



There's a Better Way to Do Business on the Internet!

Are you a business owner who can't wait to take advantage of the Internet?

This free guide offers some real-world website advice for small to medium-sized business owners. Inside we'll reveal:

How to launch a great website at an affordable price!

The best way to promote your business website!

The benefits of owning an online business!

The truths and myths about search engines!

How to choose a great website name!

Why you shouldn't create your own website!

...and much more!

The Quick Guide to Marketing Your Business on the Internet

Promoting Your Website

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CHAPTER 8—PROMOTING YOUR WEBSITE

With few exceptions the best place to advertise your website isn't on the Internet, it's in print.

Although 25% to 33% of Internet users find new websites through search engines, most people still learn about new websites through traditional advertising such as print ads, direct mail, brochures, business cards, media (TV and radio), billboards (especially those great smaller mobile billboards known as vans and trucks), and of course, word-of-mouth.

The simple reason is comfort—people are accustomed to seeing advertising where it has always been: mail, commercials, billboards, etc. When most folks browse through a newspaper they'll comfortably read through any number of advertisements without thinking twice.

With few exceptions the best place to advertise your website isn't on the Internet, it's in print.

But that's not so on the Internet because it's more interactive—you choose what websites you visit, what email you read and write, what room you're chatting in, etc.

And when your attention is focused on completing a particular task it's unlikely an online ad will pique your interest enough to click it. In fact the average Internet banner ad has a "Click-Through" rate of about 0.25% (2.5 clicks out of one thousand impressions).

To combat this aversion some websites resort to using advertisements that pop-up in a new browser window. These Interstitial advertisements are the online equivalent to a telephone solicitation while in the middle of dinner.



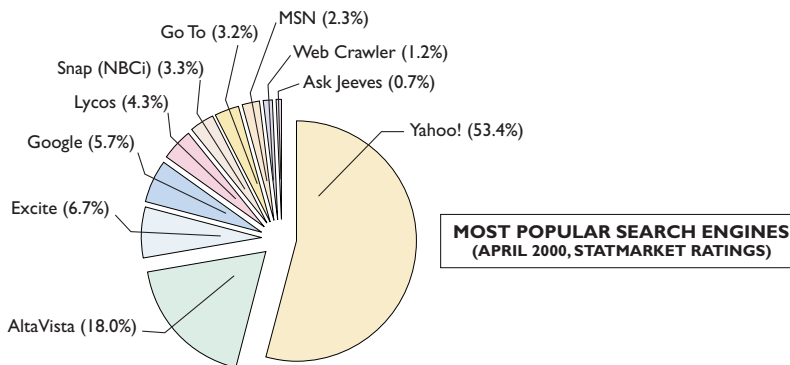
But this doesn't mean you shouldn't advertise on the Internet because some of the most effective online advertising available happens to be free (usually)—*search engines!*

A Brief Introduction to Search Engines

There's no question Search Engines, such as Yahoo and Ask Jeeves, have been paramount to the success of the Internet. In fact most web browsers are set by default to jump to a search engine page upon launching.



While there are literally hundreds of search engines, or search directories if you prefer, the majority of Internet users rely on only the top three or four.



There are two ways a search engine learns about your website.

- ♦ **It finds out automatically by using sophisticated search engine spidering software that literally travels the Internet looking for new websites to catalog.**
- ♦ **You manually submit your site to each respective search engine through an "add site" link found at each search engine website.**

But before you start submitting your site to every search engine it's worthwhile to examine how search engines actually work so you can make intelligent decisions about the value of promoting your site through search engines.

Understanding Real World Searching

Search engines and dictionaries share a common problem—you have to know how the information is listed before you can find it. For a dictionary that means you have to know the spelling. For a search engine it means you have to know which search terms will result in a list of websites that actually provide useful information.

In other words, even after your website is listed in a search engine you're at the mercy of the intelligence, patience, and fortitude of the person doing the searching. Even if that person has entered the perfect searching criteria your website might be grouped, like the Yellow Pages, with dozens, perhaps hundreds, of similar websites.

