

### GET YOUR WEBSITE SEEN

#### What's Ahead...

**Congratulations!** You've worked hard *and* smart to create a website that will connect with your market and steadily attract your ideal clients. You've crafted the elements of your brand, your launch content, and a valuable freebie that will entice your market to join your list.

Once your designer's work is done and approved, it will be time to launch! But of course, your site can only work its magic on *people who see it*. You'll need to make sure lots of people in your market do. Before you launch, let's look at how you're going to do that.

In this module, we focus on driving traffic to your site and building your list. This is an ongoing process, not something you will accomplish in a week. But this module will give you a sense for the main techniques, and help you plan your first steps. Then you can launch your site with a traffic plan in place.

#### Quick Task Alert!

**If you haven't already, download the [Track-Your-Progress Checklist](#) for Module 4.**

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#### How Websites Get Visitors

You've created a beautiful new website, carefully designed to show your ideal clients that you have what they are looking for.

You've crafted the elements of your brand, chosen the structure and look of your site, and written client winning content for all the pages your site will need when you launch. And you've created a freebie that speaks to what your market wants most, as an enticement for them to join your list.

But **in order to win you clients, your site *needs visitors***. Let's look at how you're going to make sure lots of people in your market visit your site.

**The whole venture of doing business online can be summed up in two steps:**

- **Driving traffic to your website, and**
- **Getting your visitors to "convert"**  
*(take a specific action, like signing up for your list, booking a free consult, or buying a product)*

You've already designed your site with conversion in mind. By speaking your market's language, you've made making your freebie and your services as attractive to them as possible.

In this module, we'll focus on driving traffic to your site. You will:

- Get introduced to the main techniques, and get a sense for which ones are best for you.
- Pick a few techniques to focus on, and take your first steps.
- Launch your site with a traffic attraction strategy in place.

If your business has been online for a while, some of this material will be old hat for you. If you're new to the game, it may feel overwhelming. Either way, you'll find something in this module to help you get to the next level.

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#### Drive Traffic to Build Your List

The purpose of driving traffic to your site is ultimately to win new clients. But for most people, it's going to take more than one visit to your website before they are ready to sign up as a client. That's why **your site's single most important objective is to build your email list.**

Studies show that in online marketing, **it takes several contacts with a potential buyer to build enough trust to make a sale.** This is especially true for professional services, where the price point is pretty high, and the *relationship* with the service provider is what matters most.

When a potential client opts in to your list, they are giving you permission to stay in touch with them and earn their confidence through repeated contacts. That permission is highly valuable.

Size does matter with email lists. The more you rely on filling group programs, recurring revenue and automated sales processes, the more it matters.

But don't worry about the size of your list right now. When it comes to winning clients for one-to-one professional services, a small high-quality list will outperform a large low-quality list anyway. High quality means:

- They trust you (because they opted in willingly, and you give them respect and consistent value in exchange for their attention).
- You keep the relationship "warm" by staying in touch and consistently reminding them of what you offer.

#### How Online Businesses Drive Traffic

Building traffic to your site is not a single task. It's an *ongoing process* that touches on everything you do to promote your business. It's never perfect, because it's never "done".

#### The goal is simple:

***Get in front of people in your niche market, including some who don't know you yet, and make them curious enough to come check out your site.***

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Here are just some of the methods to bring traffic to your site:

- blogging, podcasting or video blogging
- email marketing (to your own list)
- article marketing
- video marketing (YouTube)
- press releases
- social networking
- other social media (online forums, social bookmarking)
- promotional partners (affiliates and joint ventures)
- search engine optimization
- search engine marketing (pay per click, eg Google AdWords)
- other online advertising (eg Facebook)
- speaking and networking offline
- your own self-marketed events

Every one of these methods could fill a course like this one. Some would fill a career. In this module, we'll focus on five major traffic strategies that every online entrepreneur should be familiar with:

1. "high touch" promotion
2. content marketing (blogging, ezines, video)
3. social networking
4. search engine optimization
5. working with promotional partners

For these five strategies, you'll come away with enough information to:

- understand what the method is and how it works.
- evaluate which methods suit your business, your site, and your personality best, and choose which to implement first.
- start building traffic.

All of these strategies will work best if you have a blog (or an ezine that's archived on your site). That way you can attract traffic to your site with the promise of a steady stream of new content. Most of the material in this learning guide assumes that you'll publish a blog or an ezine regularly.

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If you are building a static site with no back page blog or ezine, you'll have to rely on personal (rather than online) contacts to bring you leads – so driving traffic to your site is less important to your overall marketing strategy. In this case, it will still be worth your while to read the sections below on *High Touch Traffic Generation*, and *Connecting With the Social Web*.

Some service providers sell primarily through sales pages for specific programs rather than through their “headquarters” site. In this situation, much of what is covered here applies to promoting the sales page.

The five strategies I cover here are all “free traffic” methods, meaning you won't be paying anyone else to send visitors to your site. (There *will* be costs for tools and set-up, and in the case of promotional partners you will be paying them a commission on *sales*.) If your goal is to build a big audience in a short time, you may also be interested in paid traffic. So we'll take a quick look at the most important forms of online advertising.

Then, once your traffic strategy is ready for action, you'll launch your site!

Or, you may choose to go straight to the launch section, and save the traffic strategies for later. Either way, you'll probably want to keep this learning guide on hand and refer back to it as your traffic strategies evolve.

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#### High Touch Traffic Generation

If you're used to doing business online, you know this – building your web presence is a journey, not a destination. The more you do to promote your brand online, the more opportunities will open up.

If you're just getting started, this can feel a bit daunting, like you're trying to make something from nothing. Don't worry. Lifting a business up by its bootstraps is a time-honored entrepreneurial tradition. You can do it!

The natural place to start is with high touch approaches – ways of *personally* inviting visitors to your site. This group of traffic generation techniques is the least automated and the most widely available. But that doesn't make them any less effective.

The keys to making this work are:

- **Be creative.** Don't miss any opportunities to promote your site. *If you don't see an opportunity, invent one.*
- **Be persistent.** Building traffic “by hand” is slower and involves smaller numbers than other traffic methods. But it's higher quality traffic – which is why successful Internet marketers still do it.
- **Give people a reason to go to your site.** People's time is scarce and highly prized. If they are going to spend it checking out your site, there needs to be something in it for them.

Even if you're an experienced online marketer, it's worth reviewing this group of traffic techniques to make sure you're keeping them up to date. They never go out of style.

#### Get a Buzz Going

Try this quick thought experiment. **What if there was no Internet? How would you get in front of your market then?** Service professionals have always had to find new prospects, connect with them and build trust, and convert them into clients.

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Before the Web, the main ways for a solo professional to connect with prospects were:

- face-to-face networking,
- public speaking, and
- publishing (in print).

In the Internet era, print publishing has gotten less important – but **networking and speaking have become offline roads to online traffic.**

If you are using face-to-face networking or live public speaking to connect with potential clients, referring them to your website is a natural. Keep these points in mind:

- *Your audience has to remember to visit your site when they get back to a computer – so give them a good reason to go there. (More on this below.)*
- *Some of your audience will have smart phones. That gives them the ability to visit your site while you are with them. But not all of your audience can do that, and it only works if your site is optimized for mobile browsing. (Check with your designer on this.)*

Feature your site's url on your **business card**. Or print up some cards to pass around, that just have your name, your tagline or Unique Benefit Statement, and your site's url. To minimize the cost, use Vistaprint (see **My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex**).

Many people don't bother with a business card any more, but if you do any face-to-face speaking or networking, you should have a current card. Smart phones and QR codes may eventually replace printed business cards, but we're not there yet. (In fact, some people are putting QR codes on their business cards.)

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If you have an organized market – if people in your market are members of an organization that represents their common interests – that organization probably wants to educate its members about the challenges and goals that are most important to them. That’s an opportunity for you to:

- attend their conferences and trade shows, **network or speak** there, and promote your site face-to-face.
- get them to sponsor and promote an **event you create** (say, a free teleseminar), built around a topic that serves the association’s goals, where you can point your audience to your site.

