

Online Marketing Strategies

by Jim Carroll
and Rick Broadhead



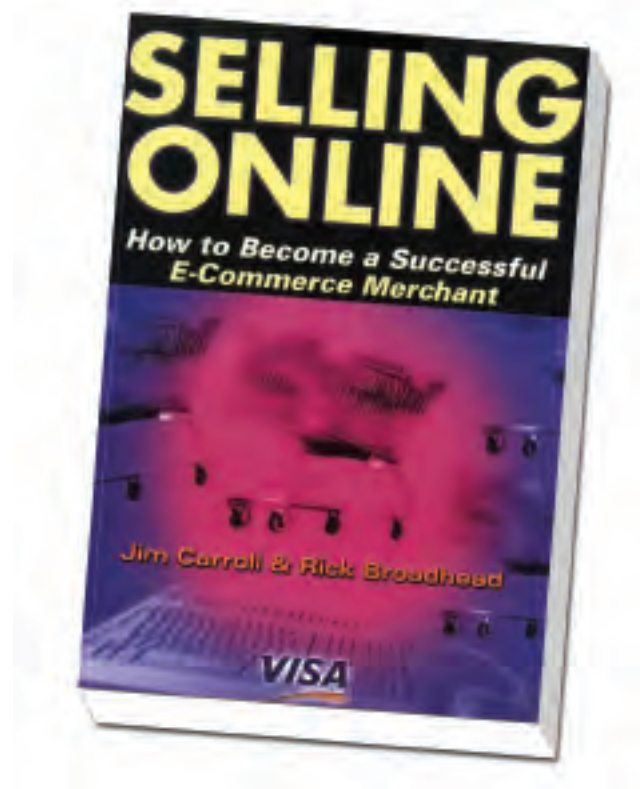
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Proven Ways to
Grow Your E-Business

Online Marketing Strategies: 16 Proven Ways to Grow Your E-Business

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and **Rick Broadhead**

This guide is a modified chapter from the bestselling book *Selling Online: How to Become a Successful E-Commerce Merchant* (ISBN 0-7931-4517-1), written by Rick Broadhead and Jim Carroll and published by Dearborn Trade.



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Online Marketing Strategies: 16 Proven Ways to Grow Your E-Business

Marketing your online store involves more than just registering your Web site with a couple of search engines and waiting for the world to beat a path to your door.

As the number of shoppers on the Internet has grown, so too has the number of Web sites and land-based businesses clamoring for a piece of the multi-trillion-dollar e-commerce pie. As many Internet companies have discovered, even with a multi-million dollar marketing campaign, it's difficult to get the attention of Internet users – even for just a split second. After all, Internet users are bombarded with so many advertisements every day and see so many Web sites, it's hard for any one firm to stand out.

One of the most difficult jobs you'll have as an e-commerce merchant is figuring out what blend of offline and online marketing techniques to use to promote your Web site. If you're a small business, that challenge is even greater on a tight budget. The right marketing mix depends on many factors, including the types of products you are selling, the types of people you are trying to target, and, of course, your marketing budget.

In this guide, we'll review a variety of different techniques for raising the profile of your online store and attracting shoppers to your Web site. Marketing your Web site is not an easy task, nor is it a short one – you'll need to work hard and work continuously to make sure that your online store doesn't get lost among the billions of pages of information on the Web.

(1) Know Your Audience!

The key to successful marketing is very simple: know your audience. Before you spend any time or money on marketing, you need to know who your target market is. What types of customers are most likely to buy the types of products you are selling? For example, males or females? What age bracket? What income bracket? Are you trying to reach people with certain interests or skills? Once you know the profile of your typical customer, you need to find ways of reaching customers with that demographic profile. This may involve online advertising, offline advertising, or a combination of the two. But don't even begin to think about spending money on marketing until you've spent time thinking about who you are trying to reach. You may even need to do some market research to uncover this information. We can't emphasize this step enough. Your marketing efforts won't be successful unless you are spending your marketing dollars in the right places.

(2) Your Brand Name

One of the most important marketing assets that you have is the name of your online store. Give it careful consideration. You should pick a name that's easy to remember yet distinct from other similar names on the Internet. Closely related to the issue of picking a name is choosing a suitable domain name. The domain name is the part of your Web site address that appears after "www." For example, the domain name for the Office Depot is officedepot.com and the domain name for Eddie Bauer is eddiebauer.com. Office Depot's Web site is at www.officedepot.com and Eddie Bauer's Web site can be found at www.eddiebauer.com.

To avoid confusing your customers, you will want to have a domain name that is as close as possible to your organization's name. This will also make it easier for customers to find your Web site. For example, customers looking for Eddie Bauer's Web site would probably start by typing www.eddiebauer.com into their Web browsers. In addition to being close to your business name, your chosen domain name should be short, easy for your customers to remember, and intuitive.

Finally, keep in mind that you don't have to have "www" in your Web address. Some organizations have chosen to drop it entirely, e.g. CBS promotes itself simply as CBS.com.

In addition, you can, with the help of the technical folks who support your site, sometimes use words or characters in front of your actual domain name, and get an extra "identity hook" that might

be unique enough to draw attention to your site. One such example of this is the Web site Beer.com, which gained some attention during the 2000 Olympics. It ran an ad that used the address mmm.beer.com – indeed, during the commercial, the graphic showed the “www” flipping over to become “mmm,” as the announcer mimicked the “mmm” or “tastes good” sound. There was a huge increase in traffic to the site.

It's important that both your brand name and your Web site address be as distinctive as possible to avoid confusion with other similar companies selling on the Internet. There are tens of thousands of merchants on the Internet all vying for attention, making it difficult for online merchants with similar names to get noticed. Even if the domain name you want is available, you should find out if similar names currently used by online stores might compete with yours. Many online merchants have found it necessary to change their names because their names were being confused with other similar names on the Internet.

When trying to come up with a name for your online store, consider getting a group of friends or colleagues together to brainstorm with you. Alternatively, you could hire a market research firm to hold focus groups with consumers.

Issues to Consider When Choosing a Name for Your Online Store

- Can you get a Web site address (i.e., domain name) for that name?
- Is the name too long?
- Is the name easy to pronounce?
- Are there other Web sites or online stores with similar-sounding or similar-looking brand names or domain names?
- Is your name unique or distinctive enough?
- Is your name memorable and does it make an impression?
- Is the name consistent with the image you want to project?

If you really want to have a domain name that someone else has already registered, you could approach the owner and see if he/she is interested in selling the domain name to you. Many companies register domain names but never activate them. Even a company that is using a domain name may consider selling it to you for the right price.

Finally, if you believe that someone else has registered a domain name that infringes on a trademark that you own, you can pursue legal action against the owner of the domain name in question.

Alternatively, an appeals process exists for domain names, and it might be possible for you to launch an appeal to see if the other party can be forced to give up the name. To learn about this option, visit a domain name registrar, and read about the international domain name appeals process. You can also visit the ICANN Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy site at www.icann.org/udrp/udrp.htm for more information.

