

# Web Marketing Basics

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This is a collection of some basic articles on beginning to do business on the Web that have been reprinted from *Web Marketing Today* newsletter.

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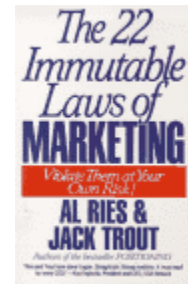
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## The Five Mutable Laws of Web Marketing

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-commerce Consultant  
reprinted from [Web Marketing Today, Issue 55, April 1, 1999](#)

What are the foundational principles of Web Marketing? I've come up with five. Only five.

This is embarrassing. Al Ries and Jack Trout have their "[22 Immutable Laws of Marketing](#)" (HarperBusiness, 1994), and what do I offer? Five measly laws, and mine are mutable, flexible, still growing and changing. But they form the backbone of present-day Web marketing lore, so I'll share them with you. And when they become immutable, you'll be the first to know. Trust me.



They are:

1. [The Law of the Dead End Street](#)
2. [The Law of Giving and Selling](#)
3. [The Law of Trust](#)
4. [The Law of Pull and Push](#)
5. [The Law of the Niche](#)

### 1. The Law of the Dead End Street

The first law goes like this: **Setting up a website is like building a storefront on a dead-end street. If you want any shoppers, you must give them a reason to come.**

You've heard too many times "If you build it, they will come." We know that doesn't work on the Internet. But why do novices again and again build websites without the least thought to a viable marketing plan? Maybe it's because FrontPage promises you a "professional looking site" and Microsoft hasn't yet offered WebMarket 2000. (Don't worry, they probably will pretty soon. Hi, Bill!)

The most wonderful site in the world is wasted unless people stop by to admire and purchase. It's the same reason that most great craftsmen aren't millionaires; they've learned to make a great product, but don't have a clue about marketing.

So the first question you need to ask yourself, even before you build your company's site, is: How will we get people to visit? Perhaps your marketing plan will look like this:

- Banner ads for two months to boost name recognition.
- Search engine positioning on HotBot and Excite in the first quarter, to include Infoseek, Lycos, and AltaVista in the second quarter.
- Reciprocal links with our industry organization and a paid listing in their directory.
- A newsworthy contest in the third quarter, for which we'll try to get full media coverage through press releases and calls from a PR agency.
- A company newsletter that carries industry news rather than just company drivel, to begin in the fourth quarter (though you should start collecting e-mail addresses now).

Then decide which of these activities to carry out in-house and which to outsource, attach a dollar value to each, and provide for them in your marketing budget. Your marketing plan may look much different than this, but you must give visitors a reason to come.

Many sites I visit are pretty slim. Yes, they give information about the company and its services, but nothing you'd want to bookmark. What compelling content can you put on your site that will make someone want to return? Content is primary.

With excellent content, when you ask for a reciprocal link, you don't have to plead, "Link to us because we're the greatest." You can say, "Link to us because we offer everything a buyer needs to know to select the right lighting fixture." When you offer a public service, you suddenly become newsworthy. Trade journals and magazines begin to mention you, and traffic follows. Give visitors a reason to come, and they will.

## **2. The Law of Giving and Selling**

An important element of Web culture is "free stuff." The Law of Giving and Selling says: **Attract visitors to your site by giving away something free, and then try to sell something additional to those who visit.**

You've seen this scenario played out in countless brick-and-mortar stores. "Free wool scarves to the first 50 people who visit our store for our annual One-Day Ski Sale on December 1." Give them something free, then try to sell them something.

Here's how we used this strategy. In mid-1995 Wilson Internet Services launched our website design business with a goal of attracting business nationally via the Web. At that time even *local* website designers were considered oddities. How could we succeed at a *national* level? First, I identified our most likely customers: small to medium size businesses. Second, I asked: What do they want to know? Of course, they wondered how to construct a website. But that's what I wanted to sell them. They also wanted to know how to market their business on the Web, I reasoned.

So I scoured the rather sparse offering of articles on Web marketing available at that time, and began a link list of about 20 articles and resources. Then every month, without fail, I would scour the Web again looking for more materials. The [Web Marketing Info Center](http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/) (<http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/>) has grown into a resource containing links to 2,000+ articles and resources, the largest collection of information of its kind on the Web. In addition, I began to write articles explaining to small businesspeople how to market their site. Some of those articles were linked to by major sites and brought many visitors. We have become a Destination Site -- on my more heady days, I like to consider us a Portal Site to the literature on Web marketing -- and our business has prospered.

Here's the simple strategy: (1) Attract people to your site by giving away lots of free information. Then (2) let people know about your products and services. Learn this rhythm of giving something away, and selling something. The strategy works. But to sell, you need to master a third law.

### 3. The Law of Trust

Assuming your products or services are priced competitively and are of good quality, your most significant sales barrier is trust. **Trust is the essential lubricant of Web business; without trust, business grinds to a halt.**

An established store brand name comes from hundreds of positive impressions built by expensive advertising campaigns. These ads purchase brand trust. But if you're a small business you can't afford such advertising. Nevertheless, you can build trust by means of your website in multiple ways. First, anchor your business in time and space by giving a full address and phone number. If you have an office or brick-and-mortar store, show a photograph. Better yet, show photos of yourself or your staff. Now your customers view you as real people rather than some faceless entity who-knows-where.

You build trust by selling well-known brand name products, by displaying clear shipping and return policies, by joining nationally-respected organizations, and by offering guarantees. You build trust with a customer-friendly navigation system and intuitive interface, and an SSL secure server for credit card transactions. You gain credibility by having a professionally designed site, rather than something your teenage son cooked up on the weekends.

Once you've established trust, sales result. You also build trust by repeated contact with your visitors. We describe this in a fourth law.

#### **4. The Law of Pull and Push**

The Fourth Mutable Law of Web marketing is: **Pull people to your site by your attractive content, then push quality information to them regularly via e-mail.**

Websites, by their very nature are passive creatures, like fireside dogs. They just lie there wagging their tail listlessly and smiling wanly until someone enters the door. (Then the best website dogs come alive and propel you to the desired destination and action.)

E-mail messages, on the other hand, are active animals like St. Bernard Rescue Dogs, always ready to go where you send them and deliver a

refreshing cask of information, and an invitation to return to your website to see the newest thing you have to offer.

A website tries to attract you by *pulling* you in with the promise of content, while e-mail *pushes* its message into your previous visitors' mailboxes. Most businesses can't survive on one-time sales only. The cost of customer acquisition is too high for just a single sale. They need to draw satisfied customers back again and again for repeat sales. The Law of Pull and Push accomplishes this vital task.

Getting an invitation to send e-mail to your visitors is key to this strategy. Include a form that will collect their e-mail address. To convince your visitor to give you his e-mail address, however, you need to promise two things: (1) that you'll e-mail him something of value, and (2) that you won't sell or rent his address to another company, hence the need for a clear privacy policy. But once the visitor has given you permission to e-mail additional information, you have wonderful marketing leverage.