If you will be giving your site’s url to people *verbally*, consider how well it will be heard and remembered. Speak clearly, and give the url more than once. If possible, give it to them visually as well.

**Print publishing** is a different case. The publishing world is being drastically changed by the Web. Publishing in print is getting easier in some ways. But at the same time it has become *much* easier to publish online than on paper (a blog).

So for most people, print publishing is not the shortest road to an audience. But if you have traction in that world, you can use it to promote your site. For example – say you have a book ready to go, and a plan to distribute it through Amazon. You could have your printer slip an insert in every copy inviting people to your site for a free related resource.

#### Give People a Reason to Visit Your Site

When you are using offline methods to drive traffic to your site, there will usually be a time delay between your invitation and your prospect taking action. So it’s even more important than usual to give your prospect a strong incentive to visit.

To do that, **send them to your site to get something**. Most commonly, that will be your freebie, but it could also be:

- a deeper look at the information you are sharing (like a transcript of your talk or a resource you mentioned in your networking conversation); or
- an opportunity to have another experience with you (like a free consult or a follow-up group call).

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Whatever you are inviting them to come and get, it needs to be *relevant to the conversation* you are having with your audience.

For example, if you are giving a talk at an association conference, make it about a topic that serves the association's goals, *and also* relates to the topic of your freebie. Since your freebie is designed to be highly valuable to your target market, that should be a natural fit.

#### Quick Task Alert!

Make a list of places where you could meet or present to people in your market. Then make a plan for:

- How will you get in?
- How will you let them know about your site?
- What will you send them there to get?

#### Link to Your Site

The more links point to your site, the more traffic you will get. So, look for opportunities to publish links:

- Include a link to your site in your email signature block.
- Make sure a link to your site is prominently featured wherever you already have a presence online.

You might be surprised how much of an online presence you have already. Try Googling your name. Take a tour of all your online profiles, bios and mentions, and ask yourself – *How could I use this to help publicize my site?* Also consider the many free ways to publish a web page about yourself. (See **My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex**.) For example:

- Do you have a Google profile yet? If not, put one up now. There's a good chance it will show up high on Google when anyone searches your name. Include your site's url there, along with some streamlined promotional copy aimed at your market.
- Free and popular online profiles are also available at about.me.

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- If you use any social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), update your profile with your tagline or Unique Benefit Statement and a prominent link to your site.
- If you do speaking gigs or guest expert appearances, highlight your site in the copy you provide to event sponsors. Keep an up-to-date bio ready (in various lengths) that promotes your site's value to your niche market.
- If you use an online video service (YouTube), podcast site (Blog Talk Radio), or other online service for your business, update your profile to feature a link to your site.
- If you control a page anywhere else on the Web, consider how you can appropriately use that space to promote your site.

You get the idea. Just about anything you are doing online can be tweaked to help promote your site. Whenever you set up a new online profile, keep the opportunity to promote your site in the front of your mind. (Note: social media and video marketing are covered later in this learning guide.)

For examples of a Google profile and an about.me profile, see slides 2 and 3 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

### Use Your Keywords

Whenever you write promotional copy (anything beyond just your site's name and url), use some of your market's favorite keywords. When you can, to get the maximum SEO punch, link the keywords themselves to your site.

### Quick Task Alert!

Make an inventory of all the places where you could publish a link to your site. Be ready to get those links up there as soon as you launch.

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#### Ask for a Favor

Ask people to help you spread the word about your site. Don't be shy. Ask for help from your friends and family, your clients, and your business network. To help them help you:

- Show them all the compelling reasons why people in your market should visit your site.
- Tell them specifically what they can do:
  - Introduce your site to anyone they know who is in your niche market.
  - If they are in your market, they can subscribe to your blog or ezine, and comment on your blog posts from time to time.
  - Post social network status updates that link to your blog posts or ezine archives.

Make this request to all of your contacts. You never know who will jump at the chance to lend a hand. Your best fans and clients often come from unexpected connections.

#### Compete!

Look for an opportunity to enter your site in a contest. It's an old fashioned promotional technique that has been adopted by the Web, because it's such a reliable buzz generator.

If your site qualifies to participate in a contest, it's a chance to get listed on a page that others – the contest promoter and the other contestants – are driving traffic to. And it will inspire you to think about your site from the perspective of your web visitors and make your site even better, and to work even harder to promote it!

Later, consider running a contest for people in *your* niche market. In a well run contest, the contest promoter benefits from much more traffic than they could pull in alone. To make it work, you need:

- a contest objective that's inherently interesting and fun;

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- an easy way to submit and judge the entries (this probably means dedicated contest software);
- a really tasty prize; and
- a good way to get the word out.

A speaking opportunity or promotional partner could be your method for getting the word out. If you do a good job designing the contest, that could help attract your audience or partner.

But don't begin your launch with running your own contest unless you're ready to make it your main project for a while. A well run contest is a lot of work. And it can be trickier to manage than you might expect (for example, dealing with people who try to "game" the contest).

The best way to learn about how it's done is to enter one and really give it your best shot, while also watching how the contest promoter handles the details.

### Marketing with Content

Content marketing is one of the most powerful traffic strategies out there, and guess what? You have already started to get into the game.

- In creating your fabulous freebie, you focused on a problem your niche market urgently wants to solve, and gave them information that:
  - clarified it for them,
  - shifted their perspective, and
  - inspired them to take action.
- If you are preparing to launch a blog or ezine, you have already created several short, punchy articles that are highly useful to your target audience.

That kind of content is designed to *spread through your market* and *build your reputation* as a trusted authority.

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The **essence of marketing with content** is simple:

- keep publishing useful material;
- make it easy to share;
- attract more people in your target audience.

#### Keep Publishing

Keep publishing a steady stream of content that's designed to teach and motivate people in your market. Your content can be written, video or audio. As you build your audience, your reputation and credibility will grow.

**The key is to become known for putting out useful material on a *specific set of topics* that your target market is hungry to learn about.**

Tailor all your content to your market, and speak their language. For example, don't write an article about abundance thinking; write an article about abundance thinking *that relates to the top challenges of your specific niche market*. Tie it into what you know about your audience – what derails them and what gets them back on track.

Expect to run out of steam from time to time. Everybody does. But there is no reason you should ever run out of *ideas*, because the opportunities to be a useful teacher never cease – as long as you keep learning. If you feel like you've run dry, take a break and recharge your batteries. Then get your juices flowing again:

- Consult your idea file.
- Google something like “blog topic ideas” for lots of advice on how to court your muse.
- Spark ideas by catching up on the blogs or ezines you follow.
- **Ask your market for ideas.** If you have a big enough audience, survey them, or ask a question on your blog or your favorite social network. If your list is small, go to the online places where your market gathers – blogs, LinkedIn groups, Twitter, online forums, Yahoo Answers – and find out what they are seeking help with.

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The last approach is best, because solving a problem that is top-of-mind for your niche market is the best way to make sure your content will be valuable to them. This kind of research takes work, so capture everything you get for your idea file.

#### Make it Easy to Share

As you build your list, make it easy for your networks to help you sign up more subscribers. Then, *ask people* to share your content with their friends and colleagues. **A recommendation from someone's friend or colleague is more powerful than any other kind of promotional message.**

- If you are developing a blog, make sure your site is designed to make sharing your posts easy. On my blog, every post has "Tweet" and "Like" buttons at the top, plus more social network icons at the bottom.
- If you will be publishing an ezine, include in your template a link that allows readers to send a copy to a friend. Put your ezines up in an online archive on your site, so people can link to them.
- Whenever you publish a new article, post a link to it on any social networks you participate in. (More on this in the next section.) Twitter is particularly effective for this, because of the culture of "retweeting" useful links.

For an example of social sharing buttons on a blog, see slide 4 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques**. For two takes on the "Forward this ezine to a friend" link, see slides 5 and 6.

#### Attract Your Audience

Get your content in front of your audience and let it speak for itself. To do this, find out where your target audience goes for information, publish there, and link back to your site. This strategy is made for blogs, but you can modify it for your ezine.

Once you have chosen a narrow enough target market, it's not hard to find out what they are reading. Scope out where your niche market gets their information online, then get in front of them on those sites.