Which raises an important point – it might be a good defensive maneuver for you to register as many domain names as possible early on, related to your store name, your product names, or other words and phrases that, when used as a domain name, might help drive traffic to your store.

How to Get a Domain Name

To get a domain name, you can go to any one of the accredited domain name registers on the Internet, including Register.com (www.register.com). You can get a complete list of accredited domain name registrars on the InterNIC Web site at www.internic.com. The list can be viewed alphabetically or by geographical location.

You don't need to have a Web site in order to register a domain name and most registrars will hold your domain name for you until you are ready to activate it on your online store. Many browser-based storefront solutions allow you to set up a domain name for your online store when you are setting up your account. This removes the need for you to go directly to a domain name registrar.

Once you have registered a domain name, you want to make sure that no one is registering similar names, or taking out a trademark similar to your name. To automatically track your name, consider using a service like NameProtect (www.nameprotect.com). One of NameProtect's services will constantly monitor new US trademark applications and domain name registrations for you and flag

any applications/registrations that are identical or very similar to your domain name. It's a great way to keep informed of any potential threats to your brand name. This service will also help you identify companies that may be trying to register your domain name as a trademark. This is a potentially serious situation as you could lose your domain name if a trademark similar to your brand name is granted to someone else.

(3) Offline Marketing

Perhaps the most important piece of advice we can give you in this guide is this: Don't restrict your advertising and promotional efforts to the Web. Online stores often rely too heavily on online advertising at the expense of more traditional advertising vehicles that may actually produce better results.

Throughout this guide, we'll review a number of different ways for you to promote your online store on the Web. But it's important not to get too dependent on online marketing for your success. Think about the types of customers you are trying to attract and what the best methods would be to reach those customers. Rather than spending your money advertising on the Web, you may find that a more effective strategy would be to place advertisements in a couple of well-targeted magazines. For example, Noggintops (www.noggintops.com), an online hat retailer, has spent very little on Internet advertising. Instead, the company did some marketing research and identified a number of magazines that appealed to the company's target market: outdoorsmen. Ads featuring the company's Web site address were then placed in those magazines. In fact, the bulk of Noggintop's marketing budget has been spent on offline ads. Our point is that you shouldn't ignore traditional advertising vehicles. Think about how you can use both print (e.g. newspapers, magazines, journals) and broadcast media (radio and television stations) to reach your target audience. Be realistic with your expectations. In years past, many Internet companies invested millions in television ads with often disappointing results. Many companies quickly learned that brands can't be built overnight. It can take years to build a successful and recognized brand name.

That being said, if you develop any print or broadcast advertising, make sure that your Web address is featured prominently in your ads. You may want to even consider purchasing advertising for the sole purpose of promoting your Web site.

It is important to use your imagination when looking for ways to raise awareness of your Web site. Don't limit yourself to radio, television, and print media. Why not advertise your Web address in buses or subways, or on the transfers handed out by your local transit authority? How about on newspaper polybags (the plastic bags that newspapers are wrapped in when they are delivered to your front door)? Or in movie theatres? Some organizations have even gone so far as to include their Internet addresses on bananas! The possibilities are endless.

In many respects, marketing a Web site is no different than marketing any product or service. The challenge is to find innovative ways to get the word out.

(4) Your Retail Store

If your business has a brick-and-mortar retail presence, use it to promote your online store aggressively. Include your Web site on your receipts, invoices, and shopping bags, and print it on your catalogs and sales literature. Make sure that your Web address is advertised prominently both within your store and outside if you can. Many retailers, unfortunately, don't leverage their retail presence in this way.

(5) Gift Certificates

Brick-and-mortar stores give out gift certificates, so why not online stores too? Consider offering an online gift certificate that your customers can give to a family member or a friend. Gift certificates purchased online make great last-minute gifts because they can be sent by e-mail to arrive almost instantly. The recipient can then visit the store's Web site and apply the gift certificate toward the purchase of any products offered by the store.

How does it work? Online stores that offer this service let you pay with your credit card and the gift certificate is delivered to the recipient by e-mail as soon as the payment is authorized. The gift certificate is essentially an e-mail message with a number attached to it. The recipient can redeem the certificate on their next purchase at that online store. When the recipient proceeds to check out of the store, they will be asked to provide their certificate number. The value of the gift certificate will then be deducted from the total amount of the purchase. Electronic gift certificates not only make great gifts – they're a great way to drive new customers into your online store!

(6) Cross-Selling

You should get in the habit of cross-selling products in your online store to increase sales. This means that where possible, product pages on your online store should feature accessories or complementary products that your customers may be interested in. For example, consider what Smith & Hawken has done in their online store (www.smithandhawken.com). Whenever a customer views a product, complementary products are displayed on the right-hand side of the page. For example, a customer may select a bench. Smith & Hawken realizes that customers who are interested in purchasing a bench may also be interested in purchasing a matching chair or table. That's why there is a section called "Also Look At:" where complementary products are displayed, including an armchair and table. As you might expect, if you look at the Web page advertising for the armchair, the bench is recommended as a complementary product.

The idea here is to try and upsell customers. Eddie Bauer employs a similar strategy on its Web site (www.eddiebauer.com). Customers looking at a specific piece of clothing can ask to see coordinating products by clicking on a link. As you can see, cross-selling is an excellent strategy to increase overall sales in your online store.

(7) Product Referral Services

Many people find out about Web sites through word of mouth. So make it easy for your customers to tell other shoppers about your online store.

For example, as customers are browsing through your Web site, they may come across products that their friends, co-workers, or family members may be interested in. Or they may want to tell a friend or family member about a product they would like to receive as a gift. That is why you should make it easy for customers to refer friends and relatives directly to specific product pages on your site. For an excellent example of how this can be done, visit RadioShack's online store (www.radioshack.com). At the bottom of every product page on the site is a graphic that says, "e-mail this page to a friend." Customers who click on that icon will be taken to another Web page where they are asked to provide the name and e-mail address of a friend. The recipient will receive an e-mail message that invites them to visit RadioShack's online store. A referral mechanism like this is an effective way to bring more people into your Web site.

(8) Affiliate Programs

Many online merchants have built successful affiliate programs for their online stores.

An affiliate program involves paying owners of other Web sites a commission for referring customers to your online store. In other words, you reward other Web sites for sending new customers to you. The idea is to find Web sites with visitors who are likely to be interested in your products. To this end, Web site owners usually try to find merchants who sell products or services related to their own Web sites. A Web site with movie reviews may try to affiliate with a merchant who sells movies, and a Web site devoted to golf may align itself with a Web site that sells sporting goods or athletic apparel. It's in a Web site owner's best interests to identify merchants with compatible products because it will increase the likelihood of making lots of sales. For example, suppose you sell travel guidebooks. You could sign up travel agencies to your affiliate program and invite them to create links from their Web sites to yours. You would then pay the travel agencies a commission on any book sales and/or leads you get from their customers.

Online retailers with affiliate programs compensate customers in different ways. Some merchants pay affiliates strictly for sales (pay-for-sale), while other merchants compensate affiliates simply for sending a potential customer their way (pay-per-lead). Other programs may compensate affiliates if a person clicks on an advertisement, regardless of whether that person turns into a lead or ends up purchasing a product. This is called a pay-per-click program.

