

FACT SHEET: PROMOTING YOUR WEBSITE

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Most dot coms, and many bricks and mortar businesses are disappointed when they venture online, as they forget that having a website is like having another shop, just the rent is cheaper.

Just like opening a real shop, or office you need to let people know where you are, and how you solve their problems. If we were opening a new shop, we would:

- Put a notice or plaque outside the shop.
- Get it listed in the Yellow Pages.
- Send a letter or brochure to all our current clients telling them about it.
- Get some advertising in the local papers, radio and TV.
- Advertise in the relevant magazines.
- Advertise on local billboards.
- Put the address on your letterhead, receipts and any other stationary you give out.

The balance between each of the above, would depend on the product or service you are selling, a specialist product would need more targeted promotion than a mainstream product.

The internet is different though, isn't it? Yes it is, so how do we change our strategy to promote our website, what do we do instead? Well to promote our site on the internet we:

- Get a catchy domain name. Consider Amazon.co.uk for example.
- Include the site in a directory, Yahoo! or DMOZ for example.
- We email all our current clients and tell them about our website.
- We advertise on other local sites that are relevant to us.
- We announce our site on the relevant newsgroups and websites.
- We put our website address in our email signature.

Does this list sound familiar? It should, it's a very slight rewrite of the first list, I hope that's enough to inspire you to review both lists again, and make sure that you work through both, to get the website's address promoted both on and offline.

Of course it doesn't end there; the internet offers us several other ways to promote our site. We can ask visitors to refer a friend, by providing a simple way for them to email our website address and details of our goods or services to their friends and colleagues.

We should encourage visitors to the site to sign up to a regular newsletter, which we can use to give them details of the latest special offers, or informational content that they might find useful.

Our site must be easy to use, and if possible we want to include some sticky content, that's content that makes it worthwhile returning to the site regularly. This could be in the form of industry news, regular promotions or competitions for prizes.

The site should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is search engine friendly, and that we make it relevant to the keywords that we expect people to use to look for the site. We might even explore pay per click advertising for these keywords.

We can search the internet ourselves looking for sites that compliment ours, and we can contact the webmasters to see if we can exchange links with their site, allowing some of their traffic to visit us and vice versa.

Having done all that, we need to exercise patience. The internet is a powerful communications device, allowing us to reach a wider range of customers; it is a way of complimenting traditional business practices, rather than replacing them.

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This fact sheet is based on extracts of the book
"DOT NOT, Getting Your Business Online"
by John Crickett.
For more information see: www.dotnot.co.uk