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- Comment on other writers' blog posts.
- Find other publishers for your blog feed or ezine articles.
- Provide guest posts to other blogs.

**Find other people's blogs that address your niche market**, and research which are the most popular and valuable. (To find out how, ask your web designer or SEO consultant.) Subscribe. Then, make a habit of commenting on their posts. Make your comments brief and useful. And make them early, so you show up near the top of the comments queue.

The comments section generally will let you post a link back to your site. If your comments are pithy and helpful, this will draw visitors. Over time, your commenting habit can also help you develop relationships with leading bloggers in your market, which might lead to promotional partnerships.

Once you have built some relationships with other bloggers and some credibility as a writer, opportunities may come your way to provide guest posts for other blogs. Take them (or ask for them). Generally the host blog will include a link back to your site as part of your guest author bio.

Does your market have:

- Associations or clubs?
- Online magazines?
- Its own forums or social networks?
- Product or service providers who have an offering related to what you blog about?

Any of these "spheres of influence" may gladly pass on your content to their readers, or give you an opportunity to present (live or remotely) to their members. For example:

- If you are a coach for realtors and you consistently write for that market, your local realtors association might host your RSS feed on their site or republish your articles in their newsletter.
- If you work with public sector retirees to develop an encore career, find the senior centers that attract highly active seniors who are still engaged in the community, and ask to make periodic presentations to their residents.

**Start by developing a relationship with the person who has decision making power** (the newsletter editor or program committee). Find ways to help them do

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what they do. Then show them how valuable your content is to their audience. When you agree to share your content:

- Find out if they have policies limiting how much you can promote your services, and abide by those.
- If they will be republishing your material, make it clear that you retain the copyright, and make sure they will link back to your site.

#### Quick Task Alert!

Make sure your designer is taking the right steps to make your articles easy to share after you launch. Then:

- Find out where your market goes for information related to their top challenges and goals.
- Get familiar with those information outlets – register, subscribe, read up.
- Find out who the spheres of influence are who control access to that audience.
- Plan how you will develop a relationship with them.

#### Article Marketing

Since you will be producing a steady stream of content relevant to your target market, consider changing up some of that content and publishing it on article directory sites. These are sites like IdeaMarketers that post huge volumes of free content from numerous authors.

Authors get the ability to include links back to their own sites in the author's "resource box" that accompanies each article. The directories can achieve high search engine rankings thanks to the volume of content they publish. Having your content published in multiple places around the web can help drive traffic to your site, and just having the links can help your site's search engine rankings. (See *Getting Traffic from Search Engines* below.)

For an example of an author resource box on an article directory, see slide 7 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

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There are schools of thought about whether article marketing is worth your time. Some service providers have gotten outstanding results this way; others have faltered. Recent updates to Google's search algorithm have caused some of the article directories to lose traffic.

One thing is clear: this is a strategy where volume matters. You'll probably need to get dozens of articles out there before you start seeing results. Give it your full commitment for several months, then evaluate.

To get the most from your article marketing strategy:

- **Start with one of the top directories**, then branch out if it's working. There are automation tools designed to help you submit to multiple directories, but these should be used with caution, since **content that is duplicated around the Web may be penalized by Google**. Don't submit to any directory without first visiting there, looking around, and understanding their submission guidelines.
- **Make sure your headline is captivating and keyword rich**. Keep your articles short (300-500 words), and focused on a single point, to make sure your reader gets all the way to the resource box at the bottom. If you normally write longer articles, break them into smaller chunks for the article directories.
- **Include a compelling call to action in your resource box**, and as many links to your site as the directory allows. Include one link that is not embedded (like <http://www.prosperouscoachblog.com>). For the rest, use keywords as anchor text.

### Video (and Audio) Marketing

Content is not just writing. More and more Web content is audio and (especially) video. All three media have their advantages, and none of them is going away. On the Web, video captures people's attention like no other medium, and is growing faster than any other.

Now anyone can publish good quality audio and video online. The tools are affordable. (See **My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex** for all the resources mentioned on this page.) For audio –

- **Production:** You can create your program with a USB mic and a desktop audio editor (Windows Sound Recorder or QuickTime Pro for Mac) or

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podcasting software. Online services like AudioAcrobat will record audio from a telephone bridge line.

- **Distribution:** Podcast hosting sites and streaming services like Blog Talk Radio abound. Or you can host your audio files on a site like AudioAcrobat, and pull them into your own site from there.

For video –

- **Production:** You can capture live action videos with a digital video camera and an inexpensive corded lavalier mic. Get a tripod too (unless you're just using a webcam). The free video editing software that comes with your computer (Windows movie Maker or iMovie for Mac) will work, or buy Vegas Movie Studio or ScreenFlow. For screen capture videos, CamStudio does an adequate job for free, or buy Camtasia. Learning your software well enough to make decent videos takes only a few hours.
- **Distribution:** You can host your videos on YouTube or one of its many competitors, and pull them into your own site from there. Or, for better load times, use a player software like Easy Video Player and an affordable paid server like Amazon Web Services.
- **File transfer:** If you have a virtual assistant or video editor helping with your videos, you'll also need a file transfer program like Pando or YouSendIt to send the (very large) video files.

Like your writing, you'll use video mainly:

- To **educate your niche** about what they are hungry to learn about.
- To **market your services and products**.

Usually promotional videos are also educational. You teach some of your system – to give people a taste of its value – *while* you promote it.

Instructional videos are great for a quick video blog, or to deliver content as part of a paid program (like the videos in *Client Winning Websites & Blogs*). If you use instructional videos in a paid program, you'll need a membership program like Digital Access Pass to host your videos in an area of your site that's behind a login.

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Purely educational videos are likely to stay online indefinitely (until replaced with an updated version). **For promotional videos, consider setting them up for a limited life – the duration of your campaign.** Letting your audience know the videos will be coming down soon gives people a motivation to go see them now.

“Over the shoulder” instructional videos are pretty easy to do off the cuff. For most other kinds of video, most of us will be better off writing a script. But keep it loose. Diverging some from your script helps your video feel spontaneous and authentic. For live action videos, teleprompter software like Prompt will scroll your script at the speed you choose.

**Writing a video script** follows the same principles as writing for your site.

- For purely educational content, make it highly useful to your market, easy to understand, and compelling. Don’t waste your viewer’s time. (Review *How to Write Content for Your Blog or Ezine* in Module 3.)
- For promotional content, make it client centric. Highlight the pain (where they are), the outcome (where they want to be), how your program fills the gap, and the specific benefits of your program. End with a direct call to action. (Review *How to Authentically Motivate Visitors to Invest* in Module 2.)

For more on creating video content, see the **Online Video Guidelines**.

#### Using Video as a Traffic Strategy

Some service providers are building their traffic strategy around YouTube – attracting viewers to a YouTube channel, and driving traffic to their site from there. But they need a site to drive that traffic to.

**YouTube views won’t help you if your viewers don’t click through to your site, where they can opt in to your list and enroll in your programs.**

And that site probably should be a video blog (that is, a blog where most of the content is video, or video plus text). When visitors arrive from YouTube, they will be expecting more of your videos, and a video blog is the way to meet that expectation.

If you prefer making instructional videos to writing articles, your strategy could be to go with a video blog instead of a written blog or ezine, and use YouTube as

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your primary traffic source. If your site is not a video blog, a YouTube channel can still send you traffic – but it won't be as powerful if you're not consistently posting new videos.

If you pursue this strategy, follow these pointers:

- **Choose your YouTube channel name carefully**, the way you would choose a domain name. Take full advantage of the information fields in your channel set-up. Use client centric language including keywords. Have your designer customize the background of your channel so it echoes your site's branding.
- **Consistently add valuable short videos to your channel.** When you post them, use compelling, keyword rich titles, descriptions and tags.
- **Include a link to your site at the top of each video description.** (Make sure it includes the *http://* to make it clickable.) Refer viewers to your site in the video itself, and give them a reason to go there.
- **Comment at other YouTube channels** that get a lot of traffic from your niche.

If you decide to go with a video blog, WordPress is still the best platform.

There are syndication services like TubeMogul that will help you distribute your videos to multiple video sites – but I would think twice about using them.

