CBI EXPORT MANUAL

Website Promotion

How to promote your website in the EU

Compiled for CBI by:
Facts Figures Future

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INTRODUCTION

> *Search with a random search engine on the Internet for the keyword 'speelgoed' (toys). The first ten search results do not include market leader Bart Smit but Schellens Speelgoed, a toy store in the south of the Netherlands. That is very disappointing for the toy giant because its website has cost some 100,000 Euros while the website of Schellens was apparently fixed in a couple of hours. However, Schellens has seriously taken into account the promotion of the website.*
> (Source: Intermediair)

Promotion is of the utmost importance if you wish to attract the right visitors to your website(s). Unfortunately, practice shows that many websites could be improved on this subject. This Manual actively show you the several possibilities on how to promote your own website well and effectively, both domestically and, especially, in the EU member states.

Regard this manual as your personal guide for the promotion of your website. It contains the most important theories, tips and tricks, and many other practical suggestions. Moreover, you will find a selection of websites on this topic and some possible criteria to assess and improve your own website are included. This manual has been compiled on the basis of literature and internet research and our own knowledge and experiences in the field. Furthermore, the experiences that were gained with workshops on website promotion in developing countries (DC) such as Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia and Peru have contributed to this manual.

In the promotion plan, the organisation describes what they would like to achieve with the website and in what way this should be done. This results into an action plan, for which goes: the more detailed, the better it is. A good promotion plan shows in very small detail how the determined goals and target groups are to be reached. The process of promoting your website is a dynamic process and consists of four steps. Figure 1 displays the process and its dynamic character. After the completion of the process, its evaluation will show in what way changes or improvements are necessary.

Figure 1 Promotion policy website
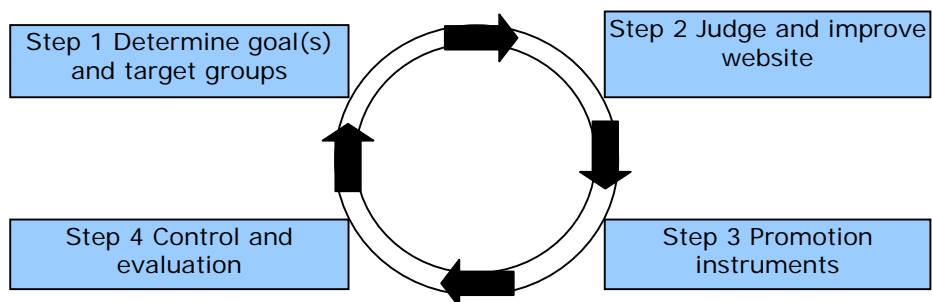
In chapter 1 you will find information on goals and target groups of the website, including some guidelines and research methods to determine them in detail. This already determines for the larger part the contents and the promotion process. Before the website is promoted, it is important that it is optimised both technically and with regard to contents. Chapter 2 will give you an overview of possibilities to assess and improve your own website. Chapter 3 describes in detail the various relevant promotion instruments which are available to you. Once the website has been submitted to search engines and directories, the process of checking and evaluating starts, which is the subject of chapter 4. It enables you to analyse the origin of your visitors, how they access your website and what part of it is popular with them. It supplies you with valuable information which can be used to improve the website and its promotion.

1 WEBSITE GOALS

"Would you please tell me which way I ought to go from here?" asked Alice
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat
"I don't much care where," said Alice
"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
Lewis Caroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

It is important to formulate which way you wish to go with your website. You have to determine the goal of your website. Without detailed and clear goals, a website can't be used efficiently and effectively. Very often a website presents the organisation structure itself instead of presenting information in accordance with the needs of your clients. Companies which start a website first have to define their goals. But also for companies that have had a website for some time, it is a useful exercise to redefine their website goals annually. Internet markets change continually and rapidly. You must do this, otherwise you could end up like the picture in figure 1.1. It demonstrates that, although you may be developing something very unique, it could turn out to be useless, since customers do not need it.

Figure 1.1 Trap
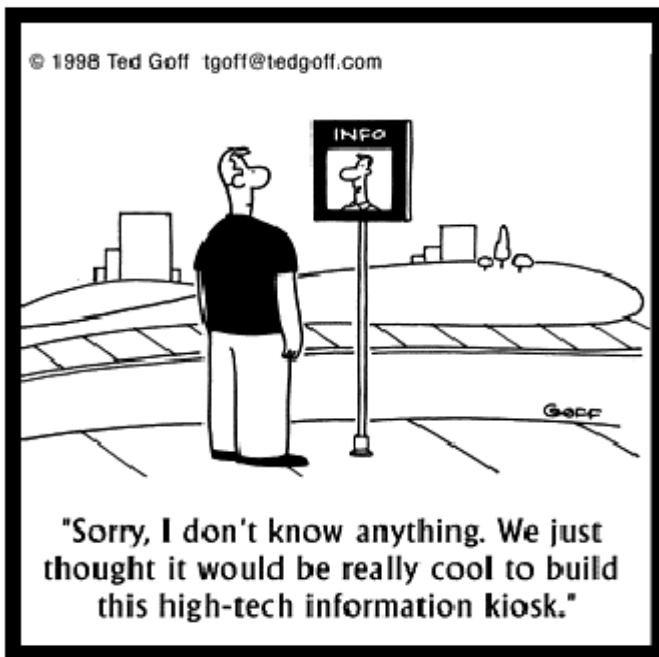
Source: International Institute for Communication and Development

Section 1.1 discusses the possible marketing goals for your website and some elements you need to consider. Section 1.2 shows three questions which can help you define detailed content goals. Section 1.3 contains the content goal matrix, a powerful instrument to develop the content goals. An internal and external analysis, discussed in section 1.4, can be helpful to define the website goals.

1.1 Marketing goals
First of all, determine the goals of your website. For instance, it could have the following marketing goals:
1) New customers
2) Cross selling (selling more products to existing clients)
3) Reducing costs

Ad 1) New customers
Getting new customers is only possible when you are able to reach these possible new clients. Please do realize that your website can be visited 24 hours a day, seven days a week from all over the world.

Ad 2) Cross selling
In general it is cheaper to sell extra products to existing clients than selling to new clients. It is certainly worth a try to attract existing clients to your website. Some instruments to do so are for example sending newsletters with product news and/or innovations or allowing them discounts.

Ad 3) Reducing costs
Think of product manuals that are accessible online, as it saves you the costs of sending it by traditional mail. Another example can be a database on your website with frequently asked questions. Customers can use the database to solve their problem, which may save you the costs of a telephone operator.

Please mind the following items when defining your marketing goals. The goals should be:
- **Specific**

This means for example that you should put a time schedule in your goals. If your goal were to be "to get 50 new clients by means of the website", a time limit is missing. Better would be to use a date, for example "to get 50 new clients by means of the website within one year".

- **Measurable**

Include detailed measurable units. The goals could, for example, include the number of visitors, the number of returning visitors and/or market shares.

- **A challenge**

A goal must have a challenge. Suppose you have defined the following goal: 'to get 5 new customers in one year'. This goal is already reached after one month, without even promoting your website. In this case the website goals could be defined more challenging.

- **Realistic**

A goal must be workable. Goals which are impossible to achieve will be frustrating and/or will not be used. If for example your goal was to gain a market share of 90% in a very saturated online market, it would not be a very realistic one.

1.2 Content goals
Marketing goals are mostly related to the content goals of the website. Define your main target group(s) (new and / or existing importer, agent, wholesaler) and determine what you want the visitor of your website to do or have done after having visited your website. Some goals include:

- **Knowledge**

What kind of knowledge must the target group have after he or she has visited your website?

- **Opinion**

What must be the opinion of your target group after he or she has visited your site?

- **Action**

And last but not least; what kind of action must the target group undertake?

1.3 Content goal matrix

A valuable instrument to develop the content goals in more detail is the content goal matrix. An example in table 1.1 will demonstrate the power of this instrument. Assume you are a DC exporter and you are focussing on Germany. Then four columns of the content goal matrix can be filled out.