How do you use it? If someone in your company has writing skills, you might develop a monthly newsletter (see our article "[How to Develop an E-Mail Newsletter](http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/newsletter.htm)" <http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/newsletter.htm>). Beware. It takes real commitment and self-discipline to send out the newsletter regularly. But a regular newsletter will give a tremendous boost to your business, and will build your trust level with customers as well as bring them back to your site again and again. All of a sudden your company has top-of-mind position. Do this month after month and your brand recognition grows. If you're not a writer, you can send out monthly specials, or news blurbs you garner (with permission) from other sites. Whatever you do, do it with excellence. Anything less than that will cause your business to lose the confidence you've already gained.

This law, too, has its own rhythm. Pull the customer to your website by attractive power, then push good content and offers to the customer via e-mail to draw them back to your site.

## **5. The Law of the Niche**

The Law of the Niche is last but not least. Let me state it this way: Big businesses like Amazon.com and Wal-Mart have the money and clout to

"own" whole segments of the marketplace. **Small businesses succeed by finding niches that are either unfilled or only partially filled, and filling them with excellence.**

For example, [JustBalls.com](http://www.justballs.com) (<http://www.justballs.com>) saw an unfilled niche in selling sports equipment. Instead of trying to bite off more than they could chew selling the whole range of sports equipment, they looked for a single slice -- balls -- and set up "The Biggest Ball Store on the Net." They sell sports balls, fitness balls, toy balls, and ball stuff. You'll find baseballs, softballs, footballs, volleyballs. If it's a ball they have it. When you think "balls," they want you to remember them, "JustBalls.com" and come to their site. They also own the URLs for Justbaseball, Justfootball, Justbasketball, Justlacrosse -- 27 different sports in all -- in case they want to expand their marketing by sport by sport.

### **Unique Selling Proposition**

The key to this kind of savvy niche marketing is to carefully write a business plan that defines your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This is best stated in a sentence or two. It defines what makes your business unique from every other competitor in your field. It spells out the precise niche you seek to fill, and how you aim to fill it.

I haven't talked personally to Jim Medalia, the owner of JustBalls.com, but their USP is probably something like this: "Justballs is committed to being the absolute best and most comprehensive source for balls on the Web. We provide excellent customer service by purchasing, warehousing, and shipping the products ourselves, rather than relying on a distributor to drop-ship for us." (You can read more about Medalia's well-thought-out concept in an [excellent interview](http://www.emarketer.com/enews/enews_medalia.html) in *eMarketer*, November 23, 1998, [http://www.emarketer.com/enews/enews\\_medalia.html](http://www.emarketer.com/enews/enews_medalia.html))

Contrast that to a phone call I received last month from a wannabe Web proprietor, who asked how much it cost to set up an online store.

"What kind of products do you plan to sell in your store?" I ask.

"Some books and electronic consumer goods," he says.



"Oh!" I reply. In my mind's eye I am trying to visualize this Internet newbie going toe-to-toe with Amazon.com and Wal-Mart.com

I explain the Law of the Niche. "Those niches are pretty well filled already," I say, as gently as I can. "Perhaps you need to define your niche more precisely. What kind of books would you like to offer?"

"Books on building high quality audio systems for maximum performance." (That's what I *wish* the caller had said. *Actually*, he answered, "Ah...." and we didn't talk much longer.)

You see, it is conceivable to build an information center on high quality audio systems that would attract many people in this niche market. You'd offer every book in print. You'd link to articles. You'd host an e-mail discussion list. Perhaps you'd even sell a line or two of components that match this carefully defined clientele. If you developed it with real excellence, the chances are good that you could carve out a profitable business.

But something as nebulous as books and electronic consumer goods? Not going to happen. It lacks a carefully crafted USP.

To succeed in any business -- on the Web, on the street, by mail order, in an office building, any business -- you need to spell out your precise USP. With a USP you can succeed. Without a USP you don't have a prayer -- and that from someone who believes strongly in the power of prayer!

The Law of the Niche isn't any more or less important than the other Immutable Laws of Web Marketing. They're all important. Together they offer you a path towards creating a successful business on the Web.

## **Cultural Clues: Tips to Tailor Your Business to the Internet Culture**

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant  
reprinted from [Web Marketing Today, Issue 55, April 1, 1999](#)

Three words help define the unique culture of the Internet -- "free," "information," and "privacy." Of course, the Internet has changed dramatically from the days it was the sole playground of grad students and computer geeks, but some of the culture has remained. Businesspeople need to understand its peculiarities, and then leverage these to land sales.

### **The Attraction of "Free"**

"Free" has always attracted starving grad students laboring on master's theses from the windowless dungeons of University Library. Perhaps socialist smoke from professors' pipes makes academics believe the world can run on free services, I don't know.

But "free is beautiful" is deeply imbedded in the online culture. Rage that the Internet has been taken over by "Commercial Interests" (spit out those words when you say them) is past, but the expectation of "free" is still with us. (Of course, "free" has been a magic word for direct mail copywriters for decades, but that ruins my grad student myth, so keep it quiet.)

As you plan your company's Internet strategy, "free" should play an important part in it. Offer something free and the world will beat a path to your door. Better yet, offer many things free, and become a Destination Site. Then sell them something while they pass by.

### **Information Is the Currency of the Web**

The quest for information drives the Web. Oh, yes, people like entertainment and Community (be sure to spell Community with a capital C, mind you), but don't underestimate information. Businesspeople and serious shoppers are driven by their need for information far more than their desire for games and chat.

This means that your site must be information rich. Don't worry about offering too much information; there's no such thing. Oh, there's information overload, so you need to offer the information in digestible chunks and provide a carefully designed navigation system to get your visitors quickly where they want to go. But don't skimp on information

Are you annoyed by those companies that don't tell you key details you want to know? Like price, for example?

"We don't want to say everything on the Web," those marketers whine. "We want to force people to give us their phone number so we can make the sale on the phone."

What they're doing, though, is sending potential customers scurrying along to their competitors who understand Internet culture well enough to satiate this hunger for information. Find more subtle ways to encourage visitors to leave you their contact information, like a free report (remember "free"?) or a free subscription to an information-rich newsletter. You don't bludgeon visitors into giving you their contact information. You'll know better how to coax it from them when you understand the third of these cultural clues.

### **Desire for Intimacy with Privacy**

I hate chatrooms. You know the kind -- where CutsyBabe cosyies up to MachoMuscle. What sparks this intimacy is the thick shield of privacy. For all you know CutsyBabe could be a wallflower spinster or a kinky guy. Anonymity allows -- no, encourages -- this human desire *to be known*. Anonymity offers the requisite safety for intimacy to occur.

The take-away lesson here is not to install a chat room on your business site. I've seen few business chatrooms that don't echo when some timid soul inquires, "Is anybody H-E-R-E?" The lesson is: understand your visitor's desire for privacy. If you can do that, your visitor may reveal a great deal about himself.

