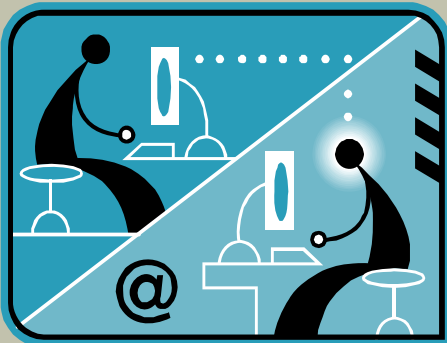


Making Sure Your Web Site is Ready for

BUSINESS



Making sure your web site is ready for business

Never list or index your web site with search engines or directories until your web site is completely finished and working properly.

One of the many reasons for this is the fact that once you are listed in a search engine or similar service, changing your listing can be extremely difficult. Unless you like problems, do not index your web site until it is ready for business.

Most search engines receive thousands of requests a day from individuals who want to make changes to their web site listing. These changes range from changing a web address (URL) where a page may be located, to the title of a listing. These requests for changes are at the bottom of any major search engines priority list. In most cases you are better off trying to completely remove your listing rather than trying to change one. The process of changing a listing is called re-indexing.

Another common sense reason for having your web site completely finished and functioning before indexing it with a search engine is that your web site is a direct reflection of you and your business. Would you let someone into your place of business knowing that there was no one to help that person? Would you let someone into your store without products on your shelves? It would be like answering your door in just your underwear. Don't be caught with your pants down!

Advertising your web site when it is not complete or functioning will only aggravate the person who decided to stop by. The last thing you want to do in business is anger a customer especially if that person took the time to seek you out. There is nothing stopping that prospective customer from going to your competition, whose web site is working and complete.

This is very common among new web sites. Everyone is so anxious to get online that even some Fortune 500 companies forget this basic rule. Think back to the last time you went to a web site only to see an Under Construction graphic. How did that make you feel about the person or company? Remember, your web site is a direct reflection of you and your business. Act professional!

There are a lot more reasons why you should not index a web site until it is completely finished, some so

important that it could mean the difference between search engines indexing your site or not.

When to add your web site to search engines

Never index your web site until you have a complete understanding of how each of the major search engines work. Why is this so important that we made it number two on list of Valuable Tips? Simple, 99% of all Internet users use only the top seven search engines to find something. Most search engines only display the results of the first 10 or 20 web sites relevant to whatever keyword or phrase to search for. If your web site is not found toward the top of these search results, then odds of someone finding and thus going to your web site, diminish exponentially. As stated in other reputable sources on the subject of search engine placement research, getting proper placement on search engines is as important as the web site itself. For if people can't find your web site, and then what's the point of having one?

What most people fail to understand is that each search engine is different in what they look for on a web page in order to make it relevant toward a certain keyword or phrase. Because of this you must make certain that your web site meets the criteria set forth by that particular search engines' indexing algorithm in order to ensure proper positioning. For example did you know that AltaVista has a limit to the number of characters you can use in the title of your web site? Or did you know that

Unless you know all these differences, and make the proper modifications on you web page(s), then the odds of your web site being found on a major search engine is close to non-existent.

If you hired a company to design your web site or are thinking about having a company design your web site, more than likely they are going to use an URL submission service. Ask them to make sure that the URL submission service they are about to use allows you to make independent submissions. There are a lot of different products and services which allow you to do this, some better than others.

To sum up this tip, remember to properly index a web page with a search engine you must know what makes that search engine tick. In most cases, only small modifications need to be made to a web page in order to achieve proper positioning. If you are new to the Internet and feel self conscious about computers and what it takes to get your web site indexed correctly, then pick up a copy of our guide and let one of the above mentioned companies help in speeding up the process of indexing your web site.

All in all, try to arm yourself with the information you need to make an educated decision about this new form of marketing called the World Wide Web. Remember, your web site is an extension of your business and only you are capable of making the decisions that will ultimately bring you success or failure. There is only one person who truly cares about the outcome of your business, and the fact that you are reading this proves it!

Make sure your web site loads fast and is user friendly.

When having someone create your web site or if designing it yourself, make certain that you test your web pages for speed. The biggest complaint on the Internet today is that web pages take too long to load. A few simple tricks are making sure you don't include everything about your web site on one page. Create a

separate web page for each of the basic elements, who, what, where, when and why. By doing so you make your web site easier to navigate and also decrease the amount of time it takes to load each page.

Another important thing to remember is not to overload your pages with too many graphics. A lot of web developers seem to forget that there are over 10 million people using America Online and a huge percentage are still using 14.4 baud modems. Ask yourself who your target audience is. Is your target audience using only High Speed Data Transfer Lines? Probably not!



Remember that when ever you request to see a web page, you are literally transferring all the elements of that web page to your computer. The more things to transfer, the longer the wait. Take a look at this scenario. Assume that your home page is made up of one graphic. Let's assume that this graphic is 50K in size and of a *.gif file format. If you were to convert the same image to a *.jpg file format, this same file could be reduced as far as 50% in size, thus making it 25K without losing any image quality. By making the appropriate change to the web page that contains this graphic would mean that it would load twice as fast! There are certain cases where you have no choice but to use *.gif files, such as when creating transparent images or image maps, but in most cases you should always try to make your images as small as possible. Speed is crucial.

Treat your web site just as you would a flyer or television commercial. The attention span of your audience is in most cases only seconds. Make

them count. People in general are impatient. They want the information now! Surveys we have conducted show that people who have to wait a long time to view a page will simply click on the stop button and go elsewhere. Don't be a victim of this and think ahead before using too many "large" graphics.

Never make anyone search for your phone or address

Not including an email address or phone number on all of your web pages is a common mistake and one that could cost you dearly.

Suppose you went to a web site and wanted to place an order or perhaps had a question regarding a product or service. Would you want to wait and load page after page in search of an email address or phone number?

Would you take out a television commercial, radio spot or even create a flyer without giving your target audience a way to reach you? Your web site is no different. Always include either your email address, phone number or better yet both, on all your web pages.

If you have a Guest Book or a page set up as a form to receive comments, be sure to include a link to an email address. Many people don't want to fill out a form in order to ask a simple question or to give you a compliment. Try to make it as easy as possible for your visitors to reach you. Remember the Internet is a marketing tool, treat it as one!