Table 1.1 Content goal matrix

Target groups	CONTENT GOALS		
	Action	**Attitude**	**Information**
New importer in Germany	• Ask for a sample • Contact • Ask for Brochure •	• Reliable • Quality • ….	• Example of products • Certification • Track record • ......
Existing importers in Germany	• Order • Request for Proposal	• Reliable • Quality ….	• Sell other products
…..	…	…	…

Target groups (first column)
In the first column of the matrix you should fill out the most important target groups you would like to target with your website. E.g. do you target consumers or businesses? Do you focus on distributors, importers, agents or traders? Or both? And which EU-countries are most important for you? It is also possible that several target groups are relevant. As a consequence, several goals can be determined per target group as well. In this case, formulate well-separated goals per separate target group. In this example the two main target groups are:
1) New importers in Germany (most important)
2) Existing importers in Germany

We will focus on the first target group here, the new importers in Germany.

Action goal (second column)
Here you can fill out the actions you would like to achieve with the website. For example, you want the new importer in Germany to ask you for a sample by filling out a form on your website. Another action goal could be that the new importer from Germany makes a phone call to your sales department.

Attitude goal (third column)
In order to make him actually undertake the action you have defined, the new importer should be convinced that you are a reliable supplier of a quality product. In other words: your website should form his attitude! After (and only after!) you have created this attitude, the action you have defined, can be undertaken. In this case, the new importer must have an attitude that you are a reliable company and that you are selling quality products.

Information goal (fourth column)
In order to form the attitude of the new importer, your website should contain certain elements. In this example, the importer should have knowledge of your product, the production methods, certification standards and also of your export experiences and current clients (track record). All these things together will create the right attitude that is needed to make him undertake the desired action as you have defined with your website.

The second target group for your website could be the existing importers in Germany. Although they are not highest in your priority list, they are still important. Your action goal could be to also sell them other products or to have them send you a request for proposal.

Then they need to know which other products you could supply (information). They must still be convinced that you are also a reliable supplier for those products (attitude).

This exercise with the content goal matrix is very important. This is your framework, your direction for the website. Everything you create, change or maintain on your website must be done in order to achieve these website goals. It is also useful to help you make choices, certainly when you also set your priorities.

Priority

When formulating both the marketing- and content goals for your website, it is very wise to prioritise them. The same goes for the different target groups that you may have: decide on the most important ones. For example: you have set a goal that you would like to offer after-sales services through extensive product manuals. But a far more important goal is to gain new clients through the website. Your priority target group in this case would be the potential client, which has consequences for the content of the website and its promotion. Setting priorities enables you to make an efficient and effective promotion policy and to carry it out.

1.4 Research

When you are defining goals for the website, good information is needed. Both internal and external sources could be used to obtain these data. Internal data provide you, for example, with information on the current visitors of the website and what part of the website they like. The people in your company may have ideas for the website as well. External information enables you, for example, to learn from your competitors, and gives an overview of opportunities, threats and trends in the internet market. All this helps you to set detailed marketing and content goals.

A) Internal analysis

The following questions may help you perform an internal analysis. They are based on the assumption that you already have a website.

1) What conclusions can be drawn from the statistics of your current website?
a) Where do actual visitors come from?
b) Which pages are most visited and which are not?
c) Which browsers do visitors use and what is their screen resolution?
Chapter 4 contains more information on the possibilities to obtain and analyse statistics of your own website.

2) What is the current internet knowledge of the staff?
a) Which ideas does your staff have with regard to the (goals of the) website?
Please keep in mind that, when interviewing your staff, they should be from several departments of the company. This way, you will have the best information and will have the opinions from the entire company.

3) What are current experiences from clients / target groups (both existing and new ones)?
a) Which possible improvements have they given already?
b) Why and how often will they repeat their visit to the website?

4) In which way is a website able to enrich, improve or be an addition to the existing information streams and communication infrastructures?
a) Does the website enable executing transactions?
b) What financial possibilities / limitations do you have?

B) External analysis
The following questions may help to perform an external analysis with regard to the website.

1) What main EU-target markets should the website be aimed at?
Table 1.2 provides you with internet usage statistics for the EU-member states.

Table 1.2 Europe Internet Usage stats and 2005 population (EIU)

Country	Population x 1 mln (2006 est)	Internet Users x 1 mln (latest data)	Penetration (% population)
Austria	8.19	4.65	56.8%
Belgium	10.48	5.10	48.7%
Cyprus	0.96	0.30	31.0%
Czech Republic	10.21	4.80	47.0%
Denmark	5.43	3.76	69.4%
Estonia	1.34	0.67	50.0%
Finland	5.26	3.29	62.5%
France	61.00	26.21	43.0%
Germany	82.52	48.72	59.0%
Greece	11.28	3.80	33.7%
Hungary	10.06	3.05	30.3%
Ireland	4.07	2.06	50.7%
Italy	59.12	28.87	48.8%
Latvia	2.29	0.81	35.3%
Lithuania	3.42	0.97	28.3%
Luxembourg	0.46	0.27	58.9%
Malta	0.39	0.30	78.1%
Netherlands	16.39	10.81	65.9%
Poland	38.12	10.60	27.8%
Portugal	10.50	6.09	58.0%
Slovakia	5.38	2.28	42.3%
Slovenia	1.96	0.95	48.5%
Spain	44.35	17.14	38.7%
Sweden	9.08	6.80	74.9%
United Kingdom	60.14	37.80	62.9%
European Union	462.37	230.10	49.8%

Source: Internet World Stats (2006)

2) What do competitors do?
You can not only distinguish yourself from your competitors, but learn from them as well. What do websites in for instance Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom look like? In what way do they differ? Do you see any differences in communication, colours, lay out? A study by the Rotterdam University shows that countries in Southern Europe use more colours and pictures than those in Northern Europe, which are more to the point. German websites, in general, contain relatively more text.

3) Is there any legislation in the EU with regard to, for example, privacy, payments and copyrights?
Legislation is an important topic to deal with. Make sure that your website meets the demands of the EU-member state you target it at.

4) Is it necessary to develop a website (or the most important parts of it) in several languages?

If your primary goal is to get into contact with for example Italian prospects, it could be wise to develop an Italian version of the website. It makes it easier for them to read the contents of the website and it gives the website a more personal 'touch' as you address them directly in their own language.

2 WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

> *'When the first impression isn't good … the user will never return"*
> (Jakob Nielsen en Mari Tahir)

Marketing your website implies that it should be in a good condition first. Both its technical aspects and contents should meet certain requirements if you want to have a maximum result from your website and marketing efforts. This chapter describes a model that can be used to assess your website on its usability. It is based on checklists of experts like Ben Vroom and Jacob Nielsen and our own field experience. The following main elements are discussed:

I   Contents (section 2.1)
II   Navigation (section 2.2)
III   Communication (section 2.3)
IV   User friendliness (section 2.4).

These four elements are subdivided into subjects, which can all be judged individually by evaluating the thesis that is given. The checklist can be used to set up a framework for a new website or to optimise your existing website, both with regard to contents and the website promotion.

Quality website: a must
A quality website for a DC company is a must these days. A study done by the German researcher GfK shows that your most important target groups use the internet heavily. The study has shown that 76 percent of purchasing decision makers in Germany rely primarily on Internet as a research tool in their purchasing process, 29 percent do research exclusively online. Source: Bjørn Borg Kjølseth

2.1 Contents
You can judge the quality of the website contents by means of two elements:
1) effective and efficient goals
2) correct presentation of information and organisation

These elements can be judged by testing in what way the website matches the thesis. Try to look through the eyes of your target group and evaluate the thesis with for example Insufficient (I), Sufficient (S) or Good (G). Once you have finished the checklist, you will have a better idea of which elements of your website are good or could be improved. The theses can be found in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Evaluation contents

CONTENTS	SCORE
1 Effective and efficient goals	
You have indicated what you want to achieve with your website (marketing- and content goals) and if –relevant- have also prioritised these goals.	
Most relevant interaction possibilities are used (e.g. contact form, e-mail, request for proposal, ask for brochure,….).	
2 Correct presentation of information and organisation	
The website contains good and correct information on the organisation and when necessary information on the staff.	
The website does not contain any dated information. If relevant, the date of the latest update is presented as well.	
The website address (URL) is logical.	
Depending on the goals, the website is available in one or more (EU-) languages.	