Write a careful Privacy Policy that respects the privacy of your visitors. If you state in your data collection form something like, "We respect your privacy and never rent or sell our lists," with a link to your full policy, that will allay fears, and you'll increase your sign-up rate substantially. Don't ask

for more information than you absolutely need, but leave space for any comment your visitor desires to communicate.

The reason you find so many rabid anti-spam advocates on the Web is not because their computers came without delete buttons. It's the perception that you've invaded the privacy of their e-mail box without their permission. It doesn't matter whether this Internet cultural value makes sense or not. It exists. Accept it. And don't send unsolicited e-mail unless you care to risk your company's reputation -- and possible lawsuits.

Of course, the Internet culture is more complex than free, information, and privacy, but learn those and you'll be well on your way to speaking Internet without a foreign accent.

## **Understanding the Opportunities for Doing Business on the Web**

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant  
Reprinted from [Web Marketing Today, Issue 55, April 1, 1999](#)

Once there was life without drive-up fast food. Hard to imagine, I know, but true. I called my local Burger King manager and asked, "How much of your business goes out the drive-up window?"

"More than 50%," was the answer.

I expect, though, that to restaurants used to a sit-down business, opening a drive-up window seemed pretty radical. It involved a whole new way of understanding the food store business. But now it's taken for granted among the fast food giants.

Doing business on the Web requires the same kind of quantum leap. It's hard to get your head around it right away, since it is so different from what you've been used to.

My 92-year-old mother won a state championship for typing speed when she was in high school. But we have this conversation occasionally:

"Ralph, just what is it you do?"

"I do business on the Internet, Mom."

"What's the Internet? Is that like broadcasting to people?"

"Well, sort of...."

I get no farther, since she has no real point of comparison. No, I'm not going to introduce the Internet to you. But I hope to convey six opportunities it opens to your business.

### **Opportunity 1: Branch Office**

Newbies see the Internet as advertising. But a business website is better understood as a branch office, a *place* of doing business. It's like opening a second office where you can entertain customers, except this office has the lights on and coffee ready 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

People can stop in at their convenience any time they want and browse through your offerings. They'll

- Read the brochures in the rack by the door,
- Pick up a copy of your "Common Questions People Ask About our Business,"
- Solve their own problems with your detailed Troubleshooting Guide,
- Scribble messages on the pad of question forms you've provided,
- Look at detailed information and specs about each product you offer, and, if you have a vending machine in your lobby,
- Make purchases day or night.

What's the monthly rent? Somewhere between \$20 to \$100 per month for smaller businesses. And the initial build-out of your branch office costs only

a few thousand dollars. Sure, you'll need to remodel every year or two to keep it up-to-date. But that's a small price to pay for the new customers your branch office will bring.

Remember, don't think "advertising," think "branch office," and you'll begin to grasp the Internet opportunity.

### **Opportunity 2: World Market**

I'm amazed how many people are blind to the second business opportunity the Internet offers -- a world market. Not too long ago a medium-size mail order executive told me, "The boss insists that we need to prevent people from other countries from ordering on our new site. We just don't do much international business, and it's a pain to ship outside the country."

I gritted my teeth and tried to smile.

A rapidly increasing number of people around the world use the Internet to purchase items they can't find locally. In early 1999, for example, 1.5 million Chinese now are connected to the Internet, along with half a million from India and a quarter million Malaysians. One million in France are now online, and nearly half the population of Sweden. Israel boasts half a million Internet users, and the list goes on and on.

If you're fast on your feet, you have the opportunity to make some of them your customers. Don't know how to market to those abroad? You'll find lots of free information online (such as <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/global.htm> and <http://www.wilsonweb.com/research/export.htm>). Don't neglect the resources your national government provides. They want to help you bring more money flowing into your country.

Think about it. The Internet provides a small business in Peoria, Illinois, or Istanbul, Turkey, the opportunity to be a global company, with little expenditure except time given to learning.

On the Internet, geography has ceased to be a barrier. A small business market used to be limited to a one hour drive from its store or office. No

more. People now shop a global directory on the Web and let the best site win.

Of course, some products don't lend themselves to a global market. Take pizza, for example. Can you imagine delivery of a flat box containing two-day-old pepperoni with anchovies? Gross! When I first began to write and speak about the Internet in 1995, I'd say, "If you sell pizza, you probably won't do well on the Internet." Then I heard about Pizza Hut in Santa Cruz, California, taking orders from students at the nearby University of California campus. The store hurdled *convenience barriers* (busy signals on a Friday night) and propelled this savvy local businesses to increased sales.

Brainstorm, my friends. Dream! A global opportunity awaits you.

### **Opportunity 3: Direct Sales**

A third opportunity is direct sales, jumping the existing distribution chain that ratchets up prices to the end user.

Many online-only businesses are essentially order-taking front offices. Product fulfillment is through manufacturers and distributors who agree to drop-ship directly to the customer. This way the Web retailer doesn't incur expenses for inventory and warehousing. (Nor does he have the ability for superior customer service, but that's another story.)

A really scary development to many manufacturers is the growing temptation to sell directly on the Web and by-pass the complex distribution chain they have built over many years. The manufacturer doesn't want to anger distributors and dealers. But increasingly, competing manufacturers sell direct from the factory and undercut the price to the end user. For many manufacturers, it's a decision to either sell directly or lose marketshare. Agony! What do you do when the Dell Computer equivalent in your industry sells directly over the Web, pulls in \$14 million per day in revenue, and grows faster than any other competitor? You sweat bullets, and finally bite the bullet. (Oh, the agony of mixed metaphors!)

Direct retail sales via the Internet is growing exponentially. What an opportunity for your business!

### **Opportunity 4: Networking**

Why does a company network its desktop computers? To increase communication, collaboration, and productivity. The Internet networks half the computers in the world!

Think of the possibilities. Now Bern, Switzerland, is closer to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, than ever before. Small businesses partner with others half a continent away to allow both of them to tackle contracts they could never handle alone. Virtual companies operate from inexpensive offices thousands of miles apart. Talk about opportunities for your business!

But this network aids commerce in other ways, too. You can hyperlink shoppers to products at Amazon.com and earn a referral fee. For a fraction of the cost of other advertising, your online store can acquire new customers by means of an affiliate network. New opportunities abound.

### **Opportunity 5: Segmented Market**

Better yet, this vast network automatically segments the market into demographic units.

Want to market only to those searching for your particular product or service? Purchase a banner ad that pops up only when someone searches on "life insurance" and you've suddenly begun to strike gold. It's even less expensive to position one of your webpages to come up #3 on an Excite search for the phrase "body surfing" or "sand candles."

If you search Deja News (<http://www.dejanews.com>) for an industry keyword, you'll find e-mail discussion lists and newsgroups populated by just the people you want to reach. Now, be careful to observe established Netiquette, or you'll blow your company's chances for good. But there are your prospects, chatting happily away, a neatly segmented market. Join in the discussion as a fellow learner rather than a salesman, and you'll begin to attract new business. What an opportunity!

