

10 Ways to Build Traffic to a Website

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1. Content is king! Without something on your site worth reading, seeing or hearing, all the promotion in the world won't help.

2. If content is king, for most sites, niche content is even more kingier. Most successful sites have a topic or set of topics and focus in tight. Deviations are fine, but they need to add value rather than dilute the site's purpose.

3. Feed the beast regularly. If people don't expect to find something new, they're not as likely to come back. Highlight fresh content with a What's New section.

4. Be easy to find on search engines. Search-friendly content is a plus, and can be as simple as writing in plain english rather than jargon. Think of how regular people might search for the topics you cover.

5. Don't miss an opportunity to put your website address in front of a potential audience. All print pieces, ads, fact sheets, handouts and public presentations should include the URL. Combined offline/online promotion can be key -- never miss a chance to find a new reader/supporter.

6. Stay in touch. Email signups, RSS, and content widgets are all ways to help people remember that you exist and that they should read you. The rule of thumb is that around one in five first-time site visitors ever return, and increasing that rate even a small amount can make a big difference.

7. Let your readers help. Include tell-a-friend features if possible -- you never know who'll get the forwarded message. Also consider downloadable badges and banners.

8. Participate in the online discussion. Find the people who are discussing your issues online, whether through blogs, YouTube, MySpace or discussion groups, and participate (substantively) in the conversation. Be sure to add value! Don't just be a shill.

9. Contact opinion leaders in your field directly. Blogger relations is a lot like traditional media relations -- find the people who are writing about your topic, cultivate a relationship and pitch them relevant stories.

10. Consider producing pieces for outside sites. Publishing your content in front of a new audience can help you reach new readers. Make sure the link back to your site is prominent!

Special Bonus (or, this list goes to 11)

11. If you have the resources, paid search (Google) ads and carefully targeted blog ads can pay off. Nonprofits can apply for a Google Grant and receive free search ads.

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