2.2 Navigation

> It's a fact: 'People won't use your website if they can't find their way around it'.
> (Steve Krug)

You can evaluate the navigation of your site by means of the following criteria (table 2.2):
1. Clear layout
2. Workable user interface
3. Clear hyper links
4. Effective homepage
5. Clear page layout
6. Word and PDF files
7. Other points of attention

Table 2.2 Evaluating navigation

NAVIGATION	SCORE
1 Clear layout	
The main categories and subcategories have clear chapter names, so that everyone gets a clear view of the contents.	
There are not too many categories and subcategories, as these might cause the visitor to lose his / her overview. Guideline: no more than 9 options in a menu.	
2 Workable user interface	
The main navigation bar can be seen on each page, so that the main subjects (categories) are shown at all times.	
The most important buttons are situated on the left side of the screen (or on top).	
There is a clear differentiation between buttons which show a factional layout and buttons which give other functions, like 'search', 'sitemap' and 'help'.	
The company name is mentioned on each page (also when visitors enter the site on a random page by means of a search engine).	
The button to the homepage is placed on every page. Moreover, the logo is a clickable button to the homepage.	
3 Clear hyperlinks	
Texts do not contain too many links, as this might cause visitors to lose the overview or to click further too easily. *When possible, the links are mentioned at the end of the text.*	
A link can clearly be defined as being a link by means of its colour or shape.	
The external hyperlinks are opened in a new screen.	
4 Effective homepage (without clicking)	
The homepage clearly shows who you are and which purpose the website serves. *Think of the logo, the tagline (describes the added value of the website for the target group in eight words) and a good welcoming text which can be read without scrolling.*	
The homepage does not offer unnecessary information, i.e. information for which the visitor who just enters the site is not looking for (e.g. mission statement).	
Within 8 seconds, the homepage convinces the target group to continue exploring the website.	
5 Clear page layout	
The page appearance is quiet, clear and scannable.	
6 Word and PDF files	
The information is offered in Word format as little as possible.	
When documents have to be printed, they are presented in PDF format. The link to the document offers enough information on the contents, by means of which the visitor can determine whether downloading the file might be worthwhile.	
The printing quality of a file is good. Points of attention are: • The URL is mentioned on each page • The company and contact possibility are mentioned.	
7 Other points of attention	
For larger sites: there is a sitemap with a good overview of the categories and pages. This sitemap also indicates where the visitor is at that moment.	
The visitor can go back to the previous page by means of the back button of the browser.	

2.3 Communication

How do people read on the internet?
(1) *'They don't'* *(Jacob Nielsen)*
(2) *'I would like to state that readers of a computer screen are like impatient, visually focused people who only scan, avoid long texts, read vertically and who expect news, customised information and interactivity'* *(Van Driel, 2001)*

The quality of information through the internet can be determined by means of the following criteria (table 2.3):
1) Accessibility of presentation of the information
2) Accessible style and understandable texts

Table 2.3 Evaluating communication

COMMUNICATION	SCORE
1 Accessible presentation of information	
Each page has a header (**in bold**).	
The core information is always given on the starting screen of the page.	
Texts are divided into short paragraphs (preferably no more than 5 or 6 lines) with blanks	
Texts can be scanned, so that visitors can easily define what part contains important information(for them).	
When it is useful, enumerations and/or bullets are used.	
There is a clear contrast between text and background.[1]	
The use of fonts is consistent (guideline: maximum of two fonts).	
Fonts used are suitable for use on screens (no *italic* fonts).	
CAPITAL fonts are avoided as much as possible.	
Long tables are avoided.	
2 Accessible style and understandable texts	
Texts are short.	
An active writing style is used (no passive).	

2.4 User friendliness
User friendliness can be shown by means of the following factors (table 2.4):
1) fast loading time
2) platform and browser independent
3) scrupulous registration

Table 2.4 Evaluation user friendliness

USER FRIENDLINESS	SCORE
1 Fast loading time	
The pages can be loaded within a few seconds (guideline: within eight seconds). • Flash introductions do not occur. • Total contents of one webpage does not exceed 30 Kb. • Pictures are smaller then 25 Kb. • (use http://www.websiteoptimization.com/services/analyze/).	
In case of a long loading time of data, you warn users about the remaining loading time.	
2 Platform en browser independence	
The website can be loaded on every computer and in every browser (Internet Explorer, Netscape and Opera) as used by the visitor. In the EU Internet Explorer is used the most. Check your HTML: http://www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator/	
3 Scrupulous registration	
There is a clear statement of what the organisation will do with visitor details.	
After registration you offer your client the possibility to unsubscribe with every communication.	

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[1] for more information refer to http://www.colormatters.com/computers.html

After going through the checklist you can determine a list of possible refining points per criterion. You will find that a number of criteria are linked. You can execute this test on your website yourself, you can have it done by a representative of your target group, or by an internet expert. He or she will behave like your target group and execute a test surfing session. This way you can see with your own eyes how your target group browses through your site. This will show useful refining points.

2.5 Homepage

"You will never get a second chance for a first impression"

The homepage is one of the most important pages of your website. It is your company's face to the world. Increasingly, potential customers will look at your company's online presence before doing business with you - regardless of whether they plan to close the actual sale online. Its main goal is to persuade the (EU) buyer to visit the other pages of your website. In practice, the EU buyer that visits your homepage will decide in 8 seconds whether he or she will explore your website or not. You should give the target group the sort of information that will convince him to explore your website in more detail.

Example from practice
An owner of a diving club at the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador said that one of the main buying motives of his most important target groups (divers in the EU) was: safety. At the same time he owned one of the few diving clubs on the Galapagos islands that had a well known safety certificate earned in the USA, which was recognized all over the world. Then we had a look at his homepage. It did not show any information about safety and the certification………

Think about your homepage as a tradeshow booth. Why do you stop at some booths and skip others? Clearly saying what you do and why users should care is the best way to attract people. At the same time you should use all the knowledge you have gained until now about the goals of your website and its usability (content, navigation, communication and user friendliness). Guidelines for your homepage are:

1 Persuade visitors to continue
In eight seconds your visitor decides to leave or to continue on your page. Include elements that convince him to continue, such as track record, proof of quality (certification), production methods and USP.

2 Tagline
A website's tagline must explain what the company does and what makes it unique among competitors. If you have been in business for 70 years and have served 2,000 clients, then no one can take that away from you. It makes you different. Locality can make you different if you are the only company in your region selling what you sell. Being a specialist can make you different.

Example
'We are the world's only certified organic shrimp farm'

3 Group all your company information
Good company information is especially important if the site hopes to support recruiting, investor relations, or PR, but it can also serve to increase a new or lesser-known company's credibility. An "About <your company>" section is the best way to link users to more in-depth information than can be presented on the homepage.

ABOUT PHILLIPS

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4 Emphasize your most important content elements

Don't just describe what lies beneath the homepage. Show some of your best (or most recent) content!

5 Don't over emphasize critical content

You might think that important homepage items require elaborate illustrations, boxes, and colours. However, users often dismiss graphics as ads, and focus on the parts of the homepage that look more likely to be useful.

6 Use meaningful graphics

Images are powerful communicators when they show items of interest to users, but will backfire if they seem irrelevant. For example, it's almost always more effective to show photos of real people actually connected to the topic rather than show pictures of models.

3 PROMOTION INSTRUMENTS

Case study: www.Cascahuin.com.mx

The Mexican company Tequila Cascahuin has boosted its sales considerably by using its website. The bilingual website (Spanish and English) was launched mid 1998 and was promoted by contacting many Chambers of Commerce, World Trade Centers and importers as well. This website was also registered in major Internet directories dealing with wine and liquor. Within a year, the firm gained new clients from Argentina, China, France, and the United States, which resulted in additional sales of $US 3,5 million yearly.

Main reasons for the company's success:
▪ promoting the website via major international directories.