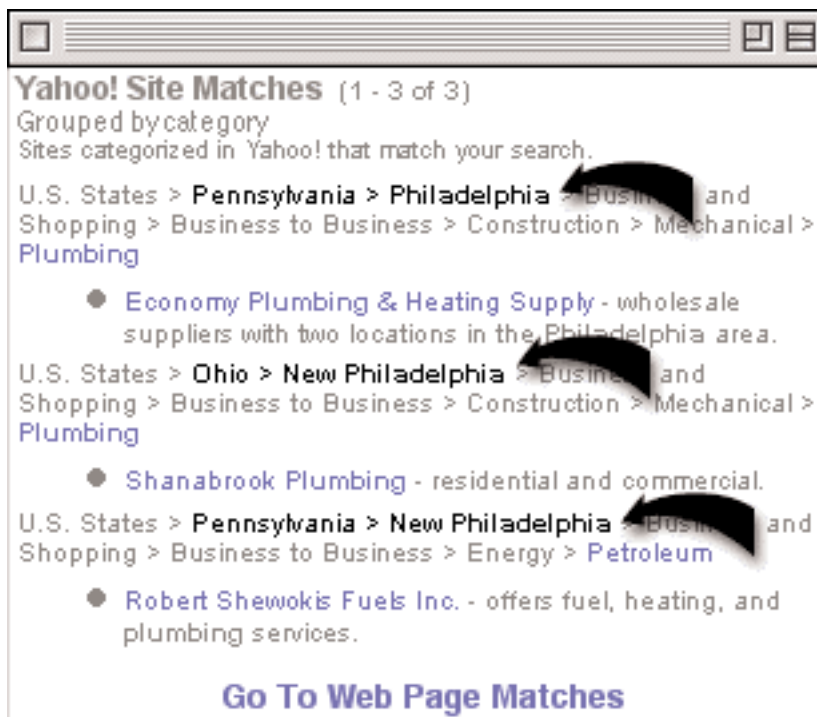
To demonstrate we're going to show what happens when we try to find a residential plumber in downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania using Yahoo. Yahoo is a good choice not only because it's the largest and most comprehensive search engine but many other top search engines make use of the same information sources.

Every search engine has a field where you enter the terms, or keywords, you'd like to use to search. To try to find a plumber in Philadelphia we're simply going to search Yahoo for "philadelphia plumbing."

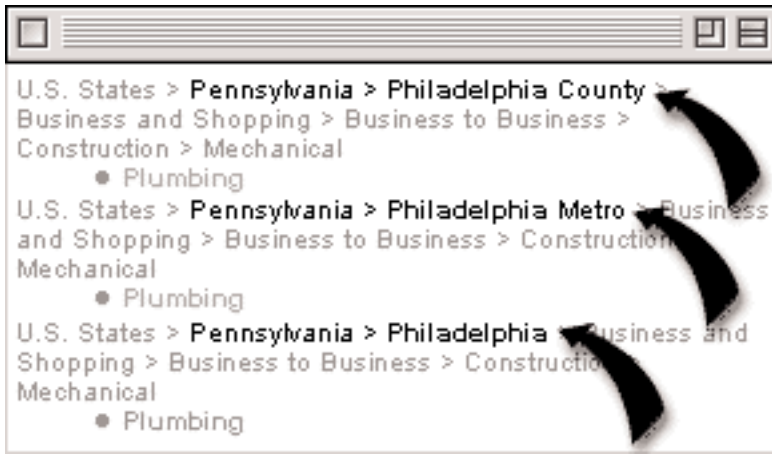
Depending on the success of the search most search engines will display the results in two formats: category matches or web page matches.

Category Matches

The results of our "philadelphia plumbing" query match three Yahoo categories. But if you look closer you'll see that each category is for a different city: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New Philadelphia, Ohio; and New Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



To narrow the results we tried a second search using "Philadelphia, PA, plumbing" resulting in a list of three different categories: one for Philadelphia County, one for Philadelphia Metro, and the third for Philadelphia.



CONTENT

Actual information available on a website—articles, charts, photographs, any information of value.

In the process of trying to figure out the differences between these three categories we noticed a more pressing problem—none of the categories listed residential plumbers, all were “Business-to-Business.” This reveals one of the most common problems with search engines—the category where you want to list your website might not even exist.

There's no “Dewey Decimal System” of search engines. The category where you'd like to list your website may not even exist.

This is also a good time to note that the listings in a categorical match are alphabetical. For example, here's a partial Yahoo listing for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the Philadelphia, PA area. Because they're alphabetical any claim by Internet marketers to be able to insure a high ranking in these categorical pages surely can't be so—they're always alphabetical.



