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Article - Marketing Tips and Ideas

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A Web site is not a marketing plan, but it can be a great marketing tool if used correctly. Think of your Web site as only one of the resources you weave into the entire fabric of your business marketing plan.

"A Web site that isn't marketed is like putting up a billboard in the desert."

Marketing can be extremely time consuming and costly – both online and off. Many people don't realize that simply having a Web site does not guarantee you traffic. Taking the time to create "targeted traffic" (e.g., people who are looking for what you offer) to your site pays off in the long run, but takes some time and effort to implement.

Here are some marketing tactics you can use to help your business.

Attracting Visitors

What's a Web site without visitors? Why even put one up if you don't want someone viewing it? Below are some valuable tips and ideas that will help you to draw in customers and keep them on your site. Get into a habit of learning a tip every week about the Internet and the way it relates to your business. Being involved and understanding is a key factor to your success!

- [5 Strategies for Effective Online Branding](#)

Promotion That Won't Clean You Out

Below are some FREE tips for your online business. After our tips we include links to additional information. For a good start, we highly recommend this book, "[101 Ways to Promote Your Web Site](#)," by Susan Sweeney.

1) Search Engine Optimization

There are certain design practices and site elements that can increase your ranking if done correctly. That's the good news. The bad news is that your page can also be thrown out of search engines for bad practices and spamming. To stay on the "good" side of the search engines, you must research on a daily basis as the methods used are constantly changing.

- [Search Engine Watch](#)
- [Hire us to optimize your Web site for the search engines!](#)



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2) Send out E-Mail Newsletters

This is a great way to share your knowledge with your existing customers base as well as prospects. Newsletters can be used to promote your business as well. Always send out a test newsletter to yourself before mailing it out to the world. Check your E-mail software for a BCC (blind carbon copy) feature; this allows you to send your newsletter without everyone on your list seeing other E-mail addresses. No one wants his or her E-mail address publicized all over the net. Be current, and if you're promoting a business, be sure and add fun and informative content in addition to your marketing content. Keep your articles to small blurbs; try and catch your audience's attention by writing about timely subjects.

- [The Handbook of Ezine Publishing](#)
- [Publishing Your Own Newsletter](#)
- [Top 13 Tips To Creating A Professional Looking Newsletter](#)

3) E-Mail Discussion Groups, Forums, and Chat Rooms

Join an online community and get involved! A great way to establish (and share) your expertise and/or products is by participating in the many communities you will find online. From Usenet news groups to discussion forums, mailing lists and chat rooms, you can find an area with your particular interests and needs. Yahoo! Groups is a great place to start. Simply find a subject you're interested in and join!

- [Yahoo Groups](#)
- [Google Groups](#)
- [Participate in Online Communities](#)
- [Find an Online Networking Group](#)

4) Put Your URL Everywhere!

Your Web address (i.e., URL) should be as visible and as widely available as your phone number. Make sure it is prominently displayed on your E-mail correspondences, paper letterhead, business cards, print ads, radio and TV ads, Yellow Pages ad, delivery vans, answering machine message, your car, dog and any place else you can think of! Your URL can be great advertising, so use it!

- [5 Strategies for Effective Online Branding](#)
- [Branding Tips - How to Brand a Better Website](#)

5) Signature Files

Most E-mail programs have an area where you can create a signature file (.sig file) that is appended to the bottom of your outgoing messages. Anyone who reads your E-mail will see your sig file. This offers a great opportunity to promote your business as well as send out your contact information. Don't make it more than four or five lines, and include your name, your E-mail address, your Web site URL, and other contact information. Some people use their slogans or a catchy phrase about their business, too.

- [Signature File Definition](#)
- [Signature Netiquette](#)



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6) News/Press Releases

Letting the media know about your business can result in tons of free publicity. The Internet News Bureau's Media Relations Tips page can help you get started on a press release and your media campaign.

[Internet News Bureau Tips](#)

7) FREE STUFF!

People love free stuff, so creating a contest or sweepstakes might make sense for your business. Giveaway programs of any kind are sure to attract attention. Web designers, for example, might offer Web site templates or host a "design a logo" contest. Send out a newsletter to let everyone about your promotion!