Source: International Trade Center

After you have defined your website goals and target groups, and have optimized your website, it is time to attract your target group to your site. This is where the online and offline promotion starts. There are many instruments that can be used, but the most important one is search engine marketing. The following main instruments will be discussed in this chapter:
1. Search Engine Marketing (meta tags, checkpoints, domain names, AdWords and submission)
2. Submitting to portals, directories and linking
3. E-mail & signature line
4. Newsgroups
5. Affiliate marketing
6. Viral marketing
7. Testimonials
8. Newsletter or E-zine
9. Returning visitors techniques
10. Press releases
11. Trade leads
12. Market places
13. Offline promotion

3.1 Search engine marketing

> **From practice:**
> *Using meta tags properly could be very lucrative for a company. The following example will show you why. Skiffy is a company in the Netherlands and manufactures smart plastics products and metal parts which can be used in almost any industry. One of its outlets is the Internet. Only some weeks after it had built a website with good meta tags, it received a one million Euro order from the NASA. The Americans had found the website by using a search engine.*

Source: Chamber of Commerce, Amsterdam (2002)

Marketing a website through search engines is called Search Engine Marketing (SEM). A search engine is a large database that searches many web pages on the world wide web. When people enter keywords into a search engine, the search engine finds pages based on meta tags, site contents and page ranking. A good example of a search engine is Google.com, which is used the most worldwide.

Search engines are among the primary instruments that are used to find websites. Research shows that more than 50 percent of the visit of a website comes from search engines. That is why a website with good search engine listings may see a serious increase in traffic. Unfortunately, many websites appear poorly in search engines or may not be listed at all. This is usually caused by the fact that most owners of websites do not consider how search engines work.

Reaching a good search engine ranking is a challenge. Submitting your website to search engines is only part of it. It is important as well to ensure that your web pages are accessible to search engines. It is a process that requires time and continuous attention, as search engines change their strategy as well. This section will give you several useful tips that will help you with this process.

3.1.1 Meta tags

It is very important to make use of the proper meta tags. Meta tags are descriptive words and phrases that you attach to your web pages and that are used to provide information about a document. Meta tags can be read and understood by search engines. The meta tags are listed in the top of your HTML code between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> directives. These tags will give you some control over how your pages are ranked and how they appear in the search results. Your web designer can add them to your web page in just a few minutes, once you have thought of the proper meta tags. Most important tags for the search engine marketing are:
1 Title Tag
2 Meta Description Tag
(3 Meta Keywords Tag).

The website http://www.scrubtheweb.com allows you to check the meta tags of your own website.
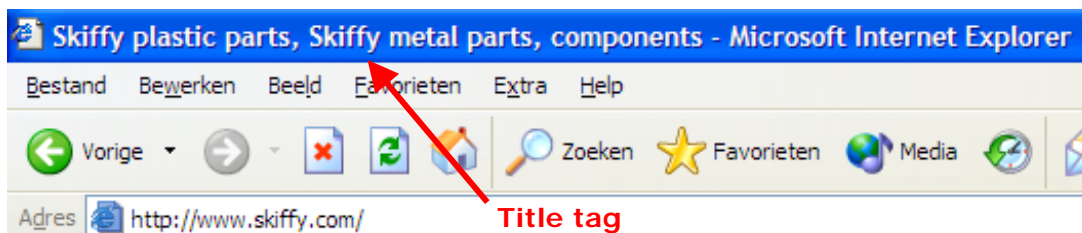

Ad 1) Title Tag

The Title Tag is one of the most important elements that influence the ranking of your website within a search engine. The title should be no longer than 60 characters (including spaces), and should appear in the top of the HTML code of your page.

Example

We return to the example of Skiffy, the company that received an order from the NASA by promoting its website effectively. The title tag of Skiffy is shown below and in figure 3.1.

Title Tag Skiffy
Skiffy plastic parts, Skiffy metal parts, components

Figure 3.1 Title tag

This Tag is 52 characters in length including tabs and spaces. It uses the most important keywords (plastic parts and metal parts) and the name of the company (Skiffy) in the title Tag. Be aware that words mentioned in the beginning of the tag are weighted heavier by search engines than the words mentioned later. Never use any hard returns (carriage return)! The title tag is also used in the words to describe your page when someone adds it to their Favourites list. More information on good keywords can be found at http://www.goodkeywords.com/.

Make sure your title covers the content of your page and uses the most relevant keywords. To be able to find the most relevant keywords for your website, you could do the following:
1. Think of the words you would use to find a site like yours when using a search engine. Write them down in order of importance.
2. Ask customers, business partners or associates what words they would use to find your site. This is a good addition to your own keywords. Once again, write these down in order of importance.
3. Use these keywords with every major search engine and see what happens. What sites are brought up with these keywords?

Selection keywords

Let us suppose you are promoting a bed & breakfast hotel in Quito, Ecuador. What are the chances that someone searching for 'holiday' is looking for a hotel room in Quito? They are more likely looking for general information on holidays and travelling. If you search for the generic keyword "holiday" in Google you get millions of hits. A search for "bead & breakfast hotel Quito old city" gives almost 100,000 listings. If you optimise your pages for "bed breakfast hotel Quito old city" the chances of getting a good listing increase dramatically. Moreover, you are more likely to get visitors that are really interested in booking a stay your hotel.

It is not the number of visitors ("the click-through rate") that matters most, but the number of buying or returning visitors ("the conversion rate"). Finally, go to one of the online keyword services and see how popular the various search phrases are. The online Wordtracker (http://www.webposition.com/order/trial.asp) could be an option.

Again: It is not necessarily smart to go for the most popular phrase. You can often win more visitors by selecting a less competitive expression. However, the phrase should not be too rare and narrow. You must find one keyword phrase that is to be the crucial one. Optimise your home page for that keyword phrase, as many search engines give more weight to the home page in the top directory than to other pages. You may try to optimise the same page for more than one keyword phrase, but under no circumstance should you go for more than three. If you do so, you will dilute the effect of the individual keyword phrases.

Avoid 'welcome' or 'homepage'
Avoid using titles like 'Welcome at' or 'home page'. Nobody from your target group will use the keyword 'welcome' in a search engine.
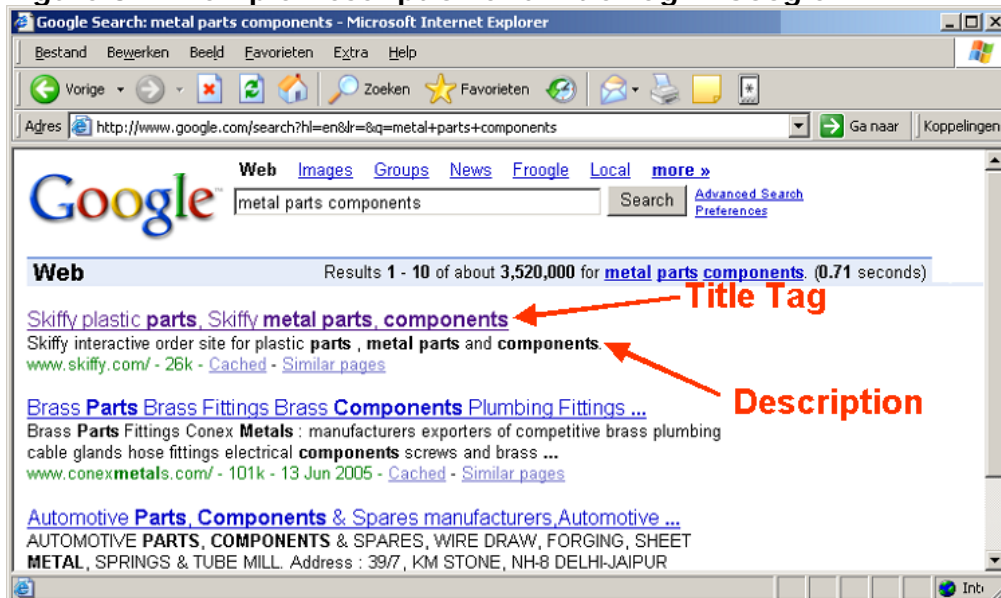

Ad 2) Meta Description Tag
The description tag gives a summary of the page, which many search engines use to make it easier for users to determine if the site is relevant to them. The description tag of Skiffy has been displayed below as an example. Its tag is 76 characters in length including tabs, spaces and carriage returns (January 2006).