Returning to the plumbing problem, at the bottom of the categorical results listings is a choice for “Go To Web Page Matches”:

[Go To Web Page Matches](#)

Web Page Matches

The Web Page Matches link displays all web pages that match the search criteria of “philadelphia plumbing” but couldn’t be placed in an existing Yahoo category. There could be a variety of possible reasons for this such as:

- ♦ **The website on which the pages reside is listed in a different Yahoo category. (Perhaps it’s a site about Pennsylvania plumbers and only a few pages refer to Philadelphia plumbers.)**
- ♦ **The site was never submitted to the search engine or was not accepted into the category requested.**
- ♦ **The intent of the page couldn’t be easily surmised by the search engine. (Was the page about the history of plumbing, a novel about a plumber, or plumbing building codes?)**
- ♦ **The search is actually for the words “philadelphia” and “plumbing” falling anywhere on the webpage, not “philadelphia” and “plumbing” together as “philadelphia plumbing.”**

Clicking the Web Page Matches button results in a staggering 5750 matches, displayed twenty pages at a time, with the best matches first. There’s little doubt the number of matches is so high because Yahoo is listing all the pages that match to the word “philadelphia.”

For the sake of brevity here’s a list of the services listed in the first twenty Yahoo matches as well as some additional comments, in parentheses, about the resulting pages.

1. City of Philadelphia Plumbing Codes(Self explanatory)
2. Herman Goldner Co.(Large scale business plumbing)
3. Plumbing and Industrial Supply; Philadelphia Street, Whittier CA(Industrial supplier)
4. Plumbing & Heating Supply(Germantown section of Philadelphia. A possible match.)
5. History of Plumbing in America(Self explanatory)
6. A large plumber hired a contractor based in Philadelphia(News story)
7. Philadelphia Water Department website(Self explanatory)
8. Whitpain Township Plumbing Codes(Self explanatory)
9. Philadelphia Business Directory(No listings for plumber as yet)
10. City of Philadelphia Plumbing Codes(more codes)
11. Plumbing Apprenticeship Occupations Programs(Self explanatory)
12. McMahon Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning; Chester Country PA(A possible match.)
13. Online service mall(No listing for plumbers)
14. Plumbing Contractors on the Web List(A possible match.)
15. PA plumbing(A possible match.)
16. Summers & Zim’s Plumbing, Atglen, PA(Too far away.)
17. Philadelphia.GoMainSt Business Directory(Link not active.)
18. Plumbing Parts Depot(Plumbing parts distributor)
19. Al Melvin Plumbing & Heating(Though they service NorthEast Philadelphia it’s a good match.)
20. Homes In Philly real estate site(The plumbing category exists but has no entries.)

Of these first twenty matches were about five links that might provide the answer. Two of those five links finally revealed a good list of Philadelphia plumbers.

That’s good, but it took over an hour, with a fast DSL connection, to track down the same information readily available in a phone book. This reveals another inherent problem with search engines— how much time will someone invest to find your website?

ANTI-ALIASING

A color averaging technique. For jagged lines anti-aliasing helps smooth out the staircase effect.

This is one of the key reasons many small businesses websites get so little online traffic—because they often make the mistake of relying on search engines for promotion. The “If I build it they will come” strategy almost always results in a fall in income and a rise in frustration.

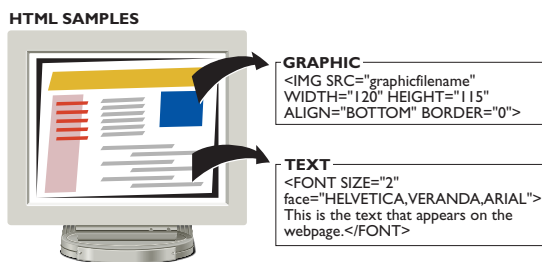
Don't rely on search engines for generating new business, particularly if you're selling a niche product or only to a local market.

This is particularly important for smaller businesses because most typically serve their immediate locality or sell a niche product or service. But search engines don't always have categories for niches and smaller communities. There's no surprise there were several plumbing categories for Philadelphia, but it's unlikely there's a plumbing category for each surrounding community.

Preparing Your Website for Search Engines

Before you submit your website to a search engine it's crucial to make sure each page is properly formatted to insure the search engines will properly index each webpage. This is done through special webpage codes called Meta-Tags.

A webpage is actually just a page of text composed of HTML programming codes. There are HTML codes to format text, codes to display graphics and animations, codes which govern all the elements you see as a cohesive webpage.