Duplicate video content may soon carry the same risk of Google penalties as duplicate written content does now. Anyway, YouTube is by far the dominant video site in terms of viewers.

If driving traffic from a YouTube channel is not for you, that doesn't mean you should give up on video. For most service professionals, video is more about delivering content than driving traffic.

#### Using Video to Build Your List

Maybe the freebie you created in Module 3 is a video or video series. (Or maybe your next freebie will be.) But that's not the only way to use video to build your email list.

When you build substantial educational content into your *promotional* video, it acts like a mini-freebie – a resource with its own compelling value to your market, which *also* points them toward your paid service or product. Then you can publicize your video based on its value, and require visitors to opt in to get it.

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That way the viral power of your video gets leveraged to build your list, while promoting your paid program at the same time. This technique works especially well when you have a promotional partner publicizing your offer to their list. (See *Working with Promotional Partners* below.)

For tips on how to make your first videos, see the **Online Video Guidelines**.

#### Quick Task Alert!

If you haven't already, download and read through the **Online Video Guidelines**. Then:

- Decide what your first online video will be.
- Plan how you will produce and distribute your video, and make sure you have the right tools.
- Ask your designer about anything you need help with (embedding your video, adding an opt-in box).
- Write your script if using one.
- Shoot your video!

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#### Connecting with the Social Web

Social networking is a game-changing technology for attracting an audience. You can reach into a vast pool of enthusiastic users through the big social networks, and the techniques are low-cost.

Social media are *not* as good at converting your audience into clients. For that, you need to provide more sustained contact and more in-depth information.

**The key is to use social media for what they are best at – attracting new visitors and converting them into *subscribers*.**

Once they are on your list, you can rely on your blog or ezine (and other tools) to steadily build trust and convert your subscribers into *clients*.

Social networking helps drive traffic to your site – *if* you have something there that makes it worth their click. Again, give them a reason to visit.

- If you are building a blog, your site is made for this. It features a steady stream of resources that are designed to deepen the conversation with people in your market.
- If you will publish an ezine and archive the articles on your site, you can use essentially the same strategy.
- If your site will be an online brochure without frequently updated content, you'll have to be more creative about giving people a reason to visit. You might use real-world meetups to contact some of your audience offline, or create free events on the fly based on what your audience is talking about.

**As powerful as it is, social networking also has a reputation as a big time waster.** And it truly can eat up any amount of time you have on hand. To avoid getting caught in this trap:

- **Set your intentions.** Write down your goals for using social networks (like *build my list* or *connect with leaders in my market*). Then make sure that *everything* you do on social networks during your working hours is serving those goals.

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- **Block your time.** Block out specific time slots during the day or week to get your social networking done, and stick to them.
- **Automate.** Use a social media client like HootSuite to gather your network feeds in one place, filter them into categories, post to multiple networks simultaneously, and schedule your posts.
- **Learn one network at a time.** If you're just getting started, pick one social network and get involved in it deeply. Master it. Then start on the next one.

Three big social networks dominate on the English speaking Web: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. They are too important to ignore.

No matter what niche market you are targeting, you can probably find them on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. But you might choose to focus on one of the not-as-big networks, if there's one:

- that your market prefers, like HR.com for human resources execs, *or*
- that is more prominent in your geographic region, like Orkut for India.

The principles are the same, but each network has its own style.

- The **Facebook** style is personal, lighthearted, and clever. Making a warm connection with people there will help you get them to respond when you post about your business.
- **Twitter** wants you to cut to the chase. Just deliver the punch line – what's interesting, what may be useful, what you want to know.
- **LinkedIn** is all business. The style there is more buttoned down and no-nonsense. The profiles call for credentials and work history. The posts are about business tips and recommendations.

#### Quick Task Alert!

If you are new to using social networks for business, decide which one you will start with. Then:

- Write down your business goals for social networking.
- Choose regular time blocks to get your social networking done, and put them in your calendar.

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### Driving Traffic with Social Networking

If you're new to social networking, *don't* just jump into promoting your business. **Pick one network, establish a presence there and get a feel for its culture, *before* using it to drive traffic to your site.**

The cardinal rule of social networking for business is: **serve others**. When you serve others much more than you promote yourself, you earn social cred.

The winning formula on social networks is to build a presence where you are visibly connecting with and serving your audience first, *then* sprinkle in some promotion of your business (which also serves your audience).

When you're ready to start promoting, be sure to touch these bases:

- Update your profiles.
- Engage your networks.
- Publicize your blog posts (or your archived ezine articles).

On all social networks, **your profile summary is critical**. Take the time to make it compelling and client centric. Include your site's url and your tagline or Unique Benefit Statement in all your profiles. Use keywords.

On Facebook, include some personal details too. Making your profile just about your business violates Facebook's policies. On Twitter, have your designer customize the background of your profile page so it echoes your site's branding. (Check out my Twitter profile for an example.)

For examples of profiles on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, see slides 8, 9 & 10 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques**.

I recommend using your real name on social networks, not your company name. It helps build trust, and on Facebook it's required.

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Your profile headshot is a key element of your brand. Using a professional headshot is worthwhile. How fortunate that you just got some for your website! Upload your headshot to Gravatar and it will show up as your avatar (thumbnail photo) for comments you post all over the Web.

The elements of your brand will evolve as your business matures. When they do, remember to keep your social networking profiles (and other Web profiles) up to date.

#### Quick Task Alert!

Decide whether to begin your social networking practice now, or wait till your site is launched. When you are ready:

- Set up your profile in your chosen network and import your contacts.
- Set up your account with one of the social networking automation tools.
- Start engaging with your network.

#### Engage With Your Networks

Social networking is all about what's happening now. So even more than other online media, it rewards a steady, consistent presence. Remember, every update you post links to your profile, and your profile links to your site.

**The key to driving traffic from social networks, and to building a bigger audience, is *engaging* with your network.**

On social networks, **your conversations are visible to all the contacts of whoever you are in conversation with.** When you engage, people in your niche will see you adding value on topics they care about, and will want to connect with you.

Use social networking to:

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- Help people out – answer their questions, link to resources useful to people in your niche market (that are *not* your articles).
- Be friendly – make connections; appreciate and recommend people; retweet, comment on, or “Like” their posts; give them some love.
- Publicly enjoy what you are doing (especially what you are doing with clients and colleagues).
- Engage with your audience about topics you cover in your blog or ezine.

The more conversations you engage in with your contacts on topics you are writing articles about, the more they will spread links to your articles.

- Ask them what they would like to see you write about.
- Ask questions that relate to your favorite topics, and engage with whoever answers.
- Use the Search function to find relevant questions that other users have asked, then post a pithy and useful answer.
- Join Groups related to your market or topics, and watch the group forum for ideas or opportunities to engage.

LinkedIn Answers is a major area of the site that’s designed to connect users in this kind of Q&A format. But asking and answering questions also works on Twitter and in Facebook Groups.

For an example of LinkedIn Answers, see slide 11 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

### Publicize Your Articles

When you publish a new blog post or archive an ezine article, announce it to your social networks, with a link back to the full article. If you are building a blog, your web designer can help you automate this.

- Pull an excerpt of each new post into your Facebook profile or fan page using the Networked Blogs app.

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- If you have a WordPress blog and use Twitter, use the WP to Twitter plug-in to tweet out each new post automatically when you publish it.

For an example of publicizing your blog post on Facebook and Twitter, see slide 12 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

**When you have enough loyal followers, some of them will start to share your article announcements with their followers.** That's when the viral power of the social networks really starts to work for you.

Once your site has built up enough of an archive, you can pull short quotable excerpts out of some of your older articles to use as social networking posts. Use a social media client like HootSuite to set up multiple posts in advance.

When promoting your articles and programs, take care not to over-do it. The community will disconnect users who over-market.

Remember the cardinal rule – serve others much more than you promote yourself. **Even though your articles are full of useful information, promoting them in your status posts counts as marketing yourself** (unless you are linking to an article that directly answers another user's question). So:

- Promote your articles *only* on networks where you are actively interacting with and serving your audience.
- Hold your self-promoting posts to less than 20% of your overall activity on the network. (Of course, this includes what you do with automated tools like WP to Twitter.)