Affiliate programs can be extremely powerful because they allow you to increase your revenues by having your brand name displayed on dozens if not hundreds of complementary Web sites. There are literally thousands of affiliate programs on the Web. For an example, visit the online store for Staples (www.staples.com) and read about their affiliate program. Web sites that sign up can earn a percentage of every sale for referring customers to Staples.com.

There is no cost for affiliates of Staples to sign up, but they must first agree to the program's terms and conditions and then complete an online application form that requests information about their Web site. If a Web site is approved into the program, Staples will provide the owner with a selection of Staples.com graphics that can be placed on the Web site and linked to Staples.com. Every time someone clicks on the link and proceeds to buy something from Staples.com, the Web site owner will be paid a commission. Staples.com says its affiliate program has been a success, with over thirty thousand Web sites signing up since the program was first created.

The commission that you offer your affiliates is up to you. Some firms, like Staples, offer a percentage of sales; other firms offer flat fees. Commission structures can range from less than 1 percent to as high as 50 percent. Flat-fee commissions, on the other hand, can range anywhere from \$0.05 to \$50.00, or more.

Affiliate programs are popular because they're an inexpensive way of attracting customers to your Web site. In essence, you are getting other Web sites to market your online store for you. Moreover, it doesn't cost a lot to get such a program underway. Best of all, you may only have to pay affiliates if they generate sales or leads for you.

Affiliate programs do have a number of drawbacks, however. It can be a burden to keep track of all of your affiliates and process all of the commission checks. Keep in mind that the number of affiliates you have really has no direct bearing on how successful your program will be. For example, even though Staples.com has over thirty thousand affiliates, what really counts is the number of affiliates that are sending significant amounts of business to Staples.com. A lot of online stores have found that many of the Web sites that sign up for their affiliate programs bring in very little business. That is why when you are setting up an affiliate program, your focus should not be on signing up as many Web sites as possible, but finding those Web sites that can generate the most sales for you. Obviously, it's hard to screen Web sites in advance but eventually you will discover which affiliates are valuable and which are immaterial to your business.

As you might imagine, setting up an affiliate program can take a lot of time and effort, especially once you begin to sign up hundreds of affiliates. You need to screen applicants, track sales from each affiliate, prepare commission checks, and spend time on other administrative functions that take you away from running your online store. For this reason, many online retailers hire organizations called affiliate program providers that specialize in running affiliate programs on behalf of online stores.

We've listed some of the more popular affiliate program providers in the table below.

Affiliate Program Providers	My Affiliate Program	www.myaffiliateprogram.com
	Commission Junction	www.cj.com
	LinkShare	www.linkshare.com

The cost of using an affiliate program provider varies depending on the affiliate provider. For example, some companies charge a one-time fee plus they receive a monthly commission based on a percentage of affiliate sales. Others may charge a one-time setup fee, an annual renewal fee, plus a percentage of your payout – the amount of money you pay your affiliates. Still others have no set up fee, or commission charge but have a flat monthly fee. Which affiliate program provider is best? It all depends on what you are looking for. Services and program features vary from one affiliate program provider to the next, so make sure you carefully consider all your options before making a final decision.

One of the major benefits of using an affiliate program provider is that these organizations will help you find Web sites that can begin linking to your online store immediately. If you're a small business with very little brand name recognition, how is anybody going to find your Web site to learn about your affiliate program? Affiliate program providers maintain a directory of participating online stores so that interested Web sites can quickly find merchants they want to work with.

If you're interested in setting up an affiliate program for your online store, start by getting in contact with the various affiliate program providers we listed earlier in the guide. When comparing affiliate program providers, think about the following questions:

- ▶ How much does the affiliate program provider charge you to set up an affiliate program?
As explained earlier in the guide, affiliate program providers have different pricing schemes, so make sure you understand how you will be charged. Also find out if there is a minimum escrow amount that you must give the affiliate program provider (this money is used to pay commissions to your affiliates).
- ▶ What types of affiliate programs are offered? As noted earlier, there are three basic types of affiliate programs that you should be familiar with:
 - 1) pay-per-click programs — you pay a Web site for referring a visitor to your online store regardless of whether a sale results or not
 - 2) pay-per-lead programs — you pay a Web site for referring a visitor to your Web site to fill out a form or perform another action that may lead to an online or offline sale
 - 3) pay-per-sale — you pay a Web site for referring a visitor to your Web site who immediately buys a product or service

- ▶ What type of performance tracking is provided? How sophisticated is the performance tracking? What information do the performance reports contain? How frequently are the reports updated? Are the reports delivered by e-mail in addition to being available on the Web?
- ▶ How user-friendly is their affiliate management software? What account management features does their software offer? How easy is it for you to update or replace the ads being served by your affiliates?
- ▶ What tools exist for communicating with your affiliates, both through the affiliate program provider's Web site and by e-mail? Can you target certain affiliates with special offers?
- ▶ Who issues the commission payments to your affiliates? Do you have to, or will the affiliate program provider do that for you?
- ▶ How does the affiliate program provider guard against fraud? For example, what happens if the same person clicks on a link to your Web site 50 times – do you have to pay for that?
- ▶ Is there any flexibility with regard to payout rates? Can you customize payout rates for different affiliates or do you have to give the same commission structure to everyone?
- ▶ Does the affiliate program provider offer any client services to assist you with the implementation of your affiliate program, or are you expected to do it on your own? What technical support is available for both affiliates and merchants? Are any consulting services offered?
- ▶ How easy is it for Web site owners to join an affiliate program and create links from their Web sites to yours? To get the answer to this question, we recommend you visit some of the leading affiliate program providers' sites and try signing up with some of their merchants. By doing this, you'll get a first-hand look at how the process works from an affiliate's point of view.
- ▶ What types of link options are available for your affiliates?
- ▶ Does the affiliate program provide support for e-mail-based affiliate programs? For example, how easy is it for an affiliate to include links to your Web site in their e-mail messages to customers?
- ▶ How many affiliates are part of the company's network? What is the company doing to recruit new affiliates into their network?

If you decide to work with an affiliate program provider, don't rely solely on its Web site to promote your program. You should also promote it on your own Web site and get other Web sites excited about the possibility of joining your affiliate program. For a good example of how this can be done, visit the Web site of Shari's Berries (www.berries.com) and read the section on its affiliate program.

One final note about affiliate programs: many merchants, in addition to running their own affiliate programs, have become affiliates of other Web sites in order to generate some extra cash. If you are thinking about becoming an affiliate of another Web site, we recommend that you proceed carefully. Having an advertisement for another company on your Web site can compromise your image and credibility. Sometimes, the mere presence of an advertisement on your site can make you look unprofessional to potential and existing clients, especially if it promotes products or services unrelated to your current line of business. Accepting advertising for another company is an implied endorsement for that organization and its product or services. Make sure that you are prepared to make that type of public statement. Keep all of these factors in mind when considering whether to accept advertisements for other merchants on your Web site.