8) Reward Existing Customers

Send them 10% coupons via E-mail and in their orders that you ship out. They DO work! Another idea is to send out *tell a friend and receive X% off next order* coupons. The possibilities are endless.

9) Know Your Visitors

Monitor who your visitors are with traffic analyzing software. Find out what pages they visit most and what they do not visit. Concentrate on what visitors are looking at on your site. Study the keywords used to find your site.

10) Update Content/Products

Ever notice how grocery stores are constantly moving products, especially around the checkout area? This is a great idea for your virtual store/site as well! Keep your site fresh by rotating your products and/or content. Make a featured sale page or provide an area on your homepage that always shows a featured item, but changes regularly. Studies have shown that if you lead buyers to your products, they'll buy! And if it's a sale, even better...

11) Social Media

It's free and it's not going anywhere! Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn... there's so many places out there to *get the word out*.



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A List of Additional Ideas

- Study Internet marketing courses.
- Create a marketing plan that ties together your online and offline material.
- Include your Web site address on your answering machine or voice mail.
- Is your Web site on the front door of your business?
- Add your E-mail and Web site address to your business cards.
- Create [Mini CD-ROM interactive business cards](#).
- Add your E-mail and Web site address to you letterhead and envelopes.
- If you sell products, add your E-mail and Web site address to your invoices and packing slips.
- Put your Web site address on promotional items such as coffee mugs, pens, and other giveaways.
- Print out brochures, flyers, and posters with your E-mail and Web site address.
- Give an incentive for others to link to you.
- Makes sure your Web site address is included in all ads - Yellow Pages, Classifieds, Magazines, Radio, TV, Newspaper, etc.
- Vehicles – put a magnet with your Web site and E-mail address on it.
- Make sure all documents you send out have your E-mail and Web site address printed clearly on them.
- Have clothing (hats/shirts) made with your E-mail and Web site address on them. Give them away!
- Create a portfolio showcasing your work, services, products and/or client testimonials.
- Have signs printed up with your E-mail and Web site address on them.
- Create screensavers and wallpaper for your Web site for visitors to download. Be sure to include your Web site address on them.
- Send automated press releases using a press release service. See the various Internet marketing courses like Declan Dunn's, Michael Campbell's and IMC for in-depth information on writing press releases.
- Do not send unsolicited E-mail, aka SPAM or UCE (Unsolicited Commercial E-mail). Only send E-mail to people who expressly give you permission, give them an easy way to unsubscribe, and a way to contact you directly - including a real return E-mail address.
- Include your E-mail and Web site address on all your product packaging.
- Provide full contact information (name, address, E-mail, phone, 800#, fax).
- Register your URL with at least the top 10 search engines.
- Market via an affiliate program.
- Advertise in targeted e-zines and opt-in mailing lists.
- Find related sites and offer sponsorships or partnerships.
- If you run an affiliate program, find qualified affiliates personally rather than relying on random sign ups.
- Offer special "limited time offers" only to your opt-in lists.



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- Time your special offers to coincide with common pay periods. Are you more likely to purchase a day or two after you are paid or a day or two before?
- Test and monitor your marketing copy, newsletters, and ads constantly. Take note of what works and change what doesn't work. Invest smaller amounts of money on small tests before committing to more expensive advertisements. Consider spreading your advertising budget over multiple campaigns rather than one quick and expensive shot.

And have fun! Share your enthusiasm for your business with the world – isn't that what marketing's all about?

About the Author

[Keli Etscorn](#) is a search engine optimization specialist who focuses on organic search engine tactics. Former founder of a fiber optic ISP, she now runs her own company, [Bear Canyon Consulting, LLC](#). Keli has created nationally featured Web sites and Ecommerce sites since 1996. Her work is featured in publications such as PC Magazine, Parade Magazine, The New York Times, Hamptons Magazine, US Weekly and APC Currents magazine, just to name a few. She started concentrating on [search engine optimization](#) in 1999 and uses her master's degree in mathematics to get her clients top rankings in the most popular search engines.

Her endeavors include starting and heading the SEO unit for one of the biggest attorney portals online (SonicSEO.com, the optimization branch of AttorneyLocate.com), including overseeing the optimization and design of over 2000 nationwide attorney and small business Web sites. Her biggest projects to date are daughter Sage and son Seven, both future UNIX system administrators.

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