#### Quick Task Alert!

Write at least the first two weeks of social networking posts you will use to promote your articles after launch.

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#### Groups, Events and Pages

Facebook and LinkedIn both offer the ability to start or join Groups and to post and manage Events. Facebook lets you promote your business brand on a Page – your own mini-site within Facebook.

**Groups** gather together people on the network who have a common interest, and provide a forum for them to share a common conversation. Groups can be open (publicly visible and anyone can join) or closed (invitation only and not searchable).

- **Find open groups that are relevant to your niche market**, join them, and watch for opportunities to engage.
- **Starting a closed group offers a free and accessible forum** for any group programs you offer, but first check out the limitations on what you can do with these groups. Using Ning to set up your own social networking platform offers more features – but it has costs.

The **Events** function gives you a page to post and edit the details of your event, and an easy way to invite your contacts and manage their rsmps. Be sure to give your event a client centric title and description (and include the time zone!). Then leverage the network by asking your contacts to invite people they think would be interested.

Setting up a **Facebook page** for your business can be a powerful way to attract an audience – *if* you are ready to invest consistently in making that page attractive to your market. Facebook wants you to use pages, not groups, for brand-oriented marketing within Facebook, so its platform favors that.

**Just like with your main site, you need to give people a reason to visit your Facebook page.** That starts with posting and interacting there every business day. Don't set up a Facebook page if you're not going to maintain it.

For an example of a Facebook page, see slide 13 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

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#### How to Build a Following

We've already covered the two most essential strategies for building a following on social networks:

- engage your audience; and
- be useful.

Consistently show what a valuable friend you can be, and the contacts of your contacts will respond. That's the viral effect these networks are built around.

But of course, you need to start with some contacts for that to work. To get off the ground, **upload the contacts in your email address book or contact manager**, and invite them to your network. When you meet a contact offline, immediately add them to your online network. Facebook and LinkedIn will suggest new contacts to you. Pay attention and follow up.

Twitter lets you follow another user without waiting for their approval – and when you follow someone, often they will follow you back. That allows you to **build up a following by strategically following other users**.

- **Find the thought leaders** with a large Twitter following in your target market. Search for leaders you already know of. Also search your keywords and look at who's contributing the most interesting tweets.
- **Follow them** (and model what they are doing). Add useful comments to their conversations.
- **Also follow their most attractive followers**. To decide which ones, check for a bio relevant to your market, and enough usage to show that they spend time on Twitter.
- **Post good, relevant tweets** on days that you are adding new follows. Some of them will check out your profile to see if they should follow you back. They will decide based on your profile summary and your most recent tweets.
- **Don't let your list of follows get too much bigger than your followers** list, or Twitter will limit your ability to add new follows.
- If you use an automation tool like Refollow for this process, *be careful*. Mass following can violate Twitter's terms of service.

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**On Facebook**, “Like” the pages of your favorite industry leaders, then start adding useful comments on the posts there. Your comments will be visible to their network and attract friends. This may work on their personal “wall” too, or they may have to accept you as a friend first.

**Joining groups** is a key way to add contacts on LinkedIn (and Facebook). To approach a new contact and invite them to join your LinkedIn network, you need either an existing relationship or an introduction. But membership in the same group allows you to message new contacts without an introduction.

**Facebook is brilliantly designed for taking *social* friendships online, which creates a dilemma for many business users.** How do you handle yourself when your Facebook friends list includes your clients and colleagues, your social friends, and your kids (or parents)?

The only rule of thumb is to *keep your audience in mind* every time you post. You can also:

- Consider setting up a business page and directing business contacts there (but the separation will not be perfect).
- Use friend lists to distinguish business friends from personal friends, then use privacy settings to restrict which friend lists see your post (also imperfect).

Assume that everything you post on social networks is hyper-public. Before you post, **always be mindful of who might be in your audience.**

### Always Be Building Your Email List

Don’t get so caught up in building your social network following that you forget to attract them to your site! Your site is where you will add them to your list, and ultimately where you will convert them into clients.

**It may feel like your community of followers is *your* community, but in the end, you *don’t* control your friend list** – Facebook (or Twitter or LinkedIn) does. Innocent people sometimes get their accounts banned from these networks. So,

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always be inviting your social following to join your email list, which you *do* control.

#### Stay Up to Date

In social networking, change is constant. For example: As this learning guide is going to press, Google has just launched **Google+**, a full-featured social network designed to compete head-to-head with Facebook. So far, it doesn't look like Google+ will fizzle like its predecessor Google Buzz – but it's too early to say whether Google+ will join Facebook as a leading global social network.

Fortunately, it's easy to find up to date information on what's happening in social media. I recommend:

- Choose one or more thought leaders in the field to follow and model.
- Follow an industry blog like *Social Media Examiner* to stay up with current trends.

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#### Getting Traffic from Search Engines

Search engine optimization is the art of attracting visitors to your site by ranking high in search engine results. SEO has the potential to send your site **a steady stream of new visitors who are looking for what you offer**. But it takes some doing.

SEO is a technical skill, the domain of professional geeks. You can do it yourself if you are technically inclined, but there will be a learning curve. Don't assume your web designer can handle it. You'll need to be educated enough about SEO to make sure your designer gets it.

Or you can hire an SEO consultant – but that can be costly, and it doesn't get you off the hook for learning about it yourself. To give your consultant good direction about *your business and your market*, you'll need to grasp what they are doing.

#### **No traffic strategy is mandatory. That includes SEO.**

Plenty of service entrepreneurs have built successful businesses online without ever mastering it.

So should you bother?

*If you are building a blog*, or your site will be continuously updated with new content relevant to your market (such as an archive of your ezines), then **it's worth your time to pick up a basic understanding of SEO now**, because:

- SEO is too important to ignore. **Search engines originate a large share of all website visits**, and an even larger share of new (first time) visits.
- SEO is a long-term strategy. The power of it accumulates gradually – so it's smart to start early.
- Even if your site never ranks as high as you hope for, having a basic grasp of SEO will make you savvier about your other traffic strategies.

*If your site is a static online brochure*, don't invest your time in SEO. It won't pay off, because search engines favor websites that are constantly updated and contain large amounts of free information.

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But you should still keep and use the keyword list you developed in Module 1. Your keywords will help you connect quickly with your audience, because they are words your market already has in mind when they are seeking the kind of services you offer.

For an example showing Lara Galloway's three page 1 Google results for "mom biz" see slide 14 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques.**

#### How Search Engines Work

Search engines seek content that is **relevant and reliable**. They strive to deliver to web searchers the exact information they are looking for, from the most reliable source.

Google sends out software programs called "spiders" that are constantly "crawling" the web, reading and indexing the text of page after page. (Note: Google is the search engine everyone knows, but the techniques covered in this section also apply for Bing, Yahoo! and other search engines.)

When Google gets a search query, it applies an *algorithm* (fancy math) to rank the indexed web pages for that query based on the words or phrases on that page, plus many other factors.

Exactly how Google's algorithm works is a trade secret of royal proportions, like the formula for Coke. And it's constantly being tweaked by Google's engineers. But we know the two most important ingredients: *keywords* and *link popularity*.

**Keywords** are the words and phrases a search user submits. If a user is searching for "best chocolate chip cookie recipe", Google directs them to pages where the phrase "chocolate chip cookie recipe" appears prominently. The keywords on your page are the main way search engines determine the *relevance* of your content.

**Link popularity** measures the importance of a web page based on the number and influence of other sites that link to it. Google figures that if lots of other sites link to the cookie recipe page, those other sites are "voting" that this page has a good recipe. All votes are not equal. If the inbound link comes from a relevant site that Google views as important, that vote gets more weight. For our chocolate chip cookie page, a link from the *Gourmet Magazine* site would have a lot of "link juice". Link popularity is the main way search engines determine the *reliability* of your site's content.

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Your goal is to **improve your site's ranking for your targeted keywords**. When you eventually break into page 1 results on the major search engines, traffic will flow to your site.