### **Opportunity 6: Competitive Advantage**

One of my friends tells of a call from a Japanese businessman a couple of years ago. "Several of us will visit San Francisco next month," said the



caller. "Can we arrange a tour of your world headquarters while we're in the area?"

After my friend had replied, as graciously as he could, that San Francisco was a long way from his city, he walked from his home office to the kitchen. "Dear, there's a group of Japanese businessmen who want to visit the world headquarters of our company next month."

His wife's face showed panic. "Are they coming here?" she gasped.

No, they didn't come, but ever after this couple shows off to their friends the room they jokingly call "our company's world headquarters."

What I'm describing is the ability of an Internet-savvy businessperson to be every bit as competitive on the Web as a 20- or 200- or 2,000-employee business. It's harder than it used to be. Large companies now budget tens of millions of dollars for their websites. That's hard to match with a \$2,000 to \$20,000 small business website. But it's not impossible to do a very credible job, nevertheless. The market is so huge that even a small slice can generate a quite substantial income for a small business. Opportunities are boundless.

### **Smarts + Sweat + Swiftness = Opportunity**

But we are years beyond the day when you could slap up a website and expect the world to beat a path to your door. These days it takes smarts, sweat, and swiftness to compete with the Big Dogs. The opportunity is surely here, but it's not a freebie.

The stupid need not apply. I hear slick salesmen hawking the Internet: "Get your company on the Internet. You don't even have to have a computer." Wrong! To compete on today's Web you must climb a steep learning ladder to discover how to do business on the Web. If you can't afford the time to learn how to use the tools, don't waste your money. There are no short cuts, not even if an infomercial tells you so. You need smarts.

Sweat is the next ingredient. I get dozens of calls from people who assume that making money on the Internet is easy. Wrong again! Developing a successful business on the Web is just as hard as building a small business in the local strip mall. Oh, the financial investment is much less. But it requires

as much work or more. They say that only 20% of new small businesses will celebrate their fifth anniversary. I'm sure this holds true for the Net, as well. The attrition rate is high partly because people aren't willing to work hard enough to succeed.

Swiftness is the final ingredient. And here is where smaller businesses hold a big advantage. Changing from a strategy that isn't working can take a big company months if not years. It's like turning an ocean liner. But small businesses, like speed boats, can turn quickly and zoom off in a new and promising direction. The environment and business climate on the Web are changing so rapidly that you must be swiftfooted to stay in business, and be ready to grasp the opportunities as they come. No points are awarded for being late.

The opportunities the Internet opens to your business are huge. If you apply smarts, sweat, and swiftness you can transform these six opportunities into your business success.

## Make Your Website Purposes Crystal Clear

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant

[Web Marketing Today, Issue 56, May 1, 1999](#)

"Why, Bunky, do you want a website?"

"Ah ... everybody has one and we don't want to look like we're stuck in the Dark Ages."

"So you're concerned about your image?"

"Yeah, image."

"Any other reasons?"

"Well, we want to make money."

"How do you plan to make money on the Web?"

"I'm not really sure."

Bunky is not alone in his fuzziness and confusion. A great many businesses on the Web find difficulty explaining to someone why they should be on the Internet.

Clarity here can help you develop a lean, clean Internet machine that will accomplish your purposes. Let's look at the four major missions companies seek to accomplish on the Internet: (1) brand development, (2) revenue generation, (3) cost savings, and (4) customer support.

### **Purpose 1. Brand Development**

You may have never thought about your company as a brand, so this may be new to you, but track with me. One of the chief reasons your company has a website is to demonstrate that you're staying up with the times, that you're on the cutting edge. You're seeking to communicate an image about your

company that will register in the minds of your potential customers. Professional marketers refer to this as brand development.

Your brand is the image of your business in the minds of customers and prospects. Everything about your site -- the quality of the design, the clarity of your wording, the sense of interest and excitement, the color scheme, the download time, and much more -- contributes to your image, and your image is your brand identity. Your goal is that when someone leaves your site they'll remember you -- positively. And that the next time they come, they'll make a purchase or pick up the phone. Your brand image is also the trust the customer has in you.

There are no real shortcuts here. Major corporations spends millions of dollars to develop their brand image and keep it fresh in the minds of consumers. Is there any way a small business can compete?

Yes, your site can look every bit as good on the Web as a major corporation's, and without spending the big bucks they do. Even though the Web is no longer a level playing field, small businesses can still compete for first impression.

How do I say this without offending you?

You need professional help.

Don't get agitated now and reach for your Valium. It's not a shrink I'm talking about, but an experienced website designer. To compete today you either need to either have graphics training and an artistic sense yourself, or you need to hire it. Do-it-yourself will undercut the strong brand identity you are trying to build. Sure, it's cheaper to do it yourself or to have your nephew do it with that spiffy new software he's dying to use on you, but not if it means your business won't get off the ground. Design includes the color scheme and graphics, but also structure of the site, the all-important navigation system, the size and quality of the photos or illustrations. All these affect your brand image. Your nephew doesn't understand brand image yet.

Be very clear about this, whether you're General Motors or a one-person small business, brand development -- image -- is first on your list of

purposes. It is a precondition for sales since it relates directly to customer trust. Fail at this and you will fail at the core purposes of your site.

## **Purpose 2. Revenue Generation**

The second major goal is revenue generation. Hobby sites don't need to generate revenue. (Neither, seemingly does Amazon.com. Just kidding. See my analysis of their strategy in "[10 E-Commerce Trends that Affect Your Business](#)," *Web Commerce Today*, Issue 21, April 15, 1999) Your company may be putting off revenue generation until they learn the ropes of e-business, or until they generate enough site traffic to produce revenue. But the bottom line for all companies that want to stay in business is revenue generation. There are three primary models at present -- (1) prospect generation, (2) online sales transactions, and (3) advertising and referral income. We'll look at each in turn.

### **Prospect Generation**

In the first model, you use the Web to bring you leads and provide information to support the sale. Then you close the sale by phone, e-mail, or face-to-face. Many small businesses, especially service businesses, use this model successfully.

My own business is an example. We use the Web to attract prospects for our online store design business. Our information provides the attraction, then visitors discover what business we're in and e-mail or phone us. A conversation ensues that sometimes results in a sale.

A main tool for the prospect generation model businesses is a carefully designed online response form. Mailto: e-mail links allow people to contact you, but the online form allows you to structure the information people give you, so you can qualify the prospect and know how to respond. Some years ago a police products cataloger set up a website to generate requests for a print catalog. He was astounded at all the internationals who requested a catalog, and found that the people who requested a catalog via his Internet site were more likely to purchase products than the leads he developed from conventional sources -- and, at a much lower cost. He qualified his leads by asking the name of the organization the inquirer was a member of. It helped

him cut down on catalog requests from people who weren't likely to purchase.