This advice may seem contradictory since the whole purpose of an affiliate program is to get other Web sites to display advertisements for your company. Won't they look unprofessional by displaying advertisements for you? Maybe. When you create an affiliate program, you have to keep in mind that you're inviting other companies to display your brand name on their Web sites and it's never a good idea to let another company take control of your brand name. Sometimes it's hard to control how your affiliates display your advertisements, and in what context. When launching an affiliate program, make sure you carefully screen your affiliates. In addition, you may want to build some rules into your affiliate program so that you have some recourse in the event that an advertisement for your company is being presented in a way that you find objectionable.

(9) Permission Marketing

You may have heard the term "permission marketing" before. It refers to a method of online marketing where the merchant asks permission from online shoppers to market to them directly by e-mail. Permission marketing is also known as "opt-in e-mail."

Permission marketing follows two main principles. First, you only market to those customers who have specifically told you that they are interested in receiving e-mail messages from you. Second, you must give away something in order to get a customer's e-mail address. In other words, shoppers are more likely to give you their e-mail address if you give them an incentive or reward for doing so. This incentive could be a discount on a future purchase, entry in a sweepstakes or contest, or just the promise of relevant advice by e-mail.

The easiest way to undertake permission marketing is by establishing a mailing list that customers can join. You can then use the mailing list to send out promotional messages to your customers. The trick is to give your customers an incentive to join your mailing list.

For an example of how a permission-based e-mail marketing program can be implemented, consider what Payless ShoeSource (www.payless.com) did on their online store. They ran a contest on their home page for a "dream trip to Tahiti." Customers were invited to enter their e-mail address into a box on the screen. Once a customer entered his/her e-mail address, a new page appeared inviting the customer to join Payless ShoeSource's mailing list. The contest was the "hook" to get customers to spend a few minutes filling out the form that is required to join the mailing list. Once customers joined the Payless mailing list, they were automatically entered into the vacation contest.

Keep in mind that if you are going to set up a mailing list for your customers, you should clearly tell your potential customers how they can leave the list, and about any other conditions that might apply to the list.

Don't restrict yourself to your Web site when collecting e-mail addresses from customers. If you have a retail store, have your salespeople at the checkout counter ask customers for their e-mail addresses. Similarly, if you have a call center, collect e-mail addresses from customers when they call in. But regardless of how you collect the information, make sure you let customers know how you intend to use it. For example, if you have a retail store, have your salespeople say something like this to your customers: "We frequently send out notices of sales and other promotions by e-mail. If you have an e-mail address, Mr. Smith, I'd be happy to add it to our database so that you'll receive advance notice of our special events". By asking customers for their e-mail addresses in this fashion, you're clearly stating why you're asking for the information and giving the customer an incentive to provide his or her e-mail address to you.

(10) Search Engines and Web Directories

Many online shoppers use a search engine or a Web directory when they are trying to find something on the Internet. A search engine is a Web site that indexes the contents of millions of Web pages. A Web directory, on the other hand, organizes Web sites by category so that they can be easily browsed by Internet users. Unlike search engines, directories are usually compiled by human beings.

In the following table, we've listed the names and addresses of the most popular search engines and Web directories. Making sure that your Web site is registered with all of these sites is one of the most important things you can do to draw traffic to your store. Why all of them? Your customers (and potential customers) won't all be using the same search engine or Web directory. Some people use Excite, some use AltaVista, some use Lycos, etc. By registering with all the major search engines and Web directories, you have the best chance of being found by online shoppers regardless of what search engine or Web directory they are using.

Popular Search Engines	AltaVista	www.altavista.com
	AOL.COM Search	search.aol.com
	Ask Jeeves	www.askjeeves.com
	Google	www.google.com
	Overture	www.overture.com
	Excite	www.excite.com
	FAST	www.alltheweb.com
	HotBot	www.hotbot.com
	Lycos	www.lycos.com
	MSN Search	search.msn.com
Popular Web Directories	LookSmart	www.looksmart.com
	Open Directory Project	www.dmoz.org
	Yahoo!	www.yahoo.com

Having said that, as we will see, it is not necessarily easy to get listed in these search engines and directories. In fact, you may be required to pay just to be considered for inclusion in their listings.

When you submit a Web site to a search engine, your Web site is added to the search engine's full text database, but it does not necessarily get your Web site included in the directory portion of the search engine. Many search engines use a different source for the directory listings, so if you want to get your Web site included in the directory portion of the search engine, you often have to go through a separate submission process. The same is true with Web directories (i.e., you may have to go through a separate submission process to get your Web site listed in the search engine portion of the Web directory).

Search Engine and Directory Databases

Before you submit your site to any search engine or Web directory, you need to understand how their databases are developed. A search engine database is significantly different from a directory database. Automated computer programs called spiders develop search engine databases. These programs scour the Internet indexing the full contents (i.e., all of the words on a page) of the millions of Web pages they find. These databases are intended to help you find instances of words or phrases on Web sites, similar to a dictionary or book index.

Web directory databases, on the other hand, list Web sites that have been selected by human beings and organized into distinct categories. These databases are similar to the yellow pages, which organize businesses by topic, and are more useful when you are interested in a specific topic.

The confusion comes from the fact that all the major search engine Web sites now have not only a search engine database, but also a directory database. Often when you do a search on such a Web site, the results that are returned include information from both databases. This is also true of Web directory sites, most of which have a search engine database in addition to the directory database.

As an Internet merchant, the ideal situation is to have your Web site included in both databases of any search engine or directory Web site.

Submitting Your Web Site to a Search Engine Database

When you launch a Web site, you want to make sure that it is included in the search engine databases of both search engine Web sites and directory Web sites. There is a good possibility that the spider programs that these Web sites use will find your Web site, index it, and add it to the search engine's database. However, it could take months for these spiders to discover your site, if they ever do. For these reasons, it's generally a good idea to visit each search engine and directory Web site and manually submit your Web site for inclusion in their search engine databases.

Getting Added to a Search Engine's Database

To add your Web site to a search engine, go to the particular search engine site and look for a link or button somewhere on the main page that says something like "Add Your Web Site", "Add a Page" or "Add URL" (URL stands for "Uniform Resource Locator" — it means the same thing as "Web address"). Click on the button or link, and you'll usually be directed to a Web page where you can fill out a form and submit your Web site.

Getting Added to a Web Directory's Search Engine Database

Web directory sites may have their own search engine spiders that develop their search engine database but quite often the Web directory partners with an existing search engine. Alliances are very common, so it is worth the time to find out who is partnered with whom and submit your Web site to all the relevant search engines. This will maximize the number of search engine databases you appear in.

Submitting Your Web Site to a Directory Database

First and foremost, make sure you register your Web site with the major directories that we listed earlier in the guide, as well as with any other Web directories that pertain to your industry. Look for information on their home pages explaining how you can submit your Web site to their database. You generally have to decide what category and sub-category would best represent your site. In some cases you do not have a choice. Look through each Web directory's help section to make sure you understand what is required and how to go about properly registering your site.