To rank for your targeted keywords, **SEO uses four basic steps:**

1. **Keyword research.**
2. **On-page optimization.**
3. **Developing inbound links.**
4. **Tracking, testing and tweaking.**

Let's walk through these steps one by one.

### Step 1: Develop Your Keyword List

The first step is to decide which keywords to target. This is done through **keyword research**. Start with the keyword list you created in Module 1.

(If you haven't created a keyword list, re-read the "Keywords Are Key" section in the Module 1 Learning Guide and get that done now.)

Use an online keyword tool to research the search volume and competition for each keyword on your list. (See **Keyword Tools in My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex**.) Look for keywords that:

- your ideal prospects would search to find a business like yours, and
- have significant search volume (hundreds per month and up), but
- have relatively low competition.

Check the competition ratings by running a Google search on each keyword. For keyword phrases, use quotation marks around the phrase. Phrases with relatively fewer total results (50,000 or less) have less competition. Then click "Related Searches" in the left column of your Google results page to get more keyword ideas.

Log the results of this research in a spreadsheet or table, and use them to target your 5-15 best keywords. You can always add more later.

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If all your keywords are coming up as high competition, try using longer, more specific phrases. If you target the most highly competitive keywords, you won't reach page 1 for a long time. More specific phrases that have less competition (referred to as "long tail" keywords) are easier to rank for.

#### Step 2: Optimize "on-page"

Once you have your targeted keywords, **optimize the pages of your site** for those keywords. On-page optimization has two layers: a human-readable layer and a machine-readable layer.

You have already optimized the **human-readable layer** of the content you wrote in the last two modules, by giving your keywords prominence on the page. Make this a habit in everything you write for your site.

#### Give your keywords *prominence on the page* by using them in:

- the page or post title,
- headings,
- body text that is
  - emphasized, or
  - early in the page, and
- the anchor text of links (to pages on your site).

Both human visitors and search engine spiders will give extra weight to words that are emphasized in these ways. The spiders also pay attention to the **machine-readable layer** of your pages, which your human visitors (mostly) don't see. WordPress and other blog platforms will help you optimize this layer; if you are not on one of those platforms, this work will require tweaking your site's HTML code.

At this layer, you'll use your keywords in:

- page URLs,
- image ALT text, and
- meta tags.

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**Don't overdo it.** Keep your machine-readable keywords moderate in quantity and relevant to the human-readable content of the page.

It's essential for your site to have a search-engine-friendly **sitemap page** and **"404 error" page**, so the spiders can easily navigate to and from every page.

If you're building a blog, use keywords in the names of your categories and tags. Be sure your designer installs a good **SEO plugin** – *and use it*. Your SEO plugin gives you fields on the editing dashboard that make it easy to add a meta title, description and keywords to every post before you publish it.

- Use your post title as the **meta title**, or edit it slightly to get your keywords within the first 60 characters (which is all most search engines will display).
- The **description** is what shows in search engine results (limited to about 160 characters), so make sure it entices readers to click through to your post.

Optimizing on-page won't start to help until the spiders find and index your site. The reliable way to get indexed is to **get inbound links to your site** from elsewhere on the web. That's also the next step for improving your search engine rankings.

### Step 3: Win the Popularity Contest

It may seem like you have no control over the links "out there" that point to your site, but that's not true. In fact, just about **any other traffic strategy you adopt will also build links**.

- Build links to your site by:
  - promoting your articles on social networks,
  - commenting or guest posting on other blogs,
  - submitting your articles to an article directory,
  - adding videos to your YouTube channel.
- Review the list of actions in *Link to Your Site* under *High Touch Traffic Generation* above, and implement any that you haven't covered yet.

Whenever appropriate, **use keywords as the anchor text of inbound links**. That will get you the most juice from the link. But be mindful of any rules of the site

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owner or considerations of etiquette (such as not promoting yourself in comments on another writer's blog).

Do a Google search for "link building strategies" and you'll find dozens more techniques. Here are a few that I haven't mentioned before:

- If you have a page on your site that links to resources for your market, contact some of those resources and see if they will give you a **reciprocal link**.
- Use GetListed.org to **claim your local search listing**.
- Submit your site to **web directories**.

Local search listings are designed for storefront businesses, but even if your business is entirely virtual, it's an opportunity to appear on the first page of search results. Local search will only get more important as more people access the Web from smart phones. Before claiming your local listing, check any zoning or licensing requirements for running a business at that location.

Web directories are online indexes that list websites by category. The big two are Yahoo! [dir.yahoo.com] and the Open Directory Project (known as DMOZ) [dmoz.org]. The Yahoo! directory is a paid listing. DMOZ is free, but it's run by volunteer editors and often takes a long time after your listing is submitted to publish it. The process is a bit tedious and time consuming, but it's worth submitting your site for the high quality inbound links.

There are many smaller web directories. If you find one that is important to your target market, list there too. You can also get a listing by joining your local Chamber of Commerce, or other business association that publishes an online directory.

#### Step 4: Track and Repeat

The fourth step is to **measure your results**. This brings you full circle, as you use what you learn to deepen your keyword research, tweak your on-page optimization, and focus your link-building strategy. Then you measure again, and tweak again.

You can track your site's ranking for specific keywords using an online rank checking tool (see **My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex**). But you need to know

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more than how your site ranks for specific keywords. You need to **answer questions like:**

- How much traffic did you start out with, and how much have you increased that traffic?
- Where did the new visitors come from, and what caused them to visit your site?
- Did the increased traffic generate increased sales? If not, why not?

Of course, the same questions apply to all your traffic strategies. For a look at how to track and understand your traffic metrics, see *How to Tell if Your Traffic Strategy is Working*, later in this learning guide.

#### SEO's Changing Ecosystem

Like everything else on the Web, **the field of search is constantly evolving.**

- Search results increasingly pull content from social networks.
- Search engines are speeding up their results and working on importing more information directly onto the results page.
- More and more users are accessing the Web from mobile devices, and search engines are working to improve their local intelligence.

Meanwhile, there's an ongoing "arms race" between the search engines and certain SEO professionals.

- A few SEO professionals use "black hat" techniques – tricks intended to game the search engine rankings. These consultants often make extravagant claims about their results, especially "guarantees" of quick first page rankings. Search engines will eventually penalize or ban sites that rely on black hat techniques. Stay away from them.
- Some sites that don't use black hat still manage to earn high search rankings for low quality content. "Content farms" are large sites that pay low rates to freelance writers for articles aimed at specific keywords. They gain high rankings by aggregating and optimizing this content, and then serve ads to the resulting traffic. Google hates this, and has tweaked its algorithm to reward "high-quality" sites – sites with original, in-depth content.

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Whatever happens next, it's a good bet that **quality relevant information will continue to be what the search engines look for**. If your site is building a library of valuable content specifically crafted for a niche market that you specialize in serving, you are showing Google a mark of quality.

Success with SEO takes patience, persistence and a willingness to experiment. Page 1 results have to be developed slowly, over the life of your site. Take everything with a grain of salt, ask lots of questions, measure your results, and go with what works for you.

Know that the landscape will keep changing. If you have found a good SEO consultant, hang onto them. If you are doing it yourself, prepare to keep learning.

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#### Working with Promotional Partners

What if your competitors started referring business to you? That may sound unlikely, but in online marketing it is routine.

Service providers who market online often have warm collegial relationships and promote each other constantly, even if they are in the same market. That reflects a win-win attitude, and a recognition that there is more to be gained by sharing your audience than by trying to hoard it.

Promotional partnerships can generate substantial revenue, but there's a better reason to do it – because **it's the fastest way to build your email list** (short of buying a list, which I don't recommend).

So it is worthwhile to **cultivate relationships with service providers and thought leaders who overlap your market**, whether their offerings compete with yours or not. Chances are you'll also find them to be heartfelt, helpful people who are fun to hang out with.

Reciprocal marketing arrangements fall across a wide spectrum, from doing someone a simple favor, to investing substantially in promoting another service provider.

Colleagues may share your content with their audience simply because they like your stuff and it serves their market. Examples of this are guest posting on other blogs and sharing your content with spheres of influence in your niche (covered under *Attract Your Audience* in the *Marketing with Content* section above).

