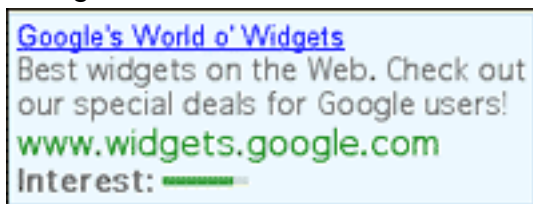
<https://adwords.google.com/AdWords/Welcome.html>

[SIDEBAR]

If the above link is dead by the time you read this, you'll know what happened -- see MSN and AskJeeves above!



You get a text ad like this...

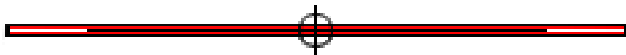


... on the right edge, where no one looks.

We experimented with the keywords “affiliates” and “affiliate.” Google reported twice as many click-throughs as we tracked. In any event, the click-through rate was dismal. And the **Conversion Rate** was just as rock-bottom discouraging.

Take-away lesson?...

Keyword-related ads are as useless as banner ads.



2.1.8. Real Names

Let's say you're thinking about buying a shiny new Ford Mustang this spring. You fire up the computer and begin the quest. Sooner or later, you stumble on the correct URL within one of Ford's sites...



Ford Mustang

<http://www.fordvehicles.com/cars/mustang/>

You say to yourself...

“Gee, that took too much time to find the Mustang page. There must be a better way. Why can't I just type “Ford Mustang” into my browser and go directly to the right spot?”

RealNames is the answer...



Real Names

<http://www.realnames.com/>

In this case, they charge Ford \$100 for the privilege of registering "Ford Mustang"... And another \$100 for "Ford Explorer"... And another \$100 for every other make that Ford wants to register... including the names "Ford" and "Ford cars."

Hmmm... this could be a very profitable idea for **RealNames**. But what about for us?

Basically, **RealNames** replaces a URL with a common word. But here's the catch. RealNames only allows a company or product name. This is useless for most of us. Why?

The world **doesn't know our names**. Customers find **us** through the Search Engines or directories by looking up benefits, or features, or kinds of products, etc.

For example... when I review the [log files](#) of my first site (PennyGold), here's what I see... almost **no one** found us by looking up "PennyGold" in a SE. Our traffic found us by using "penny stocks" and other related keywords.

After all, if someone knew that PennyGold existed, they would already know the URL and have it bookmarked.

Very few people use RealNames itself as a Search Engine -- so you won't see any traffic from them directly. And they **used** to have partners like AltaVista who displayed their results. But those relationships are drying up.

Generic words? More bad news. Although I bought "Penny Gold Penny Stocks" as a Real Name for Pennygold, all my traffic came from regular SE keyword searches for the generic term, "penny stocks."

Secondly, Real Names displays **too many listings for generic words**. Try this search for "penny stocks" at RealNames...

<http://navigation.us.realnames.com/resolver.dll?realname=penny+stocks>

See what I mean? The search results presentation for generic words **is** too congested... **unless**, however, a big guy buys that word!

For example, mp3.com bought the word "mp3" -- so **any phrase** with "mp3" in it

now goes **directly** to mp3.com. If "mp3" is important to you, try phoning and complaining to Real Names. Here's the sort of answer you'll probably get...

Hey, if someone does an exact search for "Abe's MP3 Finder," they'll still find you -- so your RealName is still perfectly good -- we never sold "Abe's MP3 Finder."

Just as you hang up the phone, you swear that you hear the sound of a muffled laugh.

Remember (and this is important)... **Exact matches are useless for the little guy!**

But wait... it gets worse!

Real Names has recently reduced the number of clicks you get for your \$100 to 1,000 -- which works out to be \$0.10 per click. GoTo.com and the other Pay-Per-Click Search Engines can build traffic for **much less**.

But that's only part of the problem. Unlike the Pay-Per-Clicks, where you **only** pay when a visitor clicks-through to your site, **Real Names does NOT guarantee...**



... a single visitor to your site.

It should come as no surprise that I didn't renew at RealNames.

Key point of this discussion?

It's not worth your while to use this strategy. Your money is better spent elsewhere!



So much for all the time-wasters (and "borderline-effective" methods). Grab your speed watch. **It's time for some profitable traffic-building techniques...**