If yours is the kind of business where people take a while to come to a decision, or need customized information before they purchase that can only be supplied by a real human being, then prospect generation is probably your main revenue model. This is especially true of products that have a higher price tag or need customization.

You can do a great deal to support the sale, however, by providing a wealth of information online. Sometimes I hear businessmen protest, "If I tell them everything they need to know, they won't phone me, and I won't be able to complete the sale."

Perhaps. But increasingly, if the prospect doesn't find the information on your site, he'll surf until he finds it on your competitor's site, and then call your competitor instead of you. One of the rules of Internet business is that your competitor is but a click away. Your online presentation and information should be so complete and compelling that your prospect has no need to leave. I've found that Jesus' saying, "Treat people the way you'd like to be treated," works very well in business. Trust prospects with all the information they need to make a decision and you increase the chances that they'll trust you with their business.

Be aware, however, that increasingly, companies are finding ways to automate the delivery of customized information, provide quotes via database queries, and then consummate the sale online. Though you may begin with a prospect generation model, you may eventually be forced to adopt an automated system or be crushed by your competition.

### **Sales Transactions**

The second revenue model is completing the actual sales transaction over the Internet. This is often referred to as "e-commerce." In spite of all the media hype, during Christmas 1998 only about half of one percent of retail sales took place on the Web. But in a few years I expect that to grow to 20% or more. It will begin to eat into sales at brick-and-mortar stores, and those that don't sell online, too, may go out of business.

The real promise of the Internet, I believe, is its ability to extend your company's reach beyond your present market area. If you can sell products or services on the Web that can be delivered outside your geographical area, then the world is your marketplace.

Business-to-business e-commerce is growing even faster than online retail; nearly 80% of online transactions are between businesses. While this may not represent so much new money as a new sales channel, it does represent substantial cost savings by reducing transaction costs.

Nirvana for an Internet business is to complete both sales transactions and product delivery over the Web. Entertainment and information sites do this, cutting the staffing and inventory costs for product fulfillment immensely. Industry analysts believe that nearly all software will be delivered over the Internet in the future. Ironically, product fulfillment and delivery is probably where an online businesses will either rise or fall. With stiff price competition in some industries, the remaining competitive advantage will be how efficiently you can pick, pack, and ship product. Or how cost-effectively you can pay someone else to drop-ship it for you.

While it's much easier now than in 1995 when we built our first online store, e-commerce is still not simple. While it's relatively easy these days to set up an online store, that's no guarantee it'll be successful. You need to have a number of ingredients in place to make it work. But when they are in place, an online store can be very profitable. We cover all these issues in a sister publication, *Web Commerce Today* (<http://www.wilsonweb.com/wct/>), and you can learn a great deal by subscribing and then reading all of the [back issues](#) we have online (<http://www.wilsonweb.com/wct1/>).

### **Advertising and Referral Revenue**

The third common revenue generation model is advertising and referral income. I've grouped these, because from the advertiser's point of view, referral fees are often considered an advertising cost.

Many siteowners dream of sitting back and letting advertising revenue from their site support them from their easy chair. Few realize this dream. Since the number of commercial websites is increasing faster than the demand for online advertising, many millions of webpages go without paid advertising,

and this tends to drive the cost of advertising down. A couple of years ago the average price of banner advertising was \$37 CPM (Cost Per Thousand page views or "impressions"). In mid-1999 it has fallen to about \$35 CPM. And much advertising sells for less than the stated rate card prices. Unless you have millions of impressions for sale per month, you can't hire an ad rep to find advertisers for you, so signing up advertisers is part of the work involved for this type of site.

To make a site pay for itself on advertising revenue alone requires a great deal of traffic. For example, at the rate of \$20 CPM that less targeted site might generate, you'd need to have half a million page views sold to bring in \$10,000 gross revenue in a month,. That's a lot! The way you attract that kind of traffic is to have outstanding content: information, entertainment, news, an online community, etc. And that content itself is expensive. Most portals realize that they need multiple streams of revenue in order to prosper, so many are now try to sell products directly to their visitors as they pass by. Time-Warner's Pathfinder site will close down because, given their site traffic, an advertising model alone is not sufficient to underwrite the costs of publishing. On the other hand, *Slate* found that charging subscribers cut into their ad revenue (because they had fewer page views); *Slate* content is now free, therefore, and total revenues are said to be higher as a result. Finding the right combination of revenue streams can be difficult.

### **Affiliate Programs**

A promising source of revenue, especially for smaller site owners, is affiliate program referral revenue. If the genius of the Internet is the hyperlink that connects every site in a vast network, then affiliate programs are native-born sons and daughters of the Web. Amazon.com pioneered the revenue sharing model, and now pays affiliates 15% for sales that result from direct links to a book, and 5% of sales that result from the affiliate bringing the shopper to the Amazon.com site. Merchants have found that customer acquisition costs from an affiliate program are substantially less than paying for banner ads with CPM prices. For example, at \$35 CPM, a 0.5% click-through rate, and a 5% conversion rate (the percentage of visitors who make a purchase), it would cost a merchant \$140 to make a sale. With an affiliate program, the merchant only pays after an actual sale occurs, and the cost per sale is usually 10% or less than the cost of banner advertising.



So we're very likely to see more and more affiliate programs. For example, we've just started a [Referral Affiliate Program](http://www.wilsonweb.com/affiliate/) (<http://www.wilsonweb.com/affiliate/>) with [Commission Junction](http://www.cj.com/go.asp?69320) (<http://www.cj.com/go.asp?69320>) to help us increase the subscriber base of *Web Commerce Today* newsletter. We pay our affiliates 12% of every paid \$49.95 subscription that results within 90 days of a purchaser clicking on one of our Referral Affiliate's links.

Many smaller site owners, and some large online companies, have entered into affiliate agreements with a merchants. While the monthly income amounts are relatively modest for most siteowners, added to other sources of revenue they can help make a site profitable. Don't expect your small site to support you from affiliate referrals or advertising alone, but consider these an additional revenue stream for your business.

### **Purpose 3. Cost Savings**

If you like, you might consider the purpose of cost savings as a fourth revenue generation model. New Internet-only companies may not appreciate the cost-savings possible on the Web, but many businesses are able to lower costs significantly by moving essential business processes to the Internet. Ben Franklin recognized this revenue source when he told us, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Let me outline some of the ways that the Internet can save costs:

**1. Staffing.** Simply stated, the Internet saves time. It is significantly less expensive -- and more accurate -- to have a customer enter an order over the Internet than it is to take it by phone or rekey it into your computer system after the sale. In online stores, customers usually wait on themselves, so you don't need as many sales clerks.

However, you will need to increase staffing in other areas -- answering e-mail, for example. Since it is so easy to ask questions, many more customers are doing so on the Web, overwhelming some businesses. A few react by making it impossible to e-mail them at all (huh?). Others automate their e-mail response systems and provide enough staff to respond to more complex inquires.

Procurement departments have found that online transactions dramatically cut the cost of processing a purchase order. With the availability of Web-based EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), many smaller businesses are able to conduct B2B commerce electronically where it was previously cost-prohibitive.