You can take this further by cultivating **referral partnerships** with other service providers. To do this:

- Find people you can recommend enthusiastically for their specific service. Connect and ask them how you can help, what kind of clients they are looking for. Send them clients when you get the chance.
- Make sure your referral partners know *specifically* who you serve and how you make a big difference in their lives. If they are fuzzy about this, they won't send you referrals. Give them your tagline or Unique Benefit Statement.

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- Whenever you get a referral, make a *personal* contact with your referral partner (not an email) to express your gratitude.

The next step up the spectrum is to *motivate* others to promote your programs by offering them a percentage commission on sales they refer to you. To do this, you'll need to track which sales originated from them.

If you take credit card payments through an online shopping cart (or an outsourced e-commerce service like ClickBank), you can set up an **affiliate program** to automate this process. Any good shopping cart system will include a module that:

- registers affiliates and assigns them an affiliate link,
- tracks which affiliate link a visitor clicked to arrive on your site, and
- credits that visitor's purchase to the correct affiliate.

The high-investment end of the spectrum is what I call **promotional partnerships** (also called joint ventures). Promotional partners get a sales commission *and also* the expectation of reciprocity. You promote my program to your list, and later I'll promote your program to my list. This is where fast list building happens.

Affiliates can earn a commission with little effort – putting an affiliate link up on a resources page, sending out a couple of tweets, or talking to one person. Promotional partners really get behind your offering, investing their reputation and marketing resources to help you sell it.

Different industries and markets have different customs. The online information industry has embraced reciprocal marketing to the point that promotional partnerships are routine. In your industry, you may be the pioneer who introduces the idea to your colleagues.

**Full scale promotional partnerships require an automated sales process and affiliate system** – so this strategy only applies if you:

- sell a product or group program online, and
- take payments through an online shopping cart or an e-commerce service like ClickBank.

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##### Affiliate Programs and Full Promotional Partnerships

If you want to work toward full scale promotional partnerships with the potential to build your list fast:

- **Start looking for your promotional partners early.** It's never too soon to look around for potential partners. Part of getting to know your market is cultivating relationships with other service providers in the space.
- **Set up your online payments and affiliate system.** You'll need it for this kind of partnership.
- **Be patient.** You'll need your own list (at least a small one) to get far with this technique – and small lists usually build slowly.

Affiliates earn standard levels of sales commission, and some programs apply the commission to the client's set-up fee only, not recurring fees. So you're not likely to bring in substantial revenues just by putting a few affiliate links up on your site.

But when a provider that I recommend offers an affiliate program, I sign up for it, because I like to be part of the team for products I think are great. The money doesn't hurt, but it doesn't change who I recommend, or deter me from recommending anyone else.

If you promote someone who will pay you a commission, **the FTC requires you to disclose that you're an affiliate.** Just say it plainly – "I'm an affiliate of XYZ." It's an opportunity to explain why you feel good about endorsing them. And full disclosure is part of treating your list with respect.

I *offer* an affiliate program because I want my loyal fans to share the reward when they help me create more loyal fans. Having an affiliate system also sets me up for doing full promotional partnerships.

Promotional partners often earn high percentages, so:

- Selling your offering through promotional partners takes a bite out of your revenue per sale – but it can give your sales a substantial boost.
- Promoting a joint venture partner's program to your list can make you real money on just a few sales – but it takes much more work than just putting an affiliate link on your site.

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#### How Promotional Partnerships Work

When approaching a potential promotional partner, don't lead with how they can help you. Ask what you can do for them first – and follow through with no expectations about what you will receive in return. Later you can share with them what you're doing, and find out if they are interested in working with you. It may take a few tries to mesh your promotional calendar with theirs.

**Promoting your partner's program will require an active campaign.** You'll send out emails inviting your list to their videos or teleseminar. You may agree to interview them, or offer a bonus to your people who buy their program. All of this has to be planned and set up with your partner.

See slide 15 in the slideshow: **Examples of Traffic Generation Techniques** for a screen shot of the registration page Bill Baren put up when I interviewed him to promote his "Masters of Client Enrollment" program. Slide 16 shows a shot of an email that I sent publicizing that call.

The promotional campaign includes some kind of "free taste" (an interview, teleclass or video series) that requires opting in. When your partner markets your offering, this opt-in is what will build your list – so pay attention. Your "free taste" should be attractive in its own right, as well as enticing people to enroll in your program.

**Make your "free taste" really mouth-watering, because that's how you will build your list.**

#### Choose Your Friends Wisely

Set up criteria for when you will partner with other providers. My first filter is simple:

**Do I feel the potential partner delivers high quality with integrity?**

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There's no substitute for firsthand experience. If you've experienced your partner's program, you can authentically say what it did for you. If you haven't, you have to rely on what you know about your partner. Don't promote something that doesn't meet your criteria. It's not worth risking your own integrity.

Ideally your partner will be offering products or services that don't *directly* compete with yours, but you'll have to decide how far to push that.

In a full scale promotional partnership, **your primary motivation is to build your list**, so you want to work with partners who can bring a substantial number of visitors to an opt-in page. That usually means someone with an email list.

Of course, most candidates will want *you* to already have a list of a certain size before they will joint venture with you. So this strategy relies on a bootstrap approach:

- First, build up your list organically using the methods covered earlier in this learning guide.
- Then, find partners who are about at your level, and work your way up by offering a really attractive free taste that will entice lots of their followers to opt in.

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#### Paying for Traffic

This learning guide is focused on free traffic strategies (meaning that you don't pay anyone for visitors – not that there won't be costs). But if you have the budget and the savvy, you can build your traffic levels faster by paying for traffic through online advertising.

The options are endless, but here's a sample of the top choices:

- **Search Engine Marketing (aka pay-per-click):** You can pay Google for the “sponsored” search results that show up above the organic results and in the right column.
- **Promoted Tweets:** Twitter displays “promoted” tweets at the top of its results for keyword searches.
- **Facebook Ads:** You can buy the little ads that appear under “Sponsored” in the right column.
- **LinkedIn Ads:** Similar to Facebook Ads. These platforms allow you to target users based on their demographic data and activity on the network, rather than the keywords they are searching.
- **Facebook Sponsored Stories:** Similar to promoted tweets. You can pay for a regular Facebook post endorsing your link to appear in the “Sponsored” space for the poster's friends – so it persists on the friend's page instead of scrolling into oblivion.
- **YouTube Promoted Videos:** You can pay for your videos or your channel to top YouTube keyword searches.
- **Article directories:** Article directories have advertising programs that allow you to pay for your article to get increased prominence on the site.

Pricing for online advertising generally is:

- **per click** – you pay the platform (such as Google) a small amount for each user that clicks through to your site from the link in your ad, or
- **per impression** – you pay for each time a user sees your ad.

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Prices range from pennies per click to over \$50 per click. The price is set through bidding by all the advertisers targeting a particular keyword or demographic. You set the ceiling on what you are willing to pay – but the platform tells you the range your bid needs to fall into, in order for your ad to get served to its users.

**There's a good chance you'll never need a paid traffic strategy.**

Even if you're interested in online advertising, I recommend starting with your choice of free traffic strategies, and developing experience there before venturing into paid traffic.

Free strategies may be slower, but they can be just as effective at lower cost. And there's a lot of **overlap in methodology**, so your experience using free strategies will help you make the most of your advertising investment. For example:

- Paying per click or per impression puts a premium on **knowing what a click or an impression is worth to you**. To know that, you have to measure how many users from a particular traffic source it takes you to make a sale. That's the kind of thing that working with free traffic can teach you.
- **Targeting keywords** for search advertising is much like targeting keywords for organic SEO.
- In online advertising, it's often important to direct the click-through traffic to a landing page that the platform considers appropriate. Experience **working with landing pages** is helpful.

But if you're still eager to get into the paid traffic game, go ahead and try it out. It's easy to stay within your budget if you keep a close eye on your campaign, so you control the risk.

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#### How to Tell if Your Traffic Strategy is Working

All of your traffic strategies are little better than shooting in the dark if you can't tell what's working and what's not working.

