

# The Web Marketing Checklist

## 37 Ways to Promote Your Website

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## Preface

Do you need to get the “big picture” about Internet marketing? Then The Web Marketing Checklist is for you. It is designed to highlight all the major approaches to Internet marketing in brief scope so you can see what your choices are.

The follow article includes dozens of links to resources and more information -- much of it carefully organized on my website (and in some e-books) for further study, much of it entirely free. Please excuse the many links to my site. Feel free to use this whitepaper as a jumping-off-place to learn about the entire field of Internet marketing.

The Web Marketing Checklist had its origin in 1997 and has been updated many times since then. It originally included 27 promotion approaches. Those have gradually expanded to 37.

I hope you find it useful as you explore the rapidly changing landscape of Internet marketing. Enjoy!

God bless you,  
Dr. Ralph F. Wilson  
Editor, *Web Marketing Today*



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p. 36

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How can you get more visitors to your website? What can you do to stimulate traffic? Here's a checklist of 37 items you need to consider. Many of these may be doing already; others you meant to do and forgot about; still others you've never heard of. Of course, a great deal has been written about this. You'll find links to thousands of articles about website promotion on our [website](#).



While I'm not breaking any new ground here, I've tried to summarize some of the most important techniques.

## Search Engine Strategies

Perhaps the most important -- and inexpensive -- strategy is to rank high for your preferred keywords on the main search engines in "organic" or "natural" searches (as opposed to paid ads). Search engines send robot "spiders" to index the content of your webpage, so let's begin with steps to prepare your webpages for optimal indexing. The idea here is not to trick the search engines, but to leave them abundant clues as to what your webpage is about. This approach is called "search engine optimization," abbreviated as SEO.

### 1. Write a Keyword-Rich Page Title

Write a descriptive title for each page -- rich in keywords you want people to find you with -- using 5 to 8 words. Remove as many "filler" words from the title (such as "the," "and," etc.) as possible, while still making it readable. This page title will appear hyperlinked on the search engines when your page is found. Entice searchers to click on the title by making it a bit provocative. Place this at the top of the webpage between the <HEAD></HEAD> tags, in this format: <TITLE>Web Marketing Checklist -- 37 Ways to Promote Your Website</TITLE>. (It also shows on the blue bar at the top of your web browser.)



Plan to use some descriptive keywords along with your business name on your home page. If you specialize in silver bullets and that's what people will be searching for, don't just use your company name "Acme Ammunition, Inc.," use "Silver and Platinum

Bullets -- Acme Ammunition, Inc." The words people are most likely to search on should appear first in the title (called "keyword prominence"). Remember, this title is your identity on the search engines. The more people see that interests them in the blue hyperlinked words on the search engine, the more likely they are to click on the link.

## 2. Write a Description META Tag

Some search engines include this description below your hyperlinked title in the search results. The description should be a sentence or two describing the content of the webpage, using the main keywords and keyphrases on this page. Don't include keywords that don't appear on the webpage. Place the Description META Tag at the top of the webpage, between the <HEAD></HEAD> tags, in this format:



```
<META NAME="DESCRIPTION" CONTENT="Increase visitor hits, attract traffic through submitting URLs, META tags, news releases, banner ads, and reciprocal links.">
```

The maximum number of characters should be about 255; just be aware that only the first 60 or so are visible on Google, though more may be indexed.

When I prepare a webpage, I write the article first, then develop a keyword-rich title (#1 above). Then I write a description of the content in that article in a sentence or two, using each of the important keywords and keyphrases included in the article. This goes into the description META tag.

Next, I strip out the common words, leaving just the meaty keywords and phrases and insert those into the keywords META tag. It's no longer used much for ranking, but I'm leaving it in anyway. I think it may have some minor value. So to summarize so far, every webpage in your site should have a distinct title and META description tag. If you implement these two points, you're well on your way to better search engine ranking. But there's more that will help your ranking....

## 3. Include Your Keywords in Headers (H1, H2, H3)

Search engines consider keywords that appear in the page headline and sub heads to be important to the page, so make sure your desired keywords and phrases appear in one or two header tags. Don't expect the search engine to parse your Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) to figure out which are the headlines -- it won't. Instead, use keywords in the H1, H2, and H3 tags to provide clues to the search engine. (Note: Some designers no longer

use the H1, H2 tags. That's a big mistake. Make sure your designer defines these tags in the CSS rather than creating headline tags with other names.)

#### 4. Position Your Keywords in the First Paragraph of Your Body Text

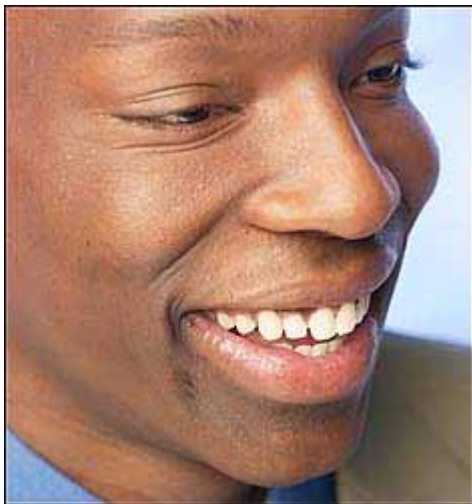
Search engines expect that your first paragraph will contain the important keywords for the document -- where most people write an introduction to the content of the page. You don't want to just artificially stuff keywords here, however. More is not better. Google might expect a keyword density in the entire body text area of maybe 1.5% to 2% for a word that should rank high, so don't overdo it.

#### 5. Include Descriptive Keywords in the ALT Attribute of Image Tags

This helps your site be more [accessible to site-impaired visitors](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/) (www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/) and gives additional clues to the search engines. The ALT attributes *do* help get your images ranked higher for image search (see #12 below).

#### 6. Use Keywords in Hyperlinks

Search engines are looking for clues to the focus of your webpage. When they see words hyperlinked in your body text, they consider these potentially important, so hyperlink your important keywords and keyphrases. To emphasize it even more, the webpage you are linking to could have a page name with the keyword or keyphrase, such as `blue-widget.htm` -- another clue for the search engine.



#### 7. Make Your Navigation System Search Engine Friendly

You want search engine robots to find all the pages in your site. JavaScript and Flash navigation menus that appear when you hover are great for humans, but search engines don't read JavaScript and Flash very well. Therefore, supplement JavaScript and Flash menus with regular HTML links at the bottom of the page, ensuring that a chain of hyperlinks exists that take a search engine spider from your home page to every page in your site.

Don't set up your navigation system using HTML frames (an old, out-dated approach); they can cause severe indexing problems.

Some content management systems and e-commerce catalogs produce dynamic, made-on-the-fly webpages, often recognizable by question marks in the URLs followed by

long strings of numbers or letters. Overworked search engines sometimes have trouble parsing long URLs and may stop at the question mark, refusing to go farther. If you find the search engines aren't indexing your interior pages, you might consider URL rewriting, a site map, or commercial solutions.

## 8. Create a Site Map

A site map page with links to all your pages can help search engines (and visitors) find all your pages, particularly if you have a larger site. You can use a free tools, [XML-Sitemaps.com](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/xml-sitemaps.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/xml-sitemaps.htm) to create XML sitemaps that are used by the major search engines to index your webpages accurately. Upload your sitemap to your website. Then submit your XML sitemap to Google, Yahoo!, and Bing (formerly MSN), following instructions on their sites. By the way, [Google Webmaster Central](http://www.google.com/webmasters/) (www.google.com/webmasters/) has lots of tools to help you get ranked higher. Be sure to set up a free account and explore what they have to offer.

## 9. Develop Webpages Focused on Each Your Target Keywords

SEO specialists no longer recommend using external doorway or gateway pages, since nearly duplicate webpages might get you penalized. Rather, develop several webpages on your site, each of which is focused on a target keyword or keyphrase for which you would like a high ranking. Let's say you sell teddy bears. Use [Google Insights for Search](http://www.google.com/insights/search/) (www.google.com/insights/search/) or the free keyword suggestion tool on [Wordtracker](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/wordtracker.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/wordtracker.htm) to find the related keywords people search on. In this case: write a separate webpage featuring the keyword "teddy bear," "teddy bears," "vermont teddy bears," "vermont bears," "the teddy bears," "teddy bears picnic," "teddy bears pictures," etc. You'll write a completely different article on each topic. You can't fully optimize all the webpages in your site, but for each of these focused-content webpages, spend lots of time tweaking to improve its ranking, as described in point #10.

## 10. Fine-tune with Careful Search Engine Optimization

Now fine-tune your focused-content pages and perhaps your home page, by making a series of minor adjustments to help them rank higher. Software such as WebPosition allows you to check your current ranking and compare your webpages against your top keyword competitors. I use it regularly. WebPosition's Page Critic tool provides analysis of a search engine's preferred statistics for each part of your webpage, with specific recommendations of what minor changes to make. The best set of SEO tools is [Bruce Clay's SEOToolSet](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/clay_seotoolset.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/clay\_seotoolset.htm). You can find links to many [SEO articles](http://www.wilsonweb.com/seo/) (www.wilsonweb.com/seo/) on my site.

Frankly, this kind of SEO fine-tuning is time-consuming, painstaking work that takes a lot of specialized knowledge. For this reason, many small and large businesses outsource search engine optimization. If you'll explain your needs to me on my online form, I can refer you to appropriate [SEO firms that I know and trust](#) ([www.wilsonweb.com/recommendations/seo-services.htm](http://www.wilsonweb.com/recommendations/seo-services.htm)).

## 11. Promote Your Local Business on the Internet

These days many people search for local businesses on the Internet. To make sure they find you, include on every page of your website the street address, zip code, phone number, *and* the five or 10 other local community place names your business serves. If you can, include place names in the title tag, too. When you seek links to your site (see #15 below), you should request links from local businesses with place names in the communities you serve *and* complementary businesses in your industry nationwide.

Also create a free listing for your local business on [Google Places for Business](#) ([places.google.com/business](http://places.google.com/business)), [Yahoo! Local](#) ([local.yahoo.com](http://local.yahoo.com)), and [Bing Local Listing Center](#) (<https://ssl.bing.com/listings/>). That way your business can show up on a map when people do a local search. For more information, see [articles on local marketing](#) ([www.wilsonweb.com/local/](http://www.wilsonweb.com/local/)) on my site.

## 12. Promote Your Video, Images, and Audio Content

Google's "universal search" displays not only webpage content, but also often displays near the top of the page relevant listings for images, videos, local businesses (see #11 above), and audio clips. Therefore, consider creating such content appropriate to your business and then optimizing it so it can be ranked high enough to help you. For example, if you were to get a top-ranking, informative video on [YouTube](#) ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) that mentions your site, it could drive a lot of traffic to your site. For more information, search on "optimizing images" or "optimizing videos." You can see how I use videos to promote my business on my [Web Marketing Today YouTube Channel](#) ([www.youtube.com/WebMarketingToday](http://www.youtube.com/WebMarketingToday)).

## Linking Strategies

Links to your site from other sites drive additional traffic. But since Google and other major search engines consider the number of incoming links to your website ("link popularity") as an important indicator of relevance, more links will help you rank higher in the search engines. Google has a measure called PageRank that reflects the quantity and quality of incoming links. All links aren't all equal. Links from trusted,

popular sites help your site rank higher than links from lower traffic sites. You'll find [articles on linking strategies](http://www.wilsonweb.com/linking/) (www.wilsonweb.com/linking/) on our site.

### 13. Submit Your Site to Key Directories

A link from a directory will help your ranking -- and get you traffic. A directory is not a search engine. Rather, it is a hierarchical listing of sites sorted according to category and subcategory. Be sure to list your site in the free [Open Directory Project](http://www.dmoz.com) (www.dmoz.com), overseen by overworked volunteer editors. But if you don't get listed right away, don't be impatient and resubmit, or you'll go to the end of the queue. A link in this directory will help you a lot.

[Yahoo! Directory](http://dir.yahoo.com) (dir.yahoo.com) is another important directory. Real humans read submission, so be careful to follow the instruction given. Hint: Use somewhat less than the maximum number of characters allowable, so you don't have wordy text that will tempt the Yahoo! editor to begin chopping. [Yahoo! Directory Submit](https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/submit/intro/) (https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/submit/intro/) requires a \$299 annual recurring fee to have your site considered for inclusion within seven business days. Other paid business directories that might help are [About.com](http://About.com) and [Business.com](http://Business.com).

### 14. Submit Your Site to Trade Organization Sites and Specialized Directories

Some directories focused on particular industries, such as education or finance. You probably belong to various trade associations that feature member directories. Ask for a link. Even if you have to pay something for a link from the organization, it may help boost your PageRank.

Marginal directories, however, come and go very quickly, making it hard to keep up, so don't try to be exhaustive here. Beware of directories that solicit you for "upgraded listings." Unless a directory is widely used in your field, a premium ad is a waste of money -- but the (free) link itself will help boost your PageRank and hence your search engine ranking.

[SubmitWolf](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/submitwolf.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/submitwolf.htm) is a directory submission tool I've used with good success. You complete a listing form in the software interface. Then they submit your listing to all the appropriate directories they know of, plus links to sites that require manual submission. It's a timesaver and works well. Just be careful to submit only to actual directories, not "linking sites."

## 15. Request Reciprocal Links

Find websites in your general niche and request a reciprocal link to your site (especially to your free service, if you offer one, see #24 below). Develop an out-of-the way page where you put links to other sites -- so you don't send people out the back door as fast as you bring them in the front door. Your best results will be from sites that generate a similar amount of traffic as your own site. High-traffic site webmasters are too busy to answer your requests for a link and don't have anything to gain. Look for smaller sites that may have linking pages.

Check out Ken Evoy's free [SiteSell Value Exchange](http://sales.sitesell.com/value-exchange/) (sales.sitesell.com/value-exchange/). It (1) registers your site as willing to exchange links with other sites that have a similar theme/topic content and (2) searches for sites with similar topical content. Additionally, two automated link building software programs stand out -- [Zeus](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/zeus.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/zeus.htm) and [IBP Link Builder](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/arelis.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/arelis.htm). Both of these search the web for complementary sites, help you maintain a link directory, and manage reciprocal links. However, use these programs to identify the complementary sites, *not* to send impersonal automated e-mail spam to site owners.

When you locate sites, send a personal e-mail using the contact e-mail on the site or to the administrative contact listed in a [Whois Directory](http://www.networksolutions.com/whois/) (www.networksolutions.com/whois/). If e-mail doesn't get a response, try a phone call. Warning: Only link to complementary sites, no matter how often you are bombarded with requests to exchange links with a mortgage site that has nothing to do with your teddy bear store. One way Google determines what your site is about is who you link to and who links to you. It's not just links, but quality links you seek. Reciprocal linking as hard, tedious work, but it doesn't cost you a dime out of pocket! Keep working at this continuously, a little bit at a time. Patience and persistence will get you some good links, so keep at it.

## 16. Write Articles for Others to Use in Websites and Newsletters

You can dramatically increase your visibility when you write articles in your area of expertise and distribute them to editors as free content for their e-mail newsletters or their websites. Just ask that a link to your website and a one-line description of what you offer be included with the article. This is an effective "viral" approach that can produce hundreds of links to your site over time. You'll find lots of information on how to do this from the most popular article marketing site, [EzineArticles.com](http://EzineArticles.com). When you create a free membership account, they begin sending you instructions and ideas each week.

## 17. Issue News Releases

Find newsworthy events and send news releases to print and Web periodicals in your industry. The links to your site in online news databases may remain for several months and will temporarily improve traffic to your site and increase link popularity. Use an online news release service such as [PR Web](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/prweb.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/prweb.htm). Placing your website URL in online copies of your press release may increase link popularity temporarily.

Two additional linking strategies, discussed below, are to ask visitors to bookmark your webpage (#20) and to develop a free service (#23), which will greatly stimulate links to your site.

## Social Media

Our next type of website promotion comes from the mushrooming field of social media, in which people are encouraged to interact with each other, and respond to each other's blog postings and comments. You should be aware of four types of social media: (1) blogs, (2) social networking sites, (3) social bookmarking sites, and (4) forums. Don't be upset if the distinctions between types of social media tend to blur. Social media help promote your site by sending direct traffic, producing links to your site, and generating awareness. The subject is too diverse to go into detail here. You can learn more in our [social media articles](http://www.wilsonweb.com/newmedia/) section (www.wilsonweb.com/newmedia/).

## 18. Begin a Business Blog

Want links to your site? Begin a business blog on your website, hosted on your own domain. If you offer excellent content and regular industry comment, people are likely to link to it, increasing your site's PageRank. Consistency and having something to say are key. If you have a blog on a third-party blog site, occasionally find reasons to talk about and link to your own domain.

## 19. Become Part of a Social Media Community

Some of the best online communities for business include [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com) (www.facebook.com), [LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com) (www.linkedin.com), and [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com) (www.twitter.com). In addition, you may want to participate in a social bookmarking community in which members share with each other information about websites, articles, or news items that they like (or don't like). These include [Digg](http://www.digg.com) (www.digg.com), [Delicious](http://www.delicious.com) (www.delicious.com), [StumbleUpon](http://www.stumbleupon.com) (www.stumbleupon.com), and [Google Bookmarks](http://www.google.com/bookmarks/) (www.google.com/bookmarks/). Search engine spiders troll these sites looking for links

to something new and relevant. You can usually place a link to your website in your profile, but the biggest gain comes when other people mention you (which generates traffic to your site), link to you (which increases your PageRank and brings traffic), or bookmark you (which increases your PageRank and brings traffic, see #21 below).

One important reminder, don't join a community to spam them or talk incessantly about your business. Like any community you must listen, comment, and make a genuine contribution for the good of others. Don't hog the conversation. Otherwise, your self-serving links and comments will hurt your reputation. By the way, to get started, why don't you visit my social media pages and become a [Facebook fan](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Web-Marketing-Today/85187746383) (www.facebook.com/pages/Web-Marketing-Today/85187746383) or a [Twitter follower](http://www.twitter.com/ralphwilson) (www.twitter.com/ralphwilson) -- please! Thank you!



## 20. Promote Your Site in Online Forums and Discussion Lists

Let me tell you about "old school" social media. The Internet offers thousands of very targeted e-mail based discussion lists, online forums, and groups made up of people with very specialized interests. Use [Google Groups](http://groups.google.com) (groups.google.com) to find appropriate groups. Search online for blogs or other forums.

Don't bother with groups consisting of pure spam. Instead, find groups where a serious dialog is taking place. Don't use aggressive marketing and overtly plug your product or service. Rather, add to the discussion in a helpful way and let the "signature" at the end of your e-mail message do your marketing for you. People will gradually get to know and trust you, visit your site, and do business with you.

## 21. Ask Visitors to Bookmark Your Site

It seems simple, but ask visitors to bookmark your site or save it in their Favorites list. I use a widget called [AddThis](http://www.addthis.com) (www.addthis.com). When you put the AddThis JavaScript on your webpage, it automatically determines the title and URL of that page. When visitors click the button on your page, they are automatically taken to a page that allows them to choose which bookmarking service they prefer, and then pre-populates the appropriate form with the title and URL of your webpage. I use AddThis throughout my website, as well as in my newsletters. If you have good content that people want to bookmark, this can generate hundreds of links to your site and significantly raise your rankings.

While you're at it, would you be so kind as to [bookmark this page](#) using the button to the right? Thank you!



## Traditional Strategies

Just because “old media” strategies aren’t on the Internet doesn’t mean they aren’t effective. A mixed media approach can be very effective.

### 22. Include Your URL on Stationery, Cards, and Literature

Make sure that all business cards, stationery, brochures, and literature contain your company’s URL. And see that your printer gets the URL syntax correct. In print, I recommend leaving off the `http://` part and including only the `www.domain.com` portion.

### 23. Promote using traditional media

Don’t discontinue print advertising that you’ve found effective. But be sure to include your URL in any display or classified ads you purchase in trade journals, newspapers, yellow pages, etc. View your website as an information adjunct to the ad. Use a two-step approach: (1) capture readers’ attention with the ad, (2) then refer them to a URL where they can obtain more information and perhaps place an order. Look carefully at small display or classified ads in the back of narrowly-targeted magazines or trade periodicals. Sometimes these ads are more targeted, more effective, and less expensive than online advertising. Consider other traditional media to drive people to your site, such as direct mail, classifieds, post cards, etc. TV can be used to promote websites, especially in a local market.

### 24. Develop a Free Service

It’s boring to invite people, “Come to our site and learn about our business.” It’s quite another to say “Use the free kitchen remodeling calculator available exclusively on our site.” Make no mistake, it’s expensive in time and energy to develop free resources, but it is very rewarding in increased traffic to your site -- and a motivation to link to the site! Make sure that your free service is closely related to what you are selling so the visitors you attract will be good prospects for your business. Give visitors multiple opportunities and links to cross over to the sales portion of your site.

## E-Mail Strategies

Don’t neglect e-mail as an important way to bring people to your website. Just don’t spam, that is, don’t send bulk unsolicited e-mails without permission to people with whom you have no relationship. Many countries have anti-spam laws.

I'll mention just a few important elements here. You can learn more from our [articles on e-mail marketing](http://www.wilsonweb.com/email/) (www.wilsonweb.com/email/).

## 25. Install a "Signature" in your E-Mail Program

A Signature will help potential customers get in touch with you. Most e-mail programs allow you to designate a "signature" to appear at the end of each message you send. Limit it to 6 to 8 lines: Company name, address, phone number, URL, e-mail address, and a one-phrase description of your unique business offering. Look for examples on e-mail messages sent to you.

## 26. Publish an E-Mail Newsletter

While it requires a commitment of time, creating a monthly e-mail publication is one of the most important promotion techniques. It could be a newsletter ("ezine"), list of tips, industry updates, or new product information -- whatever you believe your customers will appreciate. This is a great way to keep in touch with your prospects, generate trust, develop brand awareness, and build future business. It also helps you collect e-mail addresses from those who visit your site, but aren't yet ready to make a purchase. You distribute your newsletter inexpensively using e-mail marketing services such as: [iContact](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/icontact.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/icontact.htm), [Constant Contact](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/constantcontact.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/constantcontact.htm), and [AWeber](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/aweber.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/aweber.htm). If you have a very small list, some of these services let you use their services free until you grow larger. Blogs are very popular, but don't really replace e-mail newsletters. You have to go to a blog to read it, while an e-mail newsletter appears in your inbox asking to be read.

If you haven't already, would you please sign up for my free newsletter, [Web Marketing Today](http://www.wilsonweb.com) (www.wilsonweb.com). It is published weekly and will keep you up-to-date in the fields of Internet marketing and e-commerce. Thank you!

## 27. Aggressively Ask for E-Mail Sign-ups

If you want to get subscribers to your e-mail newsletter, you'll need to work hard at it. Include a subscription form on every page of your website. Promote sign-ups through free whitepapers, e-books, or other products. If you have a local business, ask customers to sign up for your e-mail list to get "special Internet only offers." Also ask other businesspeople when they give you a business card if you can send them your e-mail newsletter. While only the e-mail address itself is necessary, I always ask for a first name also, so I can personalize the newsletter and the e-mail subject line with the recipient's name.

## 28. Send Transactional and Reminder E-Mails

A transactional e-mail is sent to an existing customer to initiate, remind, confirm, or thank the person. Be creative. If you keep careful records, you can send e-mails to customers on their birthday to remind them to return to your site. Subscription confirmation e-mails can also mention several popular products. You might remind customers that it has been three months since their last order and ask if it's time for a refill. Thank you for your purchase e-mails can offer a coupon to bring your customer back for a future sale. Use your imagination, but don't pester your customers. You're there to serve them, not the other way around.

## 29. Send Offers to Your Visitors and Customers

Your own list of customers and site visitors who have given you permission to contact them will be your most productive list. Send special offers, coupon specials, product updates, etc. They often initiate another visit to your site. If you have a regular newsletter, you can include many of these in your regular e-mailing.

## 30. Exchange E-Mail Mentions with Complementary Businesses

You might consider exchanging e-mail newsletter mentions with complementary businesses to reach new audiences. Just be sure that your partners are careful where they get their mailing list so you don't get in trouble with the anti-spam laws in your country.

I'll mention renting e-mail lists in #37 below under Paid Advertising approaches.

## Miscellaneous Strategies

Here are a couple of strategies that don't fit elsewhere.

### 31. Announce a Contest

People like getting something free. If you publicize a contest or drawing available on your site, you'll generate more traffic than normal. Make sure your sweepstakes rules are legal in all states and countries you are targeting. Prizes should be designed to attract individuals who fit a demographic profile describing your best customers.

### 32. Devise Viral Marketing Promotion Techniques

So-called viral marketing uses existing communication networks to spread the word exponentially. Word-of-mouth, PR, creating "buzz," and network marketing are offline models. Promotion strategy #16 above, "Write Articles for Others to Use for Website and Newsletter Content," is a kind of viral approach.

The key to the best viral marketing, however, is create something that generates buzz and is so cute / fascinating / fun / bizarre that it gets passed by viewers to their friends via e-mail and social networks -- thousands of times -- so that it propels more and more people to your website, and, hopefully, helps enhance your brand, produce sales, and ultimately boost profits. Internet marketers often seek to launch viral campaigns on [Digg](http://www.digg.com) (www.digg.com) or [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com) (www.youtube.com). Digg is a social bookmarking site with such power, that if enough people “Digg” you, you appear on the Digg front page and receive a huge number of visitors in a few hours. If your video goes viral on YouTube, you could get tens of thousands of visits to the site you promote in the video. However, viral marketing is difficult to do well.

## Paid Advertising Strategies

None of the approaches described above is “free,” since each takes time and energy. But if you want to grow your business more rapidly, there comes a point when you need to pay for increased traffic. Advertising is sold in one of three ways: (1) traditional CPM (cost per thousand views), (2) pay per click (PPC), and (3) pay per action (PPA) or cost per action (CPA) approaches. Examples of the latter are affiliate program and lead generation programs. Banner ads get such a low click-through rate (0.2%) that I don’t recommend paying much for them. Banner ads typically cost about 50¢ to \$1 per thousand page views, except on targeted sites. Do some small tests first to determine response. Then calculate your return on investment (ROI) before spending large amounts. Here are some methods to explore:

### 33. Advertise in an E-Mail Newsletter

Some of the best buys are small text ads in e-mail newsletters targeted at audiences likely to be interested in your products or services. Many small publishers aren’t sophisticated about advertising and offer very attractive rates.

More effective (and more expensive) is to send out an appropriate solo e-mail to the targeted list’s subscribers. These often get an excellent response.

### 34. Begin an Affiliate Program

Essentially, a retailer’s affiliate program is a CPA program that pays a commission to other site owners whose links to the retailer’s products result in an actual sale. The goal is to build a network of affiliates who have a financial stake in promoting your site. If you’re a merchant, you need to (1) determine the commission you are willing to pay (consider it your advertising cost), (2) select a company to set up the technical details of your program, and (3) promote your program to get the right kind of affiliates who will

link to your site. Software and service companies are available to facilitate the process. The problem is getting enough affiliates who will actually work hard to promote your products or services. These “super affiliates” will probably consist of only 1% to 3% of your total number of affiliates.

### 35. Purchase Pay Per Click (PPC) ads

The most common text ads are found on [Google AdWords](http://adwords.google.com/select/) (adwords.google.com/select/), [Yahoo! Search Marketing](http://www.wilsonweb.com/afd/overture.htm) (www.wilsonweb.com/afd/overture.htm), or [Microsoft AdCenter](http://adcenter.microsoft.com) (adcenter.microsoft.com). This strategy is way down the list, but it is vitally important. Most Internet businesses will want to explore using Google AdWords to drive targeted traffic to their websites.

These PPC ads appear on the search engine results page, typically both above and to the right of the organic or natural search engine results. Since they are keyword-driven, they can be quite relevant to what a searcher is trying to find. Your ranking in this list of paid text ads is determined by (1) how much you have bid for a particular search word compared to other businesses, (2) the click-through rate on your ad, and (3) your Quality Score, which reflects the relevancy and quality of your ad and the landing page it points to.

PPC ads can be a cost-effective way to get targeted traffic, since you only pay when someone actually clicks on the link. But I strongly recommend that you study this carefully and expect a learning curve before you invest large sums of money in PPC advertising. You can find [articles on Paid Search](#) on our site (www.wilsonweb.com/paid-search/).

### 36. List Your Products with Shopping Comparison Bots and Auction Sites

If you're an online merchant, you'll want to consider this. Shopping bots compare your products and prices to others. Some work on a PPC (Pay Per Click) basis, others on a CPA (Cost Per Action) basis, perhaps with a listing fee. Bots to consider include [mySimon](http://www.mysimon.com) (www.mysimon.com), [BizRate](http://www.bizrate.com/) (www.bizrate.com/), [PriceGrabber](http://www.pricegrabber.com/) (www.pricegrabber.com/), and [Shopping.com](http://www.shopping.com) (www.shopping.com). Shopping sites that include comparison features include: [eBay](http://www.ebay.com) (www.ebay.com), [Yahoo! Shopping](http://shopping.yahoo.com) (shopping.yahoo.com), and [Amazon Marketplace](http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=1161232) (www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=1161232). You pay to acquire first-time customers, but hopefully you can sell to them a second, third, and fourth time, later on.

### 37. Rent targeted, commercial e-mail lists

The last website promotion technique I'll mention is renting targeted e-mail lists. We abhor "spam," bulk untargeted, unsolicited e-mail, and you'll pay a very stiff price in a ruined reputation and cancelled services if you yield to temptation here. But the direct marketing industry has developed targeted e-mail lists you can rent -- lists consisting of people who have agreed to receive commercial e-mail messages. These lists cost \$40 to \$400 per thousand or 4¢ to 40¢ per name. Do a smaller test first to determine the quality of the list. Your best bet is to [find an e-mail list broker](http://www.google.com/search?&q=e-mail+list+broker) (www.google.com/search?&q=e-mail+list+broker) to help you with this project. You'll save money and get experienced help for no additional cost. Realize, however, that due to the high cost of renting lists, many businesses won't generate enough businesses to justify the cost. Run the numbers before you invest.

Whew! That's it. We certainly haven't exhausted ways to promote your site, but these will get you started. To effectively market your site, you need to spend time adapting these strategies to your own market and capacity. Right now, why don't you make an appointment to go over this checklist with someone in your organization? Make this Checklist jump-start for your new Internet marketing strategy.

If you've read through this entire article without subscribing to my free [Web Marketing Today](http://www.wilsonweb.com) e-mail newsletter (www.wilsonweb.com), here's your last chance. It's your best source to keep up with ways to enhance your Internet marketing. [Subscribe today.](#)

## About the Author

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson is widely recognized as one of the top international authorities in the area of Internet marketing. *Business Week* called his popular WilsonWeb.com website: “bar none the best e-commerce resource out there.” *Business 2.0* profiled him as one of the savvy dot-com survivors. *The New York Times* named Dr. Wilson “among the best-known Internet Marketing publishers and consultants who preach the responsible use of e-mail for marketing.”



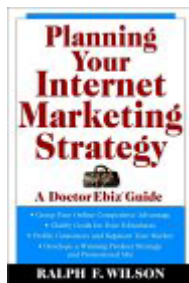
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He is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Web Marketing Today*®, the grandfather of the Internet marketing e-zines, published continuously since 1995. Currently it is sent to 95,000+ confirmed opt-in subscribers .

He is a winner of the **Tenagra Award for Internet Marketing Excellence** and the author of hundreds of articles and numerous books, including

[Planning Your Internet Marketing Strategy](#) (John Wiley & Sons, 2002). Most of the seminal marketing books he wrote in the early years of the Internet are now out-of-print. They include *The E-Mail Marketing Handbook*, *The Shopping Cart Report*, *Marketing a Local Business on the Internet*, *Article Marketing*, and *Guidebook to Search Engine Optimization* -- more than a dozen in all.



Dr. Wilson has spoken widely in the US and abroad on Internet marketing and e-commerce. His one-day seminars, such as the Internet Marketing Best Practices Briefings (2001-2006), held on university campuses all over the US, trained thousands of marketers. An ordained minister, he currently serves as interim pastor of [First Baptist Church of Nevada City](#) and maintains an extensive Internet [Bible study](#) and [Christian writing ministry](#), as well as authoring [25 books on Christianity and the Bible](#).

He plays the guitar and autoharp and sings, and admires bluegrass and Celtic fiddlers. He tries to play disc golf when he can. When there's time, he enjoys woodworking, reading Civil War history, and walking in the woods. Dr. Wilson holds three earned academic degrees and lives with his wife on ten acres he calls “Wildwood” in Loomis, California, about 20 miles northeast of Sacramento.