Second, visit the Web site of each of the major search engines, and determine who provides their Web directly listings. Then visit each of those Web directories and submit your Web site, if you haven't already done so.

Is There a Charge to Submit Your Web Site to a Search Engine or Web Directory?

The answer is that it depends. If the submission is free, it can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months for your Web site to be added to the database, assuming that it is accepted for inclusion. There is the very real possibility that your Web site will never appear in the search engine's index. But don't let this discourage you! Submit your Web site anyway — you have nothing to lose. And don't hesitate to keep submitting it again over time.

The problem is that the Internet is growing so rapidly that many of the search engine and Web directory sites can barely keep up with the massive increase in the number of pages and sites. Not only that, but they complain that many Web sites, particularly adult-oriented ones, continually submit requests for them to check new sites. Hence, they have been falling behind in indexing new sites and pages.

The result is that many search engines and Web directories now charge you a fee to submit your Web site for inclusion in their respective databases. However, payment of these fees does not guarantee that your Web site will be included in the search engine or Web directory database. In some cases the fee may only guarantee that your Web site will be considered for inclusion. Check each search engine's and Web directory's help files for specific information.

Should You Pay to Have Your Web Site Included?

You may be wondering whether it's a good idea to pay to have your Web site included in a search engine and/or Web directory. If a paid submission service is available, we recommend that you use it. In some cases, it's the only way to get your Web site added to a search engine or Web directory.

On those Web sites where both free and paid submission services are offered, we still recommend that you opt for the paid submission. Why? As noted earlier, with free submission, there is no guarantee that your Web site will ever make it into the search engine or Web directory. By paying, you guarantee that your Web site will at least be considered for the search engine or Web directory in a timely manner. If you use the free submission option, you could be waiting around forever!

Increasing Your Likelihood of Success

Throughout this section, we have talked about the process of submitting your site to search engines and Web directories, and we indicated that you might or might not manage to get listed. Particularly if you are paying a search engine or Web directory to be considered for inclusion in their site, you might want to know if there are ways to design your site so that it is more acceptable for inclusion. Look through the help files of search engines and Web directories to see if they provide any hints, tips, and other guidance for your site. Some have submission criteria you may need to follow.

There are no hard and fast rules — it can be a very subjective process. Suffice it to say you can be judged on content, appearance, relevance of your site, and other factors. All we can suggest is that you make your site and /or store as comprehensive and professional as possible, which will undoubtedly increase the likelihood of being listed.

Are Search Engines and Web Directories Effective Marketing Tools?

Working with search engines and Web directories can easily consume a lot of time, and many Web site owners wonder whether the effort is really justified. Internet users rely heavily on search engines and Web directories when they are looking for information on the Web, so it's definitely worth your time to ensure that your Web site is included in all the major search engine and Web directory sites. At the same time, we caution you against going overboard and relying too much on search engines and directories to drive traffic to your Web site. Search engines and directories are just one part of the marketing mix. Your marketing activities should include using offline media such as radio, television, and print, as well as other techniques that we discuss in this guide.

Later in the guide, we discuss the use of Web site analysis tools such as WebTrends that can help you analyze which search engines and directories your customers are using to find you. These types of tools can help you understand how much traffic on your Web site originates from search engines and directories. Furthermore, using these tools, you'll be able to quantify the importance of being listed on various search engine and directory sites. One of the authors of this guide, for example, has discovered that Yahoo! is responsible for a lot of the visits his Web site receives.

(11) Search Engine Optimization

As we noted at the beginning of this guide, there are billions of Web pages on the Internet and thousands upon thousands of online stores, all clamoring for attention. When you submit your Web site to a search engine, you typically don't have any control over where your Web site will show up in the site's results list when someone searches for your company name or a keyword related to your business. For example, suppose you open an online store selling pasta products. If someone goes to a search engine, and types in the word "pasta", you're not going to be very happy if your Web site shows up on the seventh page of results. Most people won't bother looking past the second or third page of results when they are doing a search on the Internet. In fact, many people won't even bother looking beyond the first page of results. This means that if your Web site doesn't show up in the top ten or so results for a specific search such as "pasta", the chances of your Web site being seen by Internet users diminishes considerably.

Hence, an important part of online marketing involves a process known as search engine optimization — ensuring that your Web site receives prominent placement on all the major search engines. Ideally, you want your Web site to show up on the first page of results when a potential customer searches for a keyword related to your business.

Before we go any further, you need to understand three things. First, there is no simple method or magical formula for achieving good rankings on search engines. Second, every search engine uses different ranking criteria. This is why the same search performed on different search engines will yield different results. It is also why your Web site may be ranked number one on one search engine but appear in the twentieth position on another. Third, search engines are constantly changing the algorithms they use to index Web sites, so your site's ranking on any given search engine may be in a continual state of flux. Most search engines provide some information on their Web sites to help you understand how they rank Web pages. Visit each search engine, read the help files, and try to accommodate as many of the suggestions as possible. For example, the Lycos search engine (www.lycos.com) has a page of information on its Web site with several tips and pointers to help you optimize your Web site's ranking in their index.

Reading help files will help you to understand what you need to do to get a good ranking for your Web site. That being said, there are some general tips we can offer to help you improve your Web site's ranking on various search engines:

- 1) Don't use graphics at the expense of text.** When you create the front page of your Web site, make sure you include lots of text that accurately describes your business. When search engines index your Web site, they can read text, but they can't read images. If your home page consists of a bunch of graphics and very little text, it's difficult for the search engine to properly index your Web site. This means it will be hard for Internet users to find it when they are using a search engine to find products and services. We're not suggesting that you not use graphics on your home page. However, if you use graphics, make sure they are accompanied by lots of text.
- 2) Integrate important keywords in your text.** Choose important keywords related to your business and make sure those keywords are strategically positioned on your Web site. Come up with two or three terms or phrases that might be the "hot" keywords that Internet users are most likely to search for. These important words should appear more frequently, in headings or in an introductory paragraph which has descriptive text that mentions these "hot" keywords. This doesn't mean that you should blatantly repeat the same words over and over again on your Web site. Rather, when building your Web site, think carefully about the words you are choosing to use on your home page. Make sure you integrate words and phrases into your Web site that you think Internet users will be searching for.
- 3) Use meta-tags.** Meta-tags are pieces of code that you include in the HTML code of your Web site to influence the description that search engines give your Web site (this is called a "descriptive meta-tag") and to influence the words that search engines associate with your site (this is called a "keywords meta-tag").

If a Web site is using meta tags, you can see them by looking at the Web site's HTML code (the hypertext markup language is the computer code used to build pages on the World Wide Web). If you are using the Netscape Web browser, you can look at a Web site's HTML code by choosing "View" from the list of options at the top of your browser, then select "Page Source" or "Document Source". If you are using Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser, select "View" from the menu bar, then "Source".

The information in a description meta-tag is used by the search engine to create a summary description of your Web site. When an Internet user is browsing through a list of search results on a search engine, the summary description from the meta tag is sometimes used to create the abstract that appears under the title of each Web page. Many Internet users rely on these abstracts to help them decide which Web sites to visit. It is therefore important that you create a site summary for your Web site that accurately and concisely reflects its purpose.