Remember these questions from the section on *Getting Traffic from Search Engines* –

*How much traffic did you start out with, and how much have you increased that traffic? Where did the new visitors come from, and what caused them to visit your site? Did the increased traffic generate increased sales? If not, why not?*

**These questions apply to all traffic strategies.** Answering them is the realm of website analytics programs. There are various programs, but the one to start with is Google Analytics. (See **My Cutting Edge Resource Rolodex**.) It's widely used, robust, and free. But there *will* be setup costs and a learning curve.

Google Analytics must be set up correctly to give valid data, so have it done by someone who knows what they're doing. If you hire an SEO consultant, this should be one of their first tasks, so you have a baseline to measure your traffic building efforts against.

#### **Don't stress about getting this done before you launch.**

Google Analytics requires a significant level of traffic to work to its full potential, and *you already know enough* to get started on your traffic strategies.

When you are ready, analyzing your traffic will take the process of attracting website visitors to a whole new level.

#### Reading the Numbers

Google Analytics shows more information than most of us will ever use. The key to making sense of it is to **put it in the context of your traffic strategies and conversion goals**. To get started, go to your Google Analytics reports and look at the last 30 days. Look for what the numbers are telling you about the questions quoted above.

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The most important rule of thumb about these statistics is – **it's all relative**. What matters most is what you *do* with the data, and how that affects your results.

- **Visits:** Figure out what caused any spikes in traffic. Can you reproduce them? Your hope is that overall traffic per month will keep trending up. If you see a downturn, figure out why.
- **Pages/Visit and Bounce Rate:** The more you can decrease bounce rates and increase pages per visit, the "stickier" your site. Stickiness increases conversions.
- **Traffic Sources:** Pay attention to where you are getting the most traffic from, so you can keep it coming. Your best opportunities to build traffic are the sites that are sending lots of visits with low bounce rates. If the bounce rate is high and time on site is low for a referring site, you don't want to spend time promoting yourself there.
- **Keywords:** Also look at bounce rates for each keyword. A high bounce rate from a search engine tells you that your content is not relevant to the keywords being searched. People aren't finding what they are looking for. If you are targeting that keyword, you need to revise your content for a better match.
- **Content / Top content:** These pages attract your audience and offer marketing opportunities. Think about why people are going to the high traffic pages and not the low traffic pages. Produce more content like what's on the high traffic pages.
- **Top landing pages:** Look for where the traffic is coming from, and optimize the landing pages for that traffic. Make more pages like these.
- **Top exit pages:** If people are leaving the home page, or pages where there is a call to action, look for problems with those pages.

If you have **Ecommerce Goals** set up, you will also be able to see conversion statistics for each goal, and a Funnel Visualization report that tells you how many visitors started the conversion process, how many completed it, and where the

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others dropped out along the way. Use this report to help you repair "holes in the net".

To round out your traffic tracking, there are a couple of other places to analyze your statistics:

- Your email service provider offers analytics on the open and click through rates for every email you send. Monitoring these rates will give you clues about how to improve them.
- If you use online advertising, keep an eye on the impressions and click through rates statistics for your ad campaigns, and watch your daily spend numbers.

When you are ready, analyzing your statistics will give you objective data on what works and what doesn't work to drive traffic to your site. That's valuable information for any online business.

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#### Launch Your Site

Remember when you set the target launch date for your new website way back in Module 1? Well, the moment has arrived!

Whether you met your target date is not as important as what you have accomplished. You have momentum now, so use it to get your website seen by as many eyes as possible.

All that remains before you go live is to prepare the launch itself. Most people will simply announce the new site to their existing circle of influence, but you may decide you want to spread the word more widely.

#### Quick Task Alert!

Read this section and plan your launch. Then get all the elements of your launch campaign in place before you give your designer the ok to go live.

#### Announce Your Site

Email your mentors and your **influential friends and colleagues** to let them know your site is live. Make these emails personal. Ask for their feedback on your site. Drop the seed that you'd like to be included in their recommended resources, or tapped for any upcoming topic or program where your expertise would be of value. Offer to do the same in exchange.

Announce your site to any **social networks** where you have a following. Use multiple posts, and spread them out so other posts (that are not self-promotional) fall in between. Keep your tone appropriate to the network. Post an update announcing your site to any groups you belong to, and to your influential friends and colleagues (if this is appropriate to your relationship).

If you belong to any **member forums**, announce your site there. Let them know you've launched, and ask for feedback, comments, Tweets and shares.

**If you already have an email list**, announce that your new site is live and invite them to check it out. Ask for their feedback. Ask them to spread the word. A week or two later, send out a short and sweet reminder message ("In case you didn't see this ...").

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Announce your new freebie too. Send them to the download page to pick up a copy, and invite them to click around the site while they're there.

Don't worry if your list is tiny right now. With your enticing freebie and the traffic strategies you are implementing, your list will grow with time.

**If you don't have a list yet**, you can send your email announcement manually to people you know. They don't have to be in your market, if you think they might pass the word on to someone who is. But if you take this approach, **use caution**:

- Only invite people you know. Exclude anyone you've sent an individual email to, as described above.
- Keep their email addresses private by putting your own address in the TO field and theirs in the BCC field.
- Internet Service Providers have limits on how many addresses they will send the same email to at one time, so check with your ISP.
- Send this invitation out only once. You don't want to be perceived as a spammer. Make it clear that you will not email them again unless they opt in.

Once you have a list of subscribers who have opted in, don't use this manual technique again.

**In general, never send a mass email to someone who has not subscribed to your list or given you explicit permission to subscribe them. It's a turn-off, and in some cases it's against the law.**

### Get Inbound Links

Unless you have decided *not* to pursue an SEO strategy, the sooner your site gets indexed by the search engines, the better. The key to getting indexed is **getting inbound links**. Review *Step 3: Win the Popularity Contest* under *Getting Traffic from Search Engines* above, and make getting links a part of your launch plan.

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#### Reach Beyond Your Circle

There's nothing wrong with limiting your announcement to the circle where you are already known. But if you want to make a bigger splash with your site launch, it's time to get creative.

Review the *High Touch Traffic Generation* section above, and look back over all the traffic generation plans you've made in this module. Where do you see the **biggest opportunities to get in front of a group of people in your niche market** who don't already know you?

- Set your launch up to dovetail with your best opportunity, and share your announcement there.
- If the event you select is virtual, create a mini-campaign to promote that event online, such as through social media (if you or a supportive colleague have a following), or a guest blog post.
- When you make your announcement, remember to send your audience to your site *to get something* they will perceive as valuable.

I *don't* recommend using paid advertising to announce your site, unless you have successful experience with paid traffic strategies. When you venture into pay-per-click territory, it's best to start with a for-fee offer that will bring a measurable return on your investment.

#### Before Visitors Arrive, Do Your Housekeeping

Before you go live, take a step back and make sure you are ready for what's coming when your new site hits the public Web:

- You have thoroughly tested the user experience on your site – opt-in, downloads, online purchasing and delivery. You (and several friends who use different browsers) have navigated through the whole site without any hitches, reading every word and clicking on every link.
- You understand how to use your email service provider's interface to email your subscribers and manage your lists. Any auto-responder messages have been set up and tested.
- If you are building a blog, you are up to speed on how to use your blog platform's editing dashboard to publish posts and manage comments.

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You have previewed the posts you will launch with to see how they look on your site.

- You have a writing calendar in place and your first few weeks of blog posts or ezines ready to go.

Consider “soft launching” your site *before* you publicize it. This means your designer will make your site live a week or so ahead of your announcement – which allows you to test it under live traffic conditions before relying on it to deliver publicly.

Remember, **driving traffic to your site is only the first half of the job.** You also care about what they do when they get there. Ask yourself whether your website is as good as you can make it at:

- Enticing them to stick around and delve deeper into your content (referred to as website “stickiness”).
- Converting visitors into subscribers, and (if you are selling programs on your site) converting subscribers into buyers.

But don’t get hung up on making it perfect. Improving your site’s stickiness and conversion is an ongoing process, just as driving traffic is. The only way to test it is to get it out there and start attracting visitors who are in your niche market. So...

Take a deep breath, and **give your designer the ok to take your site live.** And then, take a break and celebrate –

**Congratulations! You have launched your client winning website!**