Description Tag Skiffy
'Skiffy interactive order site for plastic parts, metal parts and components'

Figure 3.2 shows how the Title Tag and the Description Tag of Skiffy appear with a Google search of 'metal parts components'.

Figure 3.2 Example Description and Title Tag in Google

Suggestions
Please take into account some suggestions when adding a description tag to your webpage:

a) 150 characters
In general, the description tag has a maximum size of 150 characters.

b) Most important message in first 13 words
Be aware that some search engines cut the description tag after 13 words. In that case, say at least in the first 13 to 15 words the things you would like to say to your target group. Suppose a website were to have following meta description tag:
"*If you visit our site you are able to receive an enormous amount of information about the circumstances and methods of how we produce quality handicraft*".

The above description tag could be presented as follows in some search engines: "*If you visit our site you are able to receive an enormous amount of information about …*". This means that the essential information of the description tag is cut off! The potential visitor cannot read the summary of the website sufficiently and may not be triggered to visit this website. A better begin of the description tag could be: "*Information about how we produce quality handicraft…….*".

c) Google sometimes ignores the description tag
Not every search engine uses the description tag (anymore). Google, for example, sometimes ignores the meta description tag and instead will automatically generate its own description for this page. Sometimes it uses the first two sentences of the body copy.

d) Trigger to click
The text should be attractive, in order to persuade the visitor to click to your webpage.

Ad 3) Meta Keywords Tag
The meta keywords tag allows you to provide additional text for crawler-based search engines. However, most crawlers currently ignore the tag. Still, be aware that some directories (refer to section 3.2) use the meta keywords tag to index your website. The keywords tag has a maximum length of 874 characters, including spaces.

> **No repetition of keywords**
> A keyword should not be repeated more than three times. So do not add a keyword tag like <handicraft, quality, handicraft, Indian, handicraft>!!

The meta keywords tag of Skiffy is:

> **Meta keywords Tag Skiffy**
> spacers, slide, bearings, washers, locking rings, fixing, retaining, insulation, sleeves, nylon, handles, ball, knobs, adjustable, feet, knurled, frontplate, grip, nuts, screws, book, snap, rivets, drive, fasteners, rokut, tight, fittings, drillers, cable, straps, strap, mounts, label, clips, relief, bush, hose, connector, clamp, pcb, spacers, cap, cover, caps, nut, protection, plugs, tube, buffers, gear, wheels, plastic, seal, dampers, ventilation, covers ,assortments

This Tag is 494 characters in length including tabs and spaces. No words were repeated more than 3 times.

Learn from competitors
One of the attractive parts of the internet is its transparency. For example: sites of competitors that rank well can be analysed. You can check the meta tags of your competitors (or sites that rank well on the relevant keywords) on the website http://www.scrubtheweb.com as well.
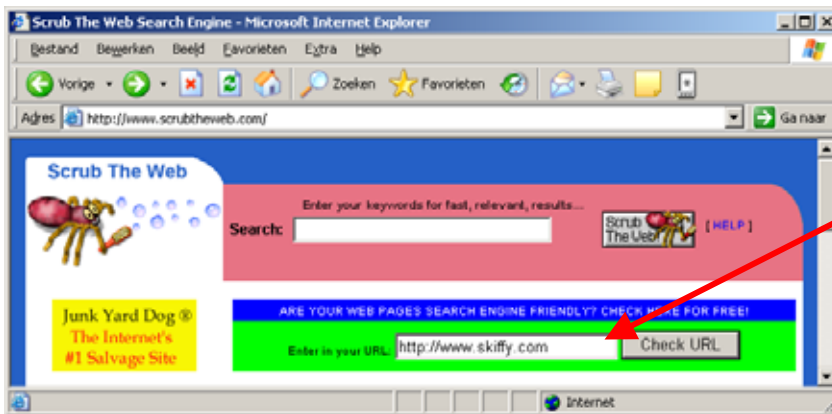
Enter URL for metatag analysis

3.1.2 SEM elements to be checked

"I don't know what to do," Mary said. "I fix my hair, wear pretty dresses, and smile charmingly, but they do not notice me, all the same."
"Aaah," Petronella answered, "they do not care about your good looks! They only look for your inner qualities, you know, your thoughts, your feelings and your knowledge."
"You must be joking!" Mary laughed.
"No, it's true," Petronella said earnestly. "The search engines look for content, content and even more content. Give them a large number of web pages filled with useful information, and you are the queen of the ball!"

Lesson learned: use strategic keywords in the contents of your website as much as possible!

Source: http://www.pandia.com

Beside the meta tags, more elements influence a good ranking with search engines. In this section you will find several more SEM elements that could be checked. They deal with your website, both technically and content-wise. They are
1. Number and location of keywords
2. Avoiding Java script
3. Avoiding frames
4. Pictures
5. Headings and link test
6. Page ranking
7. Correct HTML code

Ad 1) Number and location of keywords

The keywords you have described in the meta tags should be mentioned at crucial locations on your page. Search engines prioritize pages where keywords appear "high" on the page. To achieve that, use your most important keywords for your page headline. Mention them again in the first few paragraphs of that page. The more you mention them, the higher on the page, the better you will be ranked. If it is in any way possible, include you keyword phrases in normal text at the very top of the page.

Ad 2) Avoid Java script

Avoid using extensive Java Script codes near the top of your page. This is a language that allows a web page to include commands to be performed by the web browser. Most search engines do not understand Java script and as a consequence are not able to access a website. It can be used, but we recommend you to place it in an external source file, not in the HTML source file.

Ad 3) Avoid frames

Search engines do not work well with frames. Frames break a web page into different sections. Some browsers do not support frames and cannot read them. Sometimes, you will see the following if you do a search on Google: 'this page uses frames but your browser does not support them'.

No frames tag

If your website uses frames and you want to avoid such messages, be sure to use a 'no frames tag'. You can find the information between the <NOFRAMES> and the </NOFRAMES> tag. Most problems related to frames can be corrected. It is better to formulate a promotional text between the <NOFRAMES>-tags. Moreover, add a link to the sitemap as well. If you don't have one, add links to the most important pages of your website.

Sitemap

With regard to website promotion, every large website with frames should have a sitemap. It should be linked to from every page on the site. This will improve the accessibility of your web pages for the search engine robots. The sitemap is often the starting point for the search engine.

Ad 4) Pictures & ALT tags

"Graphics are great, but…Content Is King"

An 'ALT Tag' is a type of meta tag that gives alternate text to an image on your website. If a browser has graphics turned off, this tag tells the browser which text to display. ALT Tags not only provide your website visitors with the information that that graphics have been turned off. They are also a way to add more keywords to your page. So you can improve your ranking with some search engines by including relevant keywords in your alt tags. The HTML code is: <IMG SRC="URL" ALT="Insert your Alternative Text Here">. Figure 3.3 shows an example of an ALT tag.

Figure 3.3 Alt Tag

Ad 5) Headings and link text

Headings in your text not only make it easier for your visitors to read your website. They are also indexed by a number of search engines, including Google. You could therefore include headlines one or more times on a page. Preferably, these headings should contain one or more strategic keywords that you have formulated in the meta tags. Furthermore, the greater the size of the headings is, the higher the score for search engines. The higher the number in the corresponding headline tag, the smaller the text. Refer to figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Example headings
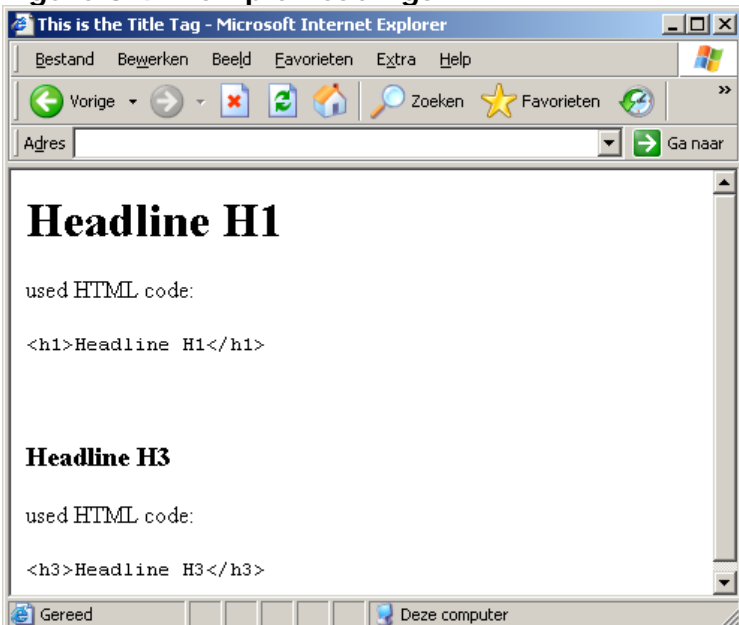
Link-text words are given higher priority than 'normal' text and words on websites. Link-text is the words that make up a hyperlink. This is why it is so important to make your link text descriptive, instead of using 'click here' for them all, which is disastrous.