A keywords meta tag looks like this:

```
<META NAME="keywords" CONTENT="candles, candle holders, aromatherapy candles, float-  
ing candles, scented candles, illumine, illuminate, candle lanterns, candle lamps, illuminations  
candles, essential oils, holders for candles, candle pillars, tapers, votive candles, tealight candles,  
candlesticks, sconces, candleescapes, online stores, incense, handmade candles, handcrafted  
candles, beeswax candles, gel candles">
```

A keywords meta-tag is essentially just a list of keywords related to your business. Notice that each keyword in the list is separated by a comma. A keywords meta tag increases the likelihood that your Web site will appear higher on the results list whenever someone does a search using any of the words or phrases that appear in your tag.

When creating your keywords meta tag, we recommend that you don't repeat the same keyword multiple times in order to try and increase your Web site's ranking. Some search engines have been known to lower a Web site's ranking in their index or remove the site altogether if they discover this type of abuse.

We mention meta tags in this guide because so many Web sites use them and because they are often cited as an important online marketing technique. However, the main problem with meta tags is that only some of the large search engines recognize them – many ignore them altogether. Furthermore, on search engines that do pay attention to meta tags, they are only one of several factors a search engine uses to rank your Web site for users' searches. Therefore, meta tags are not a panacea for getting your site to the top of a search engine's results list – they are just one of many things that you can do to improve your site's chances of being found on the Web. If you want to find out whether a particular search engine recognizes meta tags, visit its Web site and read the online help files.

Depending on what type of storefront software you used to build your online store, you may or may not be allowed to modify the HTML code that makes up your Web site. In order to create and modify your meta tags, you will need to have access to the HTML code behind your Web site. Check with the company you are using to host your online store to see if this is possible. If you are not technically inclined or you're not familiar with HTML code, you may want to hire someone to create your meta tags for you.

- 4) Give your Web site a descriptive title.** Make sure that the title of your Web page describes your business rather than simply mentioning the name of your business. The title of your Web site is what appears at the very top of your Web browser's window — it is not what appears on the front page of your Web site.

Many search engines pay special attention to the words in your Web site's title when they index your Web site. In other words, you may increase the likelihood of appearing higher up on a search engine's results list if the words in your title closely match what an Internet user is looking for. What you shouldn't do is create a title like: "Welcome to my Web site" or "Welcome to My Home Page". Titles like this are much too generic.

Your Web site title is also important for another reason. The title of your Web site is often the title that an Internet user will see in a search engine's list of results. Creating a good descriptive title for your Web site is one way to make it stand out from the rest. Internet users are most likely to click on Web sites that have clear, descriptive titles. The title of your Web site is controlled by a line of HTML code in your Web site called the title tag. A title tag might look like this:

```
<TITLE>Foot Locker: The Source for Athletic Footwear and Apparel</TITLE>
```

You'll need to have access to your online store's HTML code in order to change or modify your Web site's title.

- 5) Get other Web sites to link to you.** Contrary to popular belief, many search engines look at factors other than what's on your Web site in order to figure out where to rank your site. For example, if a lot of other Web sites link to you, this can help you to get a good ranking on some search engines such as Google (www.google.com). Generally speaking, the more Web pages that link to your Web site, the more "popular" your Web site is, and the higher your Web site's ranking in the Google database. We'll discuss the issue of Web site linking in a little more detail later in the guide.

Using a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Company

Many Web site owners, sometimes in sheer desperation or frustration, have enlisted professional help to try and improve their rankings on search engines. The reason that search engine optimization (SEO) firms are in such demand is explained well by one of many companies that specializes in search optimization: "...Over the years the search engines and directories have gotten smarter and keep changing to the point where we have to work very hard to keep up to date on what techniques work best (or at all). Search engine optimization has become a very complex, sophisticated practice that requires constant research, practice, and reevaluation to be effective."

In other words, understanding how search engines work is a complex business and most Web site owners don't have the time, inclination, or skill to try and manage their own Web site rankings.

Search engine optimization has become a popular business in recent years. There are also many small organizations that offer search engine optimization services. Many Web design and online advertising firms have also entered this market.

Search engine optimization firms use a variety of practices to improve Web site rankings for their clients, practices that are beyond the scope of this guide. If you're thinking of hiring a SEO firm, evaluate your options carefully. While many search engine optimization companies do honest, legitimate work, there are just as many companies that use unethical techniques and are looking for a way to earn a fast buck. We know of one company, for example, that was duped out of over \$2,000 after hiring a company that promised to get it listed in the top ten rankings of all the major search engines. The rankings never materialized, and the company never saw its money again. If the company you hire uses unacceptable techniques to boost your search engine ratings, you could wind up having your Web site banned from a search engine forever.

Search engine optimization is such a complicated business that it's hard to know what techniques a company is using. Even if they're explained to you, you may not understand, and this of course makes it difficult for you to figure out whether a certain practice is ethical or unethical. Before choosing a SEO company to work with, check references and ask to see the company's client list. This will help you to ensure that you are only dealing with legitimate companies that use industry-accepted practices.

For further information about search engines and Web directories, including lots of links to other helpful resources on search optimization, visit the About.com Guide to Web Search (websearch.about.com) as well as Search Engine Watch (www.searchenginewatch.com), a newsletter covering the search engine industry. Search Engine Watch isn't free, but a subscription is well worth the price if you're interested in keeping abreast of the fast-moving search engine industry.

(12) Online Shopping Directories

Most of the major search engines and Web directories have shopping areas on their Web sites that showcase selected merchants and that list hundreds of merchants by product category.

Many Internet users use one of these shopping directories when looking for online merchants to buy from, so it's a good way to get exposure for your online store. However, to get included in a search engine or Web directory's shopping directory, or to become one of its "featured stores" or "premier merchants", you usually need to be an advertising partner or be using the site's online storefront software. To become an advertiser, you will need to get in contact with the search engine or directory's advertising department for details about pricing. America Online, for example, has advertising agreements with a number of large retailers that give these retailers prominent positioning on AOL's shopping directory.

It is important to point out that these types of advertising opportunities are often targeted are larger, established retailers as opposed to small businesses, so depending on your advertising budget and the size/profile of your business, you may find that this type of advertising opportunity is not practical or affordable.

(13) Online Advertising and Sponsorships

One of the most popular online marketing strategies is to advertise on or sponsor other Web sites that attract the types of people who may be interested in buying your products and services. Suppose, for example, you sell luggage products. Why not advertise your online store on Web sites that attract travelers? For example, you might want to approach a travel Web site, such as one of

the popular travel-booking services like Travelocity.com, about sponsoring a section of their site. In addition, many of the popular travel magazines like Condé Nast Traveler have their own Web sites, and accept advertising.

Most Web sites that accept advertising have a section somewhere on the site that provides contact information for advertising inquiries as well as a general overview of advertising and sponsorship opportunities.