Meta-Tags are the HTML codes that help search engines figure out how to list your website. Folks who visit your website don't see the meta-tag information (which is what makes it a “meta” tag).

```
SIMPLE HTML WITH META-TAGS
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>A Financial Company</TITLE>
  <META name="description" content=" Financial
  Company provides financial planning specializing
  in insurance and investments.">
  <META name="keywords" content="investments,
  finances, financial planning, insurance, stocks">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
  Welcome to our company! This is where all the page
  content, also in HTML form, goes.
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Choosing an appropriate set of Meta-Tags isn't always cut and dried because they're just one of the tools a search engine uses to figure out how to index a website. Search engines also examine the page title, page content, and other attributes to surmise the true purpose of the website. Search engines make such an effort because on occasion website owners use less than honest methods to try to have their websites listed where they don't really belong.

eBay

eBay (www.ebay.com) is the world's largest online auction house.

On average sellers typically pay a percent or two to auction their item to a large audience.

A simple example would be a business website listing the competitor names in its meta-tags. The hope is the website will be listed when someone searches for a competitor. A similar example would be a company listing the names of larger, related businesses. For example, a luggage company listing various airlines in its meta-tags.

Not only don't these schemes work but almost every search engine will penalize the ranking of websites that resort to these "Meta-Tag Loading" tactics. And this is certainly easy to understand because search engines want to protect the manner in which they choose to index websites as well as provide motivation to purchase advertising from them.

Search engines are savvy to meta-tag tricks. Don't use them.

1 family	21 video	41 web address	61 homes	81 porn
2 internet	22 internic	42 auto	62 www	82 java
3 web	23 web hosting	43 health	63 information	83 management
4 free	24 advertising	44 registry	64 news	84 house
5 ecommerce	25 marketing	45 gifts	65 verisign	85 jobs
6 design	26 com	46 domains	66 car	86 hotel
7 business	27 website	47 server	67 internet address	87 domain registration
8 domain	28 shopping	48 multimedia	68 xxx	88 html
9 email	29 music	49 sports	69 audio	89 adult
10 sex	30 services	50 computer	70 sales	90 property
11 art	31 org	51 education	71 nude	91 development
12 hosting	32 home	52 net	72 pictures	92 graphics
13 online	33 search	53 registration	73 international	93 employment
14 software	34 net	54 training	74 insurance	94 vacation
15 real estate	35 web design	55 web site	75 cgi l	95 canada
16 travel	36 consulting	56 buy	76 entertainment	96 texas
17 domain name	37 secure	57 mail	77 money	97 registrar
18 service	38 name	58 isp	78 site	98 chat
19 domain	39 commercial	59 network	79 california	99 florida
20 domain name	40 whois	60 books	80 construction	100 icann

**TOP 100 MOST POPULAR META-TAG KEYWORDS
(AUGUST 2000) SOURCE:NETFACTUAL.COM**

If you'd like to legitimately attempt to improve your chances for a higher search engine ranking we suggest the following tips.

- ♦ **Give each HTML file a meaningful name. Use hyphens (dashes) to separate words.**

For example, if you have several web pages detailing oak chairs then "oak_chair_1.html"; "oak_chair_2.html"; etc. are more meaningful file names than "prodch1.html"; "prodch2.html"; etc.

- ♦ **Don't use graphics to display body text. Search engines can't read graphics.**

**BODY COPY AS HTML
(HARD EDGES, NO ANTI-ALIASING)**

BODY COPY AS A GRAPHIC. LOOKS GOOD BUT UNREADABLE TO A SEARCH ENGINE.

- ♦ **Use important keywords in your body copy—the same keywords used in your meta-tags.**
- ♦ **Don't submit a site to a search engine with "Under Construction" text on any pages.**
- ♦ **Don't use words like "great" or "fantastic" in the meta-tag description field. Like Joe Friday said, "Just the facts, Ma'am."**

- ♦ **Don't create extra webpages with similar content to make your website look bigger than it is.**
- ♦ **Don't hide words and links by coloring them to match the background or by reducing their size.**
- ♦ **Don't change the website's page titles, meta-tags, and HTML file names just for the purpose of resubmitting the website.**

Search Engine Placement Services

Because so many online searches result in hundreds of web page matches, it obviously becomes valuable to have your website appear at the top of that list.

To that end there's no shortage of companies touting extravagant claims to "List your site at the top of the best 500 search engines on the net!" (One company claimed it would submit "to over 500,000 search engines and directories." We had no idea there were that many!)

Save your money. Search engines constantly change the criteria they use to evaluate and rank websites. After all they have their own method for getting your site listed high in their listing—selling advertising. (Yahoo advertising starts at \$1500/month in case you're interested.)