Ad 6) Page ranking
The more websites that link to your website, and the higher their quality, the better. This is very important for your search engine marketing. Refer to section 3.2 for more information.

Ad 7) Correct HTML code
There are many pages with mistakes in the HTML-code. Most web browsers, like Internet Explorer, don't have problems with this. Search engines, however, do have problems with HTML mistakes. It could cause a wrong indexation in the database of the search engine.

A typical mistake that is made is that some tags are not closed properly, or used for different purposes than those they are meant to be used for.

3.1.3 Domain names
A domain is a website's address. It is what you enter into your browser to find a particular website. The website's domain of the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) is www.cbi.nl. Getting your own domain name is highly recommended. You can imagine that your website being hosted on one of the free web page hosts would not improve your image. Free web page hosts may be fine for a personal homepage, but for a professional business it is necessary to get your own domain name. Besides, this improves the ranking with search engines.

Keyword in url
A domain name is almost as important as the page title, as most search engines give higher rankings to sites with domain names relevant to their content. Domain names (Internet address or URL) should relate to the products / the most important keywords to be searched. Imagine that you are selling handicrafts to importers or wholesalers in Germany. In this case it could be wise to register a specific German domain name like www.handicraft.de. Having a good domain name is extremely important to the success of your site. It is also recommended that you have multiple domain names forwarded to your website, as different domain names increase the odds of search engines indexing your site under more topics and keywords.

Different types of domain names
The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN, www.icann.org) is responsible for the co-ordination of the assignment of domain names. There are two broad categories of domain names:

1) Generic top-level domains
Examples are .com, .net, .org, .info, .name, .aero, .biz and .coop.

2) Country code top-level domains
Examples are .uk for the United Kingdom and .nl for the Netherlands.

The top level domain name .com will be ranked higher in most search engines and .nl or .de will score higher in specific Dutch or German search engines.

Search available domain names
Use the website http://www.eurodns.com/ to search for available domain names, both generic (.com, .org., .biz) and European ones.

Registration
Domain names are generally registered through a variety of different "registration agents", sometimes called "registrars". Registration agents act as intermediaries between the registry and the domain name holder, taking most of the technical hassle out of registering and running a domain. You should always make sure that your registration agent registers your domain name in your business's or your own name, which will make you the domain name "holder" or "registrant" and give you the necessary authority to make subsequent changes to the registration.

Ranking directories
Many directories rank their websites alphabetically using the url as a base. A url that starts with 'apples' will be mentioned earlier than for example 'Zambia roses'.

Trial and error search
More and more people are searching directly by putting a url in the address. They just typ in the url that they think it should be.

Simple URL
If you have chosen a simple URL, it will be easier for people to remember and to return to your website.

3.1.4 Several languages
Be aware of the several languages that are used on the Internet in the EU. English is not understood everywhere! Within the 25 member states, less than the half of the people understand English. It is well understood in northern Europe and less in southern Europe. There is also a demographic factor. Younger people know English better than older people, which goes for all of Europe. Moreover, you may have several target countries in the EU, e.g. Germany, the UK and Spain. As an exporter, you have several options to choose from when it comes to registering and publishing the website in this case:
1) Index on homepage with option for languages
2) Specific domains per language

Ad 1) Index on homepage with option for languages
This could consist of an option on your homepage for the several languages that you have available on the website. Most websites display flags of the corresponding EU-countries.
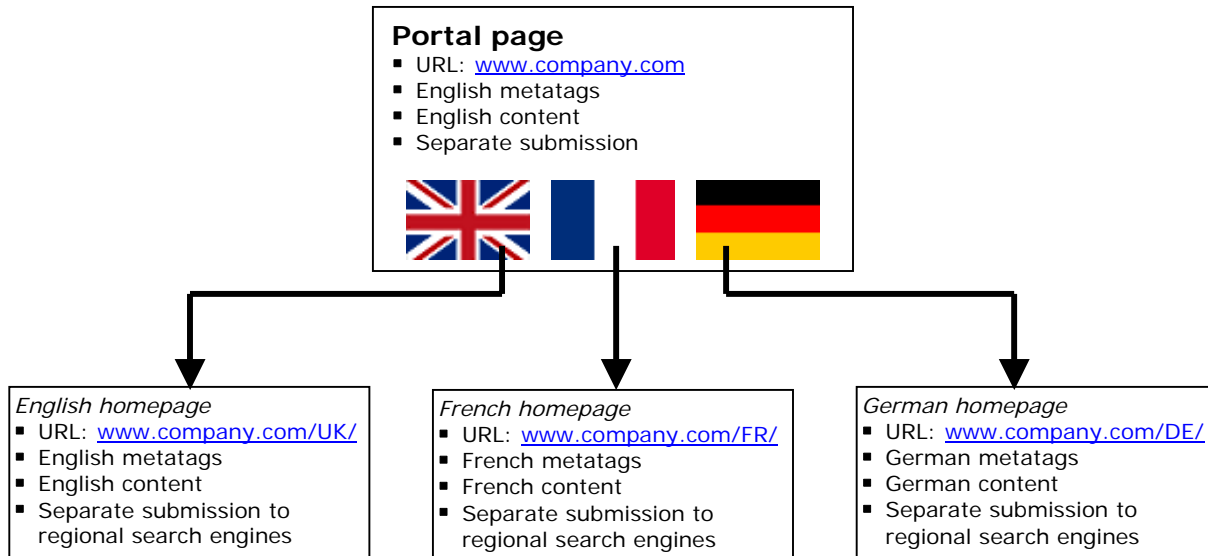

Metatags for each language!
Moreover, you could choose to add specific meta tags in each language. You could also submit each individual webpage with specific metatags in separate languages to regional search engines, portals and directories! As can be seen in section 3.1.5, www.whitelines.net gives an overview of regional search engines in the EU. In short, your individual language homepages could look like the diagram in figure 3.5:

Figure 3.5 Separate homepages in several languages

Portal page
- URL: www.company.com
- English metatags
- English content
- Separate submission

English homepage
- URL: www.company.com/UK/
- English metatags
- English content
- Separate submission to regional search engines

French homepage
- URL: www.company.com/FR/
- French metatags
- French content
- Separate submission to regional search engines

German homepage
- URL: www.company.com/DE/
- German metatags
- German content
- Separate submission to regional search engines

Ad 2) Specific domains per language
The second option for a multilingual website is to register a specific domain per language. This could be, for example:
www.yourcompany.nl
www.yourcompany.de
www.yourcompany.fr

In this case, each website is hosted separately and has its own server. Furthermore, you could submit them individually to search engines, portals and directories. Again the metatags should be in the corresponding languages. As the websites all have their own index.html file, they will be displayed like this: www.yourcompany.fr, which looks more professional than the first one. Moreover, it is easier to submit, as each website is separated. On the other hand, you will have to pay for each domain and the hosting package.

3.1.5 Submitting to search engines
After you have defined your meta tags and have optimised other elements of search engine marketing, it is time to let the search engines know that your website exists. This can be done by submitting your website to the search engines of your choice. This is usually a free service, although some search engines sometimes charge a fee. After submission, a robot visits your site to check if your site is ok for inclusion in the search engine's database. You can submit in two ways: 1) manually and 2) by means of software.