Before choosing to advertise on or sponsor any Web site, make sure that the site is reputable. You don't want to advertise on any Web site with a doubtful reputation or poor credibility. You should also obtain audited statistics that tell you how many visitors the site receives on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Also try to obtain as much demographic information as you can – data that will tell you what types of people the site attracts, including average age, income, and spending habits. You want to ensure that the Web site is attracting the same types of people who buy your products; otherwise your advertising dollars are being wasted. You should also find out what types of advertising or sponsorship packages are available and how much they cost. Will the Web site let you track how well your ad is performing? How frequently can you access usage statistics?

Banner Advertisements

Online advertisements come in all different sizes and shapes, just like newspaper ads. However, online advertising often appears in the form of a banner ad. A banner ad is a small rectangular graphic that can either be animated or static. You can design it yourself, or have someone design it on your behalf — it's basically a small Web page or graphic. People can click on a banner ad to be immediately connected to the advertiser's Web site.

Banner advertisements are usually sold on the basis of page views (every time a person accesses the Web page, that is considered a page view), and page views are usually purchased on a cost per thousand (CPM) basis. For example, if you are told by a Web site that the cost of banner advertising is \$60 per CPM, this means that you pay \$60 for every thousand page views. This might represent a thousand people looking at that page – or it might mean five hundred people looking at that page two times each. There are hundreds of thousands of Web sites on the Internet that accept banner advertising. The key is to find Web sites that attract the types of customers you are interested in reaching. There is no sense buying banner advertising on a Web site if its visitors aren't in your target market.

The average price for a banner is between \$5 and \$50 per CPM, although rates can be much higher or lower depending on the Web site. The cost of a banner ad may also be influenced by the length of the contract you sign and where on the Web site the banner ad will appear. For example, a banner ad placed in the health section of a Web site may cost more than an advertisement in the gardening section if the health section attracts more visitors. As you might expect, banner advertising on high-traffic sites like Yahoo! is typically more expensive than the industry average.

The cost could also be affected by the way that the site charges for advertisements. It could be based upon the number of “impressions” (i.e., the number of times your ad is actually shown on a Web page) or instead, it might be based upon the number of “click-throughs” (i.e., the number of times people actually click on the ad.).

When purchasing banner advertising, you may come across terms like “run of category”, “run of site”, “run of network” and “fixed category”, especially if you are inquiring about advertising on a search engine or Web directory. “Run of category” means that your banner advertisement will be rotated throughout a specific category area on the site (e.g. gardening, travel, etc.), “run of site” means that your banner ad will be rotated throughout the entire Web site, and “run of network” means that your banner ad will be rotated throughout a network of other Web sites that are somehow related to the site you are advertising on. “Fixed category” advertising allows you to display your banner ad on the same page within a category all the time

Creating Your Own Banner Ad Campaign

Larger Web sites may require a minimum advertising buy of several thousand dollars. For a small business, this can be prohibitive. An alternative to purchasing banner ads through one of the big search engines and directories is to use a service like Microsoft’s Small Business Center (www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/products/online/bannerads) where small businesses can create their own banner advertising campaigns and place them on select Web sites for a smaller up-front investment.

Online Advertising Help

If you want professional help with online advertising, you may want to consider using an advertising network to help you develop an online advertising campaign and target it at the right audience.

Advertising networks typically use sophisticated profiling technology to target your ads at Internet users who would be most interested in the types of products or services you are selling.

DoubleClick (www.doubleclick.com) is an example of such a firm.

How Effective Are Banner Ads?

We won't kid you — companies have had mixed success with banner ads. Many online shoppers say that they ignore them. Indeed, only 3.2 percent of online advertisers surveyed by Forrester Research said that banner ads were effective in driving traffic to their Web sites.

The other problem is that most Web users who see banner advertisements don't click on them. In fact, the average click-through rate for banner ads is less than 1 percent. In other words, no more than 1 percent of all the Web users who see banner ads on the Internet actually click on them.

That's an even lower response rate than using direct mail! But such a dismal click-through rate doesn't mean that banner ads are ineffective. Some companies run banner advertising campaigns with the goal of increasing brand awareness. If this is the goal of your online advertising campaign, the number of click-throughs isn't as important as the number of people who see your banner ad. However, if you are trying to drive traffic to your Web site, you may find that banner advertising is not a good investment.

Given the disappointing performance of banner ads for many businesses, if you're thinking of purchasing banner ads to drive visitors to your online store, make sure you keep your expectations in check.

(14) Keyword-Based Advertising

Many Web sites, including many of the major search engines and Web directories, offer keyword-based advertising. Here's how it works. You purchase one or more words and/or phrases related to your business. When a customer searches for any of those words, an advertisement for your Web site will appear. The advertisement may be a banner ad or another type of online advertisement that

you create. For example, suppose you own a business that sells pools and spas. You could purchase the word “pools” on Yahoo! so that whenever someone searches for that word, a banner ad for your company will appear on the search results screen.

Keyword-based advertising doesn't necessarily involve banner ads. For example, Google (www.google.com), one of the Internet's most popular search engines, allows you to create text ads for your company that will be displayed whenever an Internet user searches for a keyword that you've selected. Google's program, called AdWords (adwords.google.com), is affordable for small businesses because there is no monthly minimum spending limit and it costs just \$5 to set up your account.

Keyword Research

Part of the challenge in using keyword-based marketing on the Internet is to pick the keywords that your customers are most likely to be using when they are doing searches on search engines and Web directories. This will likely require a bit of brainstorming on the part of yourself and your staff. That's your job. To help you brainstorm, you might want to check out a few of the search engines that reveal what Internet users are searching for.

For example, Lycos has a service called “The Lycos 50 Daily Report” (50.lycos.com) that shows you what people are searching for on the Lycos search engine. Every week, Lycos publishes the 50 most popular searches from the past week.

You may also want to check out the MetaSpy (www.metaspynet.com), a service operated by the MetaCrawler, search engine. MetaSpy will show you what Internet users are searching for right now. You'll certainly find these services to be entertaining, if not inspirational as well!

(15) Links from Other Web Sites

One of the least expensive online marketing techniques, but perhaps one of the most effective, is getting links from other Web sites. Contact suppliers and manufacturers you work with to see if they will link from their Web sites to yours. Why is this important? Customers often visit the Web sites of manufacturers or suppliers when they are researching a purchase. If the manufacturer provides a

link from their Web site to yours, the customer may end up making the purchase online from you. This manufacturer benefits from the sale as well, given that you are selling more product, so it's in the manufacturer's best interest to link to you. You should also contact any industry associations you belong to and ask if they will link to you. The idea is to try and get as many Web sites to link to you as possible. As noted earlier, this can even help you with your placement on search engines since many search engines take a site's links into account when they decide where to rank it.

If you want to see how many other Web sites are linking to you, a really useful resource is a Web site called LinkPopularity.com (www.linkpopularity.com). Just enter your Web site address into the box on the LinkPopularity.com Web site. The site will generate a free report listing all of the Web sites linked to yours. You can also use the LinkPopularity.com site to monitor how many Web sites are linking to your competitors' Web sites. If appropriate, you can contact these Web sites directly and ask that they link to your online store, too!