**2. Distribution of sales materials.** If you've ever run a catalog business, or sent sales materials to your far-flung offices, you know how much money and energy is invested in printing and postage. The Web shines as a way to distribute great amounts of information inexpensively. Many companies put their entire catalog on the Web and then keep it up-to-date, longing for the year when they won't have to print a catalog at all. Others put their sales materials on the Internet (or on a company Intranet for employees). While there is some expense in converting text and graphics to the Web, once the material is there, it costs next to nothing to keep it there. Updating of data is simpler, too, especially on database-driven sites.

**3. Advertising costs.** For some businesses, especially those in neatly-defined niches, advertising costs are lower. Sierra Digital Communications in Rocklin makes microwave radios that transfer data over short distances where trenching and hardwiring would be cost prohibitive. Since more and more purchasing agents are using the Web for shopping, and since this is an established product they can search for, advertising costs are low; search engines do much of the work. But most new online businesses seriously underestimate the costs of advertising. People must have a reason to come to your site. If they don't find you by search engines, then you'll need to drive them there by a combination of paid online and offline advertising.

**4. Start-Up Costs.** When you compare the costs of beginning an Internet business to opening a new brick-and-mortar store, the Web wins hands down.

You can probably think of other ways the Internet saves your company money. But the point is easy to make. One of the purposes of your website should be saving money. For some businesses this will be more significant than any other purpose.

#### **Purpose 4. Customer Support**

As Patricia Seybold so eloquently states in her best-selling book [Customers.com](#), successful businesses have this in common: they focus on the customer's needs. This ought to be an important purpose for most business websites.

Pre-sales support can be enumerated under revenue generation, but post-sales support to your customers is a category all of its own. Fortunately, the Web can provide the very best in customer support.

Your system may be as simple as an FAQ or troubleshooting decision tree. What a great way to help your customers. The more material you have, the more valuable a searchable database becomes. Microsoft's site, for example, provides a huge amount of product support information on. Epson's site links you to any driver software you may need.

Providing customer support on the Web is not only efficient for the customer, it is also a boon to company customer support departments, who can refer callers to their website for detailed and complete information, substantially shortening phone calls.

There's no need to be fuzzy about your website's purposes. Ask yourself these questions:

1. How can I present my company in the best possible light? (brand development)
2. What source(s) of revenue can we realistically expect from our online business.
3. How can we achieve maximal cost savings on the Internet? and
4. How can we provide excellent online customer support?

Answer these four questions and you're well on your way to online success.

## How to Select a Good Domain Name or Two

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant

Reprinted from [Web Marketing Today, Issue 56, May 1, 1999](#)

I've developed a four point scoring system to determine whether a given domain name is a good choice. Give one point for each criterion that passes muster. Four out of four is best, though you'll seldom score that high.

### 1. Short.

A good domain name should be short, the shorter the better. Recently, Art-U-Frame.com was able to acquire the art.com name for \$450,000. Can you blame them? If you were stuck with Art-U-Frame.com, even your mother couldn't remember your URL. Short is better chiefly for two reasons: it is easy to spell without error and it is memorable. Incidentally, after the name change sales doubled.

### 2. Memorable

But not all short URLs are memorable. I spoke to a company recently who decided to get some domain name like bscs.com, the initials for Boyle's Sierra Carpeting Sales. Sure, bscs.com is short, but it is only memorable to a handful of company insiders. Now if you're IBM, then using initials for your domain name makes sense; that's how your customers know you. But most of the time, using initials for your domain name is a most unmemorable and customer-unfriendly approach to business.

If the domain name makes no sense in and of itself it is not memorable, and your customers won't be able to remember what in the world it is. Much better would be a domain name like boylescarpet.com, for it is both memorable and meaningful.

[Dr. Michel Fortin](#), the "Success Doctor" from Ottawa, Canada, has a knack with domain names. He observes that rhythm and meter can make a business name or domain name memorable. When we were looking for a domain name back in November 1995, wilsonweb.com seemed to capture it. It has a kind of singsong character that makes you remember it. It also met our third criteria.

### **3. Related to Your Core Business or Business Name**

The very best domain name should be one you can guess. Yesterday I wanted to find Focus on the Family so I entered [www.focusonthefamily.org](http://www.focusonthefamily.org). Sure enough, there it was. Their core domain was [family.org](http://family.org) (that's nice!), but I could find them by just entering their organization name.

If your business name is too clumsy, look for something that relates to your business. An Indonesian teak furniture company, Indofurn, selected [solidteak.com](http://solidteak.com). Is that better than [indofurn.com](http://indofurn.com) do you think? Which is more memorable? Perhaps both domain names would be better.

### **4. Hard to Misspell**

Our fourth criterion may seem obvious -- hard to misspell -- but you'd be surprised how many domain names are tough to spell if you've only heard it orally. Many people are poor spellers. Still others are poor typists. Combine them together and you're better off with a short, memorable, logical, easy-to-spell domain name. Here's one: [rosevilleelectric.com](http://rosevilleelectric.com). It does pretty well with criterion 3, since it is the electric company for Roseville, California, but the doubled "e" in the center of the name makes you wonder about the spelling. You could put a hyphen between the words, but then you'd always need to explain on the phone, "It's [roseville-electric.com](http://roseville-electric.com) with a hyphen between the words." If you always have to explain how to spell your domain name, then it's not a very good one. Which leads us to another issue.

### **Buy Alternate Domain Names Now**

If you're a very small business, then \$70 to secure a domain name for two years may seem like a major investment. But as you grow, you'll wish you had purchased the common misspellings of your company name, or at least the .net and .org versions. If you're successful, your competitors may make a nice living off the traffic from poor spellers who intended to get to your site but weren't apt with the alphabet. If someone tries to register a domain name for a trademarked word, they probably won't prevail if it goes to court -- though they might settle for a tidy sum out of court if they have nerves of steel.

Won't multiple domain names for your business just confuse people? No. You should only advertise one, but you use the others to bring traffic, and point all the domain names to the one site. If you are using search engine positioning and gateway pages to increase traffic, you might consider listing at least some of the gateway pages on another domain. You might gain an advantage on some search engines by using search words prominently in your name.

Let's go back to Boyle's Sierra Carpet Sales. We've agreed that `bcs.com` isn't memorable. Better is `boylescarpet.com`, but probably Mr. Boyle ought to invest also in `boylescarpets.com`, in case one of his potential customers thought in the plural. Perhaps `boylecarpet.com` would be important in case his customer wasn't as possessive. Mr. Boyle might want to get `boylescarpet.com`, also. Some search engines are especially partial to domain names that have a keyword (such as "carpet") as a discrete part of the domain name. You get the idea.

The investment in multiple domain names is small compared to the potential marketing value to your company. Consider obtaining all the possible combinations now before they are taken and your potential customers end up far from home.

Yes, there is some complexity in finding a good domain name, but in essence it's simple:

1. Short
2. Memorable
3. Related to the Business Name or Core Business, and
4. Hard to misspell

Even you can remember that.

## The Web Marketing Checklist: 27 Ways to Promote Your Site

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant  
reprinted from [Web Marketing Today, Issue 57, June 1, 1999](#)

You have a website, but it isn't getting the number of visitors you'd like. What can you do to stimulate traffic? Why don't you take a few minutes to review. Here's a checklist of 26 items you need to consider. Many of these you're probably doing already; others you meant to do and forgot about; still others you've never heard of. Of course, a great deal has been written about this. You'll find links to thousands of articles on site promotion in our [Web Marketing Info Center](#) (<http://wilsonweb.com/webmarket/>). While we're not breaking any new ground here, we've tried to summarize some of the most important techniques.



Cited in *PC Magazine*,  
9/21/99, p. 36

The most important first step is to register your site with the main Web search engines, so we begin with steps to prepare your Web pages for optimal indexing. We link to lots of info on search engines at <http://wilsonweb.com/webmarket/searchengine.htm>

\_\_\_ **1. Write a Page Title.** Write a descriptive title for each page of 5 to 8 words. Remove as many "filler" words from the title, such as "the," "and," etc. This page title appears on the Web search engines when your page is found. Entice surfers to click on the title by making it a bit provocative. Place this at the top of the Web page between the `<HEADER></HEADER>` tags, in this format: `<TITLE>Web Marketing Checklist -- 26 Ways to Promote Your Site</TITLE>`. Hint: use some descriptive keywords along with your business name on your home page. Instead of "Acme Cutlery, Inc." use "Acme Cutlery -- Pocketknives, Butchering Sets, and Kitchen Knives". The more people see in the blue highlighted portion of the search engine that interests them, the more likely they are to click on the link.

\_\_\_ **2. List Keywords.** To get your juices flowing, sit down with some

associates and brainstorm a list of 50 to 100 keywords or keyphrases -- the kind of words or phrases someone might search on to find a business or site like yours. Then refine the list to the most important 20 or so. Place those words at the top of the Web page, between the

<HEADER></HEADER> tags, in a META tag in this format:

```
<META NAME="KEYWORDS" CONTENT="promoting, promotion, Web marketing, online sales ...">
```

Note, however, that some research on search engine algorithms indicates that a fewer number of keywords may help you better target the most important search if you're working to increase your page's ranking on the search engines. Consider using both lowercase and capitalized forms of your very most important words, since some search engines are capitalization-specific. Make sure that you don't repeat any word more than three times so you're not penalized for "keyword spamming."

- \_\_\_ **3. Write a Page Description.** Select the most important 20 keywords, and write a careful 200 to 250 character (including spaces) sentence or two. You don't need to repeat any words used in the page title. Keep this readable but tight. Eliminate as many "filler" or "throwaway" words as you can (such as: and, the, a, an, company, etc.) to make room for the important words, the keywords which do the actual work for you. Place those words at the top of the Web page, between the

<HEADER></HEADER> tags, in a META tag in this format:

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

- \_\_\_ **4. Submit Page to Search Engines.** Next, submit your page to the important Web search engines and directories. To do this, consider using a submission service such as Submit-It <http://submitit.linkexchange.com/> or All4one Submission Machine <http://www.all4one.com/all4submit/> The most important search engines that robotically "spider" or index your site are: AltaVista, Excite, HotBot, Lycos, Infoseek, WebCrawler, and Northern Light.

- \_\_\_ **5. Submit Page to Yahoo.** Yahoo is the most important listing of all -- though it's technically a directory, rather than a search engine. It uses real humans to read (and too often, pare down) your 200 character sentence, so be very careful, and follow their instructions.

<http://www.yahoo.com/docs/info/include.html> You'll find some tips at



<http://wilsonweb.com/wmt4/990301yahoo.htm> Hint: I've learned to use less than the maximum number of characters allowable. If the Yahoo editor starts chopping your wordy copy, he or she may not leave as much as you'd like.

- \_\_\_ **6. Submit Page to Other Directories.** You've probably seen offers to submit your pages to 300 different search engines. These don't help much, except to increase the perceived "popularity" of your site by some of the major search engines. The most important 25 directories are probably enough, unless you find some specific to your industry. Most of the rest aren't really search engines at all, just an excuse to solicit you for "upgraded listings." These marginal directories come and go very quickly, making it hard to keep up.
- \_\_\_ **7. Request Links on Industry Sites.** You probably belong to various trade associations that feature member sites. Ask for a link. Even if you have to pay something for a link, it may bring you the kind of targeted traffic you crave.
- \_\_\_ **8. Include URL on Stationery, Cards, and Literature.** Make sure that all reprints of cards, stationery, brochures, and literature contain your company's URL. And see that your printer gets the URL syntax correct. In print, I recommend leaving off the http:// part and including only the www.domain.com portion.
- \_\_\_ **9. Promote using traditional media.** Don't discontinue print advertising you've found effective. But be sure to include your URL in any display or classified ads you purchase in trade journals, newspapers, etc. View your website as an information adjunct to the ad. Catch readers' attention with the ad, and then refer them to a Web page where they can obtain more information or perhaps place an order. Sometimes these ads are more targeted, more effective, and less expensive than online advertising. Consider other traditional media to drive people to your site, such as direct mail, classifieds, post cards, etc. Since SuperBowl 1999 we've seen TV used extensively to promote sites, since the Web is now considered a mass medium, though it is probably too broad for all but the most general portal sites.
- \_\_\_ **10. Develop a Free Service.** It's one thing to say, "Come to our site and learn about our business." It's quite another to say "Use the free

kitchen remodeling calculator available exclusively on our site."

Make no mistake, it's expensive in time and energy to develop free resources such as our Web Marketing Info Center <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/> but it is very rewarding in increased traffic to your site. Make sure that your free service is closely related to what you are selling so the visitors you attract will be good prospects for your business. Give visitors multiple opportunities and links to cross over to the sales part of your site.

- \_\_\_ **11. Request Reciprocal Links.** Find complementary websites and request a reciprocal link to your site (especially to your free service, if you offer one). Develop an out-of-the way page where you put links to other sites -- so you don't send people out the back door as fast as you bring them in the front door.
- \_\_\_ **12. Issue News Releases.** Find newsworthy events (such as launching your free service), and send news releases to print and Web periodicals in your industry. Note: opening or redesigning a website is seldom newsworthy these days. You may want to use a Web news release service, such as one offered by Eric Ward's URLwire (<http://www.urlwire.com>) or Audette Media's [Internet News Bureau](http://www.news bureau.com/welcome.cgi?1017) (<http://www.news bureau.com/welcome.cgi?1017>)
- \_\_\_ **13. Request Links from Business Link Sites.** Especially if you offer a free service, you can request links from many of the small business linking pages on the Web. When you have something free to offer, many doors open to you. Surf the Net looking for places that might link to your site. Then e-mail the site owner or webmaster with your site name, URL, and a brief 200-word description of what you offer there.
- \_\_\_ **14. Capture Visitor E-mail Addresses and Request Permission to Send Updates.** On your website's response form, include a checkbox where the visitor can give you permission to e-mail updates about products or services. Now your e-mails to visitors are not "spam." You're responding to their request for more information. I recommend capturing first and last name in separate fields so you can market personally to them. But only ask for the information you need or they won't fill it out.