Ad 1) Submitting manually
In our opinion you should definitely submit your site manually to all the major search engines. The website www.whitelines.net offers you an overview of free search engine submission pages of the major search engines. It works as follows.

Step 1: Go to www.whitelines.net

Step 2: Hit 'major search engines'
You will get to a webpage that gives an overview of the major search engines.

Step 3: Submitting

Suppose we wish to submit a website to Google. Go to the Google.com part of the webpage and hit the button 'submit'. Note: the blue button means it is for free, the red one means it is fee based. We suggest you start with all free submissions first.
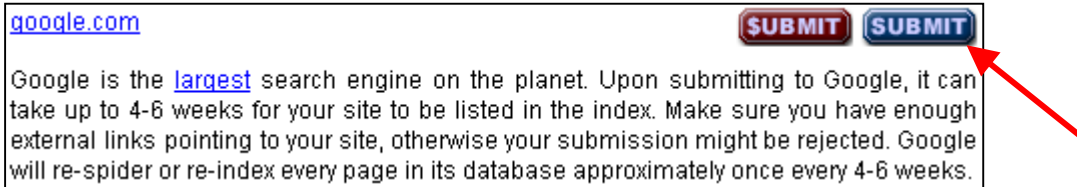
After you have hit this blue button, you will get straight to the submission webpage of Google. It says 'Add your URL to Google'.
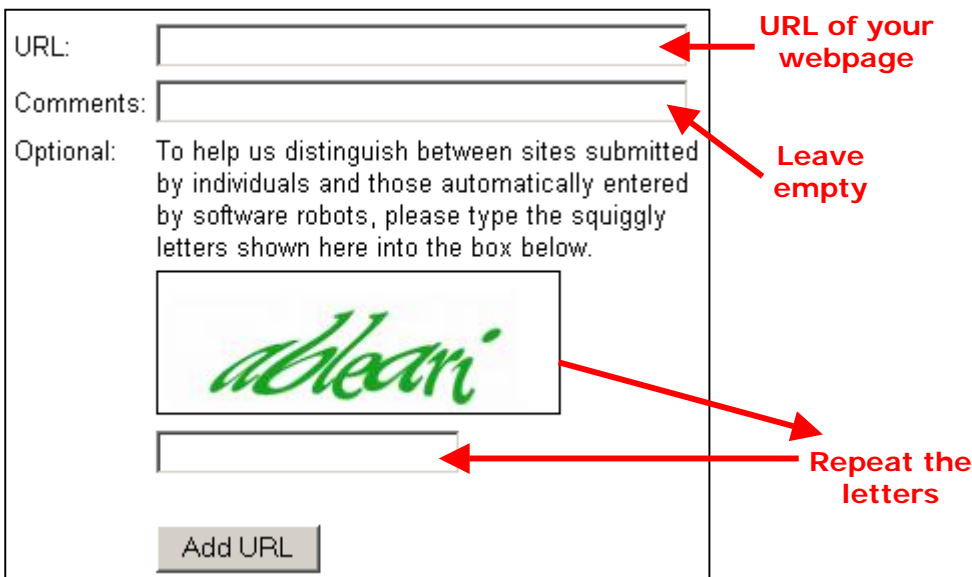
Fill out the two elements in the form: enter your URL. You can leave the 'comments' box empty. Finally, to distinguish sites submitted by individuals and those automatically entered by software robots, please type the 'squiggly' letters shown into the third box.

It is wise to submit your home page and perhaps one or two other URLs from 'inside' (deeplinks) your website. You really do not need to submit more. The only reason for submitting some of your inside pages is in case there is a problem reaching your home page. Please note that there is no guarantee that Google will actually include your URL.

You can repeat this exercise for all other major search engines that are listed at Whitelines, e.g. Altavista, Alltheweb, Inktomi and so on. To find out which search engines are popular per EU country, hit 'statistics' on Whitelines, there you will find links to relevant websites.

Fee based submission
A growing number of search engines offer paid URL additions. These guarantee your site will be indexed within a limited amount of time.

Give them what they want!
Listen to what search engines try to tell you. By knowing what factors search engines use to rank your pages, you can focus your efforts and achieve rankings without resorting to spam.

The following table 3.1 provides a basic guide to some of the factors search engines weigh in ranking pages.

Table 3.1 Search engine ranking

Search engine	What's not indexed	Slow Pages play a role?	Content and location	HTML Title	Meta tags	Keyword Frequency	Link popularity	What it likes
AltaVista	Registration pages, text in graphics and multimedia files (use Alt tags), XML, Java applets, comment tags, Acrobat files, spammers	Yes	Very important, Top of the page	Very important, should be unique for every page	Not important, but should be included just in case	Not mentioned 0, but the best location is title and top of page	Important	Uncommon words, good navigation, plain HTML pages with text only , themes, inbound links and keywords in link text.
DMOZ Users	Spammers	Yes, considered poor design	Worthy of indexing as determined by editors, and in appropriate category	No, but the title filled in plays a role.	No, but the description and keywords filled in play a role.	No	Not important for DMOZ, but is important, for some of its partners who use Inktomi	Concise and accurate descriptions and keywords, choice of appropriate category
Google	Not mentioned, see AltaVista for approximate guidelines; spammers	Not mentioned	Keywords should be close to each other. Content should include keywords in text or links	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	No	Not mentioned	Very important, especially from relevant pages	Link popularity, keywords near each other, keywords in URLs and link text, themes
HotBot	Frames, pages with cookie requirements, URLs with special characters (unless submitted through Inktomi's paid program) , spammers.	Yes, pages can be dropped if a server is too slow	Ranks on the length of the document and frequency of keywords.	Most important	Very important, both description (150 characters) and keywords (75 characters)	Very important (standard require ments are 3-7%)	Important, uses Inktomi	Lack of stop words, meta tags, HTML titles, lots of keywords, link popularity, and click popularity (HotBot uses DirectHit)
Lycos	Spammers, URLs with special characters	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	Themes
MSN	Spammers, frames - <noframes> tag needed	No	Not mentioned	Important, should contain keywords	Both are supported; description limited to 250, keywords to 1017	Important, 4-12 times	Important, uses Inktomi	Theme present throughout the site, site popularity
Yahoo Directory	Spammers	Yes, may be excluded	Worthy of indexing as determined by editors, and in appropriate category	No, but the title filled in plays a role. It should be concise	No, but the description and keywords filled in play a role.	No	Very important, uses Google	Concise and accurate descriptions and keywords, choice of appropriate category

Source: www.searchenginewatch.com

Ad 2) Submitting by means of software
If your website has been submitted to major and/or EU-search engines, you could consider submitting your site once again, now with software. Some examples of such software are Submit It (http://www.submit-it.com) and Web Position Gold (http://www.webposition.com/).

However, please be warned: at this moment Google explicitly warns against submission with software and also explicitly names the software of Web Position Gold.

Checklist
Table 3.2 shows a checklist in which you can find all the topics about search engine marketing that have been discussed. Use it to scan your own website and give a score for each of the elements, as done in chapter 2 as well. Once filled out, you could use the checklist to improve your search engine marketing.