(16) Monitor Activity on Your Web Site

Once you invest in an online store, you owe it to yourself to monitor how well your investment is paying off. The number of sales you receive is only part of the picture.

You also want to be able to track the number of people who visit your online store, where they come from, and which search engines and directories they use to find you. This information is vital to your business because it will help you assess whether your marketing activities – both online and offline – are succeeding or failing.

If you don't already receive daily traffic statistics from your Internet service provider, Web hosting service, or online store service, or if the reports you receive don't provide enough detail, consider signing up for one of many the third-party Web site analysis services. In the box below, we've listed some of the more popular programs that will allow you to monitor how your customers are using your Web site.

Popular Web Site Analysis Programs

HitBox

www.hitbox.com

Omniture

www.omniture.com

WebTrends

www.webtrends.com

Two thirds of all online shoppers abandon their shopping carts before making a purchase. A software program like the ones listed above can help you analyze what path customers are taking through your site and what the most popular “exit pages” are so that you can minimize customer abandonment (the “exit page” is the last page visited by the customer before the customer leaves your site).

One powerful Web site tracking program is WebTrends (www.webtrends.com). Webtrends has a number of different versions of its program that will allow you to track sales activity on your Web site. WebTrends is capable of generating very detailed sales reports for your Web site. For example, one report shows you how much revenue your Web site is generating from repeat customers.

Most Web site analysis programs work over the Web so you don't need to install or configure any software. You simply cut and paste some code into your Web site, and the service will start to track your Web site immediately. You'll be given a password and username, and you can log into the vendor's Web site at any time to access your reports. In some cases, you may have the option of purchasing Web site analysis software and installing it on your computer. Users of WebTrends, for example, can choose between browser-based versions that provide real-time statistics over the Web and software versions that can be installed on your computer and integrated with internal databases. Several versions of WebTrends software are available depending on your reporting needs and the complexity of your Web site. If you decide to go with a software solution, you will need to have access to the Web servers of the company that hosts your online store. Check with the company hosting your online store to find out if you can use WebTrends. A free 14-day trial version of WebTrends can be downloaded at www.webtrends.com.

When evaluating a Web site analysis program, don't buy strictly on the basis of price. Examine the types of reports you are getting (many services will give you a free trial period or access to sample reports on their Web site) from two perspectives. First, how easy are the reports to read and understand? Secondly, what type of reports are available and how much detail is provided? In particular, find out if the program will allow you to do any type of advanced e-commerce tracking, such as tracking sales or the performance of your advertising campaigns. We want to point out that most of the entry-level Web site analysis programs do not provide this type of e-commerce tracking. If you are interesting in tracking orders on your Web site and monitoring sales activity for all the products in your online store, you should be prepared to spend significantly more for a product that has these capabilities. However, you may not need these type of tracking options if the storefront solution you are using already provides them.

A final note—many of the Web site analysis services we've mentioned provide free versions of their programs that you can install on your Web site and use immediately. In addition, from time to time, you may come across companies offering free Web site counters that provide very basic visitor tracking on your Web site. Although these services are free, we suggest you think carefully before using them. Why? Many of these free services require you to place an advertisement on your Web site. For example, the free version of the WebTrends service requires that you place a small button on the Web pages you are tracking. Although your Web site visitors can't see your reports, the button is essentially an advertisement on your Web site and you have to decide whether or not this is acceptable to you. Some of the free services require you to place a counter on your Web site that displays the number of visits your Web site has received. Do you really want to disclose this information publicly? For example, a customer may visit your Web site and decide not to place an order with you because your counter shows that your Web site has only received twenty visitors in the last six months!

About the Authors



Jim Carroll

Futurist, Trends and Innovation Expert

As a leading international futurist, innovation and trends expert, Jim Carroll dedicates his time to helping people and organizations understand how they can aggressively adopt tomorrow, today.

He has a proven track record as someone who delivers unique, specialized insight, with over 1,000 presentations in the past 10 years, with such clients as the *BBC*, the *US Department of Defense*, the *American Federation of Teachers*, *Microsoft*, *American Express*, *KPMG* and *VISA*.

Jim is well known for his critical thinking and business-oriented view of issues related to future developments, strategic operational trends and business models, workplace trends and organizational culture and transformation, product and service innovation, and consumer attitudes and market challenges. “We live in a world of hyper-competition, constant, relentless change, rapid innovation and increasing market risk,” Jim notes. “People can choose to watch as their world passes them by, or they can choose to become futurepreneurs, able to spot the trends, analyze what it means, and determine an action plan that let’s them master their future. That’s where I come in.”

Jim provides this insight in many different settings including keynote presentations, executive briefings, corporate and board of director strategy sessions, and interactive workshops. His foresight is based on extensive research and analysis — with 34 books to his credit that have sold in excess of 750,000 copies worldwide, over 600 articles written for a wide variety of national and international publications, and some 3,000 interviews on radio, television and in print.

For more information, or to contact Jim, visit www.jimcarroll.com



Rick Broadhead

Rick Broadhead is renowned as one of North America's foremost experts on technology, e-business and e-commerce. He is also an author, consultant and professional speaker with a track record that is virtually unmatched in the technology industry.

He is the co-author of a record-breaking 33 books about technology and e-business, including his most recent book, now available in bookstores, *Dear Valued Customer: You are a Loser!* (Andrews McMeel, 2004) which chronicles some of the most humorous and embarrassing technology blunders of all time.

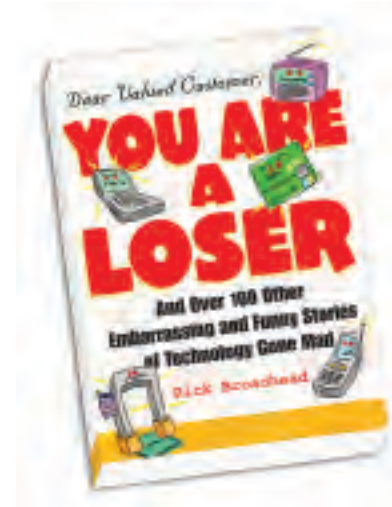
Rick is also the co-author of *Selling Online: How to Become a Successful E-Commerce Merchant*. Officially endorsed and sponsored by VISA, *Selling Online* has sold well over 100,000 copies worldwide and is being used in VISA's national e-commerce training initiatives. An international success story, *Selling Online* has been translated into French, German, and Russian.

As an industry expert and technology visionary, Rick has been retained as a keynote speaker by clients across North America, where he speaks about innovation and the future of technology.

Rick Broadhead's insights and analysis on technology-related topics are regularly sought by journalists from both print and broadcast media. During the last ten years, he has conducted literally hundreds of interviews with radio stations, wire services, television networks, magazines and newspapers including *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, *Reuters*, *the Associated Press*, *USA Today*, *US News & World Report*, *PC Magazine*, *the Los Angeles Times*, and *the New York Times*.

Rick holds an MBA in marketing from York University's Schulich School of Business, where he was awarded the George A Edwards Marketing Medal for demonstrated excellence in marketing.

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