- \_\_\_ **15. Publish an E-Mail Newsletter.** While it's a big commitment in time, publishing a weekly, monthly, or quarterly newsletter is one of the very best ways to keep in touch with your prospects, generate trust, develop brand awareness, and build future business. You can distribute your newsletter using your e-mail program, or have people subscribe on your website directly to a listserver program (such as Majordomo) offered by your Internet Service Provider. More information can be found at <http://wilsonweb.com/articles/majordomo.htm> and <http://wilsonweb.com/articles/newsletter.htm> Why don't you take a look at our newsletter, [Web Marketing Today](http://wilsonweb.com/wmt/), <http://wilsonweb.com/wmt/> and subscribe free, like tens of thousands of others?
- \_\_\_ **16. Install a "Signature" in your E-Mail Program.** Most e-mail programs such as Eudora, Netscape, or Outlook allow you to designate a "signature" to appear at the end of each message you send. Limit it to 6 to 8 lines: Company name, address, phone number, URL, e-mail address, and a one-phrase description of your unique business offerings. Look for examples on e-mail messages sent to you.
- \_\_\_ **17. Promote Your Site in Mailing Lists and News Groups.** The Internet offers thousands of very targeted mailing lists and news groups made up of people with very specialized interests. Use DejaNews <http://www.dejanews.com> to find appropriate sources. Don't bother with news groups constituted of pure "spam." Instead, find groups where a dialog is taking place. Don't use aggressive marketing and overtly plug your product or service, even if you see some jerks doing so. Rather, add to the discussion in a helpful way and let the "signature" at the end of your e-mail message do your marketing for you. People will gradually get to know and trust you, visit your site, and do business with you.
- \_\_\_ **18. Join a Mall.** You may gain a little traffic this way, but not a lot. The biggest and free-est mall, if you will, is [Yahoo](http://www.yahoo.com). Get a good listing there, and you won't need other malls very much. Paying to be in a mall is seldom a good investment. See <http://wilsonweb.com/articles/mall.htm>
- \_\_\_ **19. Announce a Contest.** People like getting something free. If you

publicize a contest or drawing available on your site, you'll generate more traffic than normal.

- **20. Join a Banner Exchange Program.** Of the many banner exchange programs, LinkExchange is the biggest. <http://www.linkexchange.com> Essentially, you agree to show a rotating banner on your site for other LinkExchange members, and they do the same for you, and there's a possibility you'll earn something through paid banner ads, too. Full list of banner exchange programs at <http://bannertips.com/exchangenetworks.shtml>
- **21. Purchase Banner Ads on Appropriate Sites.** You may need to spend money to boost traffic by purchasing banner advertising. Choose sites that seem to attract the kinds of people who would be good prospects for your business or product. Expect to pay \$10 to \$40 per thousand people who see your ad, and achieve a click-through rate of 0.5% to 1%. You can find media brokers who can help you find appropriate and cost-effective places to advertise, especially if you have a significant advertising budget for branding purposes. Much information at <http://wilsonweb.com/webmarket/ad.htm>
- **22. Buy a Text Ad in an E-Mail Newsletter.** Businesses are finding that some of the best advertising buys are for small 4 to 12 line ads in established e-mail newsletters. Ads can both inform and motivate readers to click on the URL, and tend to bring much more targeted visitors. More info at <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/ad-email.htm>
- **23. Rent targeted e-mail lists.** We abhor "spam," bulk untargeted, unsolicited e-mail, and you'll pay a very stiff price in reputation and cancelled services if you yield to temptation here. But the direct marketing industry has developed targeted e-mail lists you can rent consisting of people who have agreed to receive commercial e-mail messages. Do a smaller test first to determine the quality of the list. Some companies which offer such services are listed at <http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/lists.htm>
- **24. Employ search engine positioning.** Registering your site with the search engines is the first step. But with tens of millions of webpages, your site may hardly be visible. These days you may need to construct

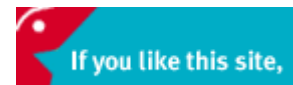
a series of gateway pages, each tuned for a particular search phrase and search engine. Then fine-tune these gateway pages to rank high using a program such as [Web Position Gold](http://www.webposition.com) (<http://www.webposition.com>). Many small businesses outsource search engine positioning because of the considerable time investment it requires. You can find more information at <http://wilsonweb.com/wmt4/issue54.htm>

— **25. Begin an Affiliate Program.** Essentially, a retailer's affiliate program pays a commission to other sites whose links to the retailer result in an actual sale. The goal is to build a network of affiliates who have a financial stake in promoting your site. If you're a merchant you need to (1) determine the commission you are willing to pay (consider it your advertising cost), (2) select a company to set up the technical details of your program, and (3) promote your program to get the right kind of affiliates who will link to your site. Two affiliate programs to consider: (1) [Commission Junction](http://www.cj.com/go.asp?69320) (<http://www.cj.com/go.asp?69320>) sets up the entire program for the merchant, handles administrative details, and pays the affiliates. (2) [AffiliateZone](http://www.affiliatezone.com/al/affiliates.cgi?225) (<http://www.affiliatezone.com/al/affiliates.cgi?225>) installs excellent software on your site to allow you to track purchases through affiliate links, and enable you to administer the program yourself. More info at <http://wilsonweb.com/research/associate.htm>

— **26. Ask Visitors to Bookmark Your Site.** It seems so simple, but make sure you ask visitors to bookmark your site. We use a graphic on the main entry pages to our site. See more at <http://wilsonweb.com/wmta/bookmark.htm> In fact, why don't you bookmark the article you're reading at <http://wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm> You know you'll be looking to find it again soon. :-)



— **27. Devise Viral Marketing Promotion Techniques.** So-called viral marketing uses the communication networks (and preferably the resources) of your site visitors or customers to spread the word about your site exponentially. Word-of-mouth, PR, and network marketing are offline models. The classic example is the free e-mail service hotmail.com that includes a tagline about their service at the end of every message sent out, so friends tell friends, who tell friends. More at



<http://wilsonweb.com/wmt5/issue70.htm>. Another example is the Recommend-It.com service to tell friends. Why don't you recommend this site right now to see how it works, and enter to win a prize.  
<http://recommend-it.com/l.z.e?s=557360>

We certainly haven't exhausted ways to promote your site, but these will get you started. To effectively market your site you need to spend some time adapting these strategies to your own market and capacity. Right now, why don't you make an appointment to go over this checklist with someone else in your organization, and make it the basis for your new Web marketing strategy.