Table 3.2 Checklist search engine marketing

| ELEMENTS SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING	YOUR SCORE
1 Title Tag	
The Title tag contains (the name of your company) and the most strategic keywords that your target group would be looking for.	
The Title tag contains approximately 60 characters, spaces included	
The Title Tag is promotional	
The most important keywords are mentioned first	
The Title tag can be used as a description for the Favourites text	
2 Description Tag	
The Description tag is promotional / triggers to click	
The Description tag contains at least the most important keywords	
The first 13 words contain the most important part of the description	
The Description tag is not too long (max. 150 / 200 characters)	
3 Keywords tag	
The keywords are targeted at the target group / their way of searching	
No names of competitors are used	
The tag is no longer than 874 characters, all spaces and other punctuation marks included. (More is not always better !)	
4 Other elements	
If relevant, the no-frames tag has been filled out with a promotional text and includes links to important pages of the website. (use http://www.htmlhelp.com/tolls/validator tick 'show input')	
The first 2-3 lines of the website give a good summary of the website, including the most relevant keywords. These lines could be used as a description for the result pages of search engines as well.	
Pictures and graphics have been given an ALT tag with a good promotional description.	
The website has its own domain	
Keywords are added to the URL in sub pages of the website.	
The most strategic keywords are mentioned several times and have crucial positions (headings and larger font size)	
Page ranking is seriously taken into account	
The HTML-code does not contain any bad mistakes (use http://www.htmlhelp.com/tolls/validator)	
The search engine's crawler has access to your website via a sitemap or an index	
The meta tags do not contain any line breaks (no hard returns)	
5 Internationally The website sufficiently takes into account your EU-target groups: Meta tags are in the appropriate language(s) Graphics have an ALT tag in the appropriate language If relevant: the differences in Internet culture by each EU-country have been taken into account (lay-out, communication, colours)	

3.1.6 Google AdWords

Every major search engine with significant traffic accepts paid listings. This unique form of search engine advertising means that you are guaranteed to appear in the top results for the phrases you have an interest in within a day or less. Given this, paid listings are an option that should be explored by site owners who wish to quickly build visibility. They may also be a long-term advertising option for some.

An example could be the Google Adwords. They are paid listings that appear to the right of the 'normal' search results. With Adwords you can create your own ad by choosing one or more keywords. You only pay when someone clicks on them. In this way you can reach an audience that only looks for your specific keyword(s).

I - Advantages

Have a look at the two examples below. Imagine someone uses www.google.com to look for suppliers of organic shrimps. The first Google search is with one keyword, 'organic'. At the right part of the screen, eight Adwords appear (26 January 2006).

A more specific search would be 'organic shrimp'. With this combination, only two Adwords remain. This means that your website could be at a very visible spot at a relatively low rate. This price would be USD 0.01 per click, which is the minimum price for Adwords. Also refer to step 3 of the 'step by step' method below.
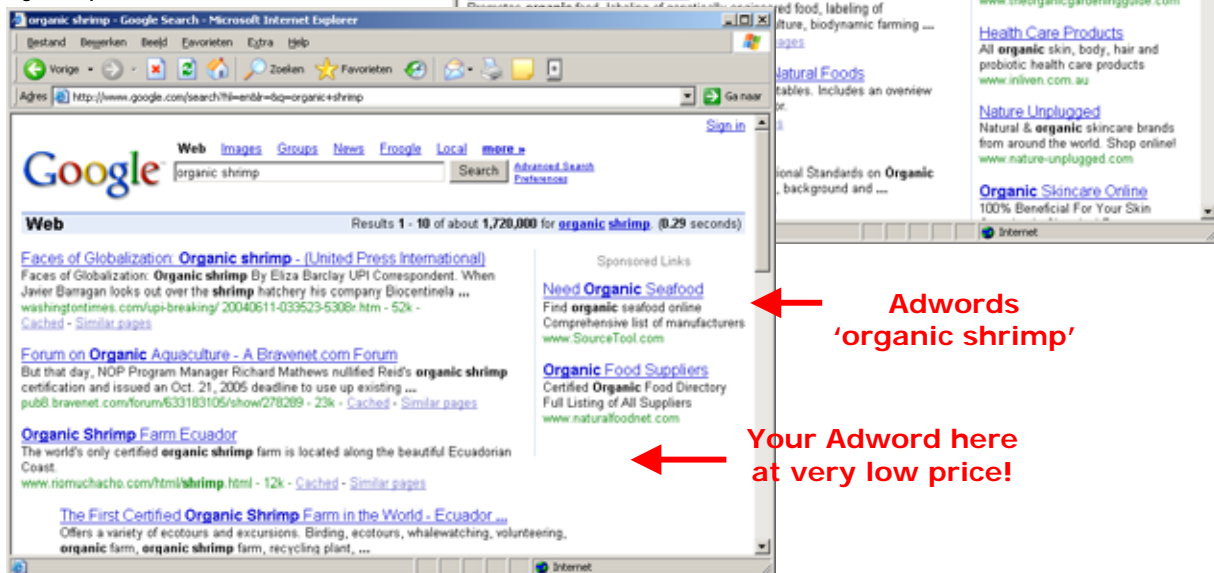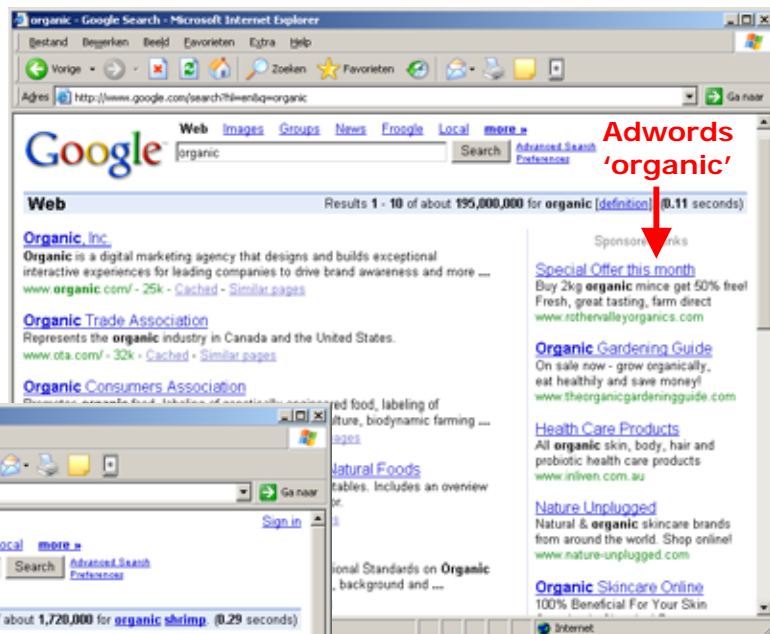
II – Costs

The costs for Adwords depend on how much you are willing to pay. Again, it is very important to target a specific target group and to keep in mind the (priority) goals you have set for your website. The costs can be divided into a fixed and flexible rate. As a start, you will have to pay a fixed fee, to activate your Google AdWords campaign. After that, you only pay for clicks on your keyword-targeted AdWords. This varies from USD 0.01 to USD 100, depending on what price you are willing to spend. To limit the costs, you can set a daily budget. For example, you could start an Adwords campaign with a pay per click of USD 0.01 on a daily budget of USD 2. This already gives you a possible 200 targeted visitors (USD 2 divided by USD 0.01)!

III - Step by step method

To sign up with Google Adwords, you could follow the next four steps:
Step 1 Target customers
Step 2 Create your Ad
Step 3 Set pricing
Step 4 Sign up

They are discussed below.

Ad 1) Target customers

Signing up starts with the sign up menu:

a) Go to https://adwords.google.com/select/ and hit 'click to begin'.

b) Then choose the languages and also select the geographical scope of your ad (by country? By city? Or both?) Click ' continue'.

c) Highlight the countries or territories on the left where you would like your ad to appear. Click ' continue'.

The language and country selections together will determine who may see your ad. For example, if you target the language French and the countries France and Spain, your ad may appear to users in those two countries who have set French as their language preference.

Ad 2) Create your Ad
Create your own ad by filling out the elements in the form:

d) Write your headline
This is the text that appears at the head of your Adword (in blue) and which contains the URL to your page. Example: 'organic shrimp Ecuador'. Maximum: 25 characters.

e Write description line
Write one or two phrases that persuade the visitor to click on your Ad. Therefore use promotional words that are relevant for your target group. For example: 'World's only certified organic shrimp farm from Ecuador'. Maximum: 70 characters in total.

f) Enter URL
This is the address of your website, which is displayed in the Ad. Maximum: 35 characters.

g) Enter destination URL
The destination URL is the actual URL of the web page that users will get to when they click on your ad. This can be your homepage but also a direct 'deep link' to one of your sub pages. Maximum: 1,024 characters.

Enter 'continue'.

h) Choose keyword(s)
When selecting your keywords, it is of the utmost importance that the keywