

Web Traffic Strategies for Book Promoters

Contributed by Shel Horowitz
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This gem was excerpted with permission from *Grassroots Marketing for Authors and Publishers* by Shel Horowitz. While not an exhaustive study on search engine strategies for authors, it will give you a good place to start.

Internet Book Marketing and Promotion Techniques

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Building Website Traffic for Book Promotion

If you build it, they won't necessarily come. Whole books have been written on how to get traffic to your site; here's a brief overview.

Most traffic will arrive at your site through one of four channels: natural search, nonsearch links, off-line promotion, or paid advertising.

Natural or Organic Search Engine Traffic

Search-engine robots will crawl your site. The more relevant content, the more relevant links to and especially from other sites, and the more often you update, the more frequently the "bots" will "spider" or "crawl" your site.

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While it's not generally worth the effort to spend huge amounts of time figuring out what they're looking for-it changes constantly anyhow-some basic principles apply. The term "tag" or "metatag" refers to a little snippet of code that tells the search bot what to do with the information. If you're creating your own site, any decent book or online primer will explain them. When working with a web designer, just make sure your expert is incorporating tags properly, especially on your home page.

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Use search-engine-friendly navigation: verbally describe every image with an "alt" tag, so that the search engines can index the content. Start every page with good, strong, keyword-laden text, and avoid unethical optimization techniques like showing one page to the search-engine "bots" and a different one to human visitors.

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For each page, pick a few keywords that start near the beginning of the page and get repeated several times (but write for human beings, not for bots).

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If you can, incorporate that keyword into the page title and the file name as well as the keyword and description meta tags.

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Write your "meta description" tag carefully; in many cases, that's the text the search engines will display if they return your page.

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Get other relevant sites to link to you.

Nonsearch Links Related to Book Promotion and Book Marketing

Links from other sites not only help you with the search engines, they also provide a direct path for visitors from those sites. You can get these links by submitting articles in exchange for a block of resource and contact information, by cross-linking your own multiple sites, by providing great content that people want to link to, and just by asking-but not with those idiotic autogenerated form letters, please! Instead, visit sites you genuinely like and politely suggest to the webmaster that a particular page of your site might be useful to that site's visitors. You may or may not want to offer to reciprocate, depending on circumstances.

Offline Book Promotion

Your website URL should be on everything you ever send out-and not just the address, but a reason to visit. Put it on press releases, business cards, postcards, and bookmarks with the cover of your book, any apparel or other promotional items you create, and so on.

What kind of reason to visit? The same kinds of things you might suggest when you give out the URL (I hope it's an easy one to spell and remember) on a radio interview: get a free newsletter about (your topic), learn the truth about (topic), take a survey and see how you compare, to name a few possibilities.

These are some actual reasons I've given out:

Visit frugalfun.com to find out how to have a \$300 wedding. Visit frugalmarketing.com to find dozens of ways you can slash the cost of marketing and boost its effectiveness. Visit business-ethics-pledge.ORG (I emphasize ".org" because people expect ".com") to create a society-wide tipping point toward ethical business.

Paid Advertising

You can buy traffic. Lots of people will sell it to you. I'd suggest that if this interests you, you sign up for Google AdWords-and do some serious research first. It's very easy to drop a big wad of money if you don't know what you're doing. Study the reports from Perry Marshall and others who've been down this road. Figure out very carefully constructed search terms that are specific enough to get people who are seriously interested in what you want, and affordable enough that you can make a profit if even one person in 100 who clicks to your site turns into a buyer. For example, don't buy clicks for "bicycles"; instead, buy "recumbent bicycle racing." And when people click, they should arrive at a landing page that's specific to what they clicked on-not to a generic home page. And finally, keep your eyes on your budget, and on your results. Carefully track how much you spend to bring in what number of visitors, how many of them buy anything, and how much they spend.

Convert Your Visitors

When you finally get that precious visitor to your site, you need to know what you want that person to do-especially if you've paid to bring that person there. This is what SBI's Ken Evoy calls the "most wanted response." Usually, that's buying something. But sometimes it might be signing up for a newsletter, or something else entirely; if the prospect isn't ready to buy, the newsletter subscription is the next most wanted response-because it allows you to go back in front of

that prospect, with permission, every day or week or month, until that person is finally ready to buy.

And most websites convert pitifully.

Why is that? Because most people who set up a website don't think about what their visitors are looking for, and don't try to make it happen for them. Websites need to be usable, easy to navigate, fast to load, and with multiple paths through the site-many of which guide the visitor toward the response you want.

Read Jakob Neilson and Jared Spool on usability. Study Ken Evoy or Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg on conversion. Most importantly, sit down in front of your site and pretend you've never seen it before. Can you figure out how to find what you need? Does what you find meet your expectation when you were searching? And does it make you want to buy your book?

The award-winning author of five marketing books, Shel Horowitz specializes in helping authors and small publishers succeed in a crowded marketplace-as a marketing copywriter, strategist, and book coach. Visit him on the Web at <http://www.frugalmarketing.com> or call him at 800-683-WORD (800-683-9673) or 413-586-2388. This article is taken from his latest book, *Grassroots Marketing for Authors and Publishers*; his two other current books are *Principled Profit: Marketing That Puts People First* and *Grassroots Marketing: Getting Noticed in a Noisy World*.