Don't use search engine placement services. You can perform the same task in an hour or two and be sure it was done correctly.

Submitting Your Site to Search Engines

While it can be sobering to understand what promotion a search engine can or can't offer, it's still worthwhile to submit your site to the most popular search engines because it's easy enough to do yourself and still free—usually.

That is, submitting your site to a search engine is no guarantee the site will be indexed, let alone in the category you request. Yahoo offers a Business Express Service, a \$200 one-time fee, which guarantees your site will be evaluated in no more than ten business days. Other search engine companies are following suit.

While this may initially seem to be a good value the decision to use these express services isn't always simple. Each search engine's selection of categories is unique and there's no guarantee your website will be listed in what you think is the most appropriate category.

For example, one of our own websites, GuitarList.com, lets music stores place online classified ads for guitars and basses. Though we requested to be listed in the main Guitars category Yahoo listed it in a far less visited, but admittedly more appropriate, Musical Instruments Classifieds sub-category.

Every search engine has its own indexing methods and placement criteria. Your site might not be listed in the category you requested.

So to find the website through Yahoo someone would have to search using the words "guitar" and "classified." Not very likely. Perhaps in retrospect the \$200 express service placement fee would've been better spent on a magazine ad.

Once your website is prepared, submitting it to a search engine usually takes only a few simple steps:

- 1. Browse to the category page where you want to be listed;**
- 2. Click the Suggest a Site link at the bottom of the page;**
- 3. Add the information requested (such as site owner, keywords, and description).**

Domain Name Typography

As stated at the beginning of this chapter it's important to imprint your website address wherever possible: on business cards, stationery, signs, windows, car doors, etc. But if domain name can't be easily read another opportunity to convince folks to visit your website has been lost.

Most domain names are typeset as #1 below—all characters are the same size making it hard to distinguish each portion of the address. One simple way to help make a domain name more readable is to only capitalize the first character of each word (#3).

It's easy to improve on this by enlarging the actual name of the website as in #4. Even better is using color is more strongly distinguish the name as in #5. Whether #6's alternating colors hurt or help readability is up for debate.

Various Ways to Display Your Domain Name

1. WWW.MYWEBSITE.COM	4. www.MyWebSite.com
2. www.MYWEBSITE.com	5. www.MyWebSite.com
3. www.MyWebSite.com	6. www.MyWebSite.com

Most often it's displayed like #1

But #6 is far easier to read as it's distinguished by both size and color.

Word-of-Mouth Advertising

Time and time again the top marketers tout the virtues of word-of-mouth advertising. But, as you may know, it also takes the most effort.

You can overcome one of these hurdles by taking advantage the novelty of the Internet and your website. The Internet is changing society and it seems everywhere you turn there's a conversation about the Internet. Hand someone a business card touting a website address and you'll not be surprised to hear "Hey, what's on your website?" in return.

OFTEN OVERHEARD

"Hey, we just got a new website. Here's the address, take a look!"

RARELY OVERHEARD

"Hey, we just printed a new brochure! Wanna see it?"

Taking Advantage of eBay and Auction Websites

If you sell a product or service that's commonly listed at online auctions you can inexpensively direct market your business to dozens, sometimes hundreds, of potential customers by simply holding an online auction.

As part of your auction ample space is provided to detail the size, age, color, condition, etc., of the item being auctioned—even enough room to plug your business! Feel free to regularly insert phone numbers, website links, any information at all, into the description field. After all, you paid for the advertising space!

The result is that each person who visits your website also sees a custom advertisement for your business. The number of people that view any particular auction can be in the hundreds—eBay even allows your auction to display a page counter at no extra cost so you can track the number of visitors. (eBay's page counters are secure, they can't be reset as can personal web page counters.)

There's no extra cost to plug your business in an online auction. Take advantage of it.

If you're concerned your item will sell for far less than its value you can opt to hold a "reserve auction." In a reserve auction if the desired price isn't met the item remains unsold. On the minus side reserve auctions command an additional fee.

1962 Gibson Les Paul Amp

- Visit our website at: www.guitarvile.com

[Click here to go to](#)

Musical Instruments Mall

[Please click here to see my other auctions.](#)

00498

ALMOST 500 PEOPLE HAVE VIEWED THIS \$4 EBAY® AD!
(LESS THAN A PENNY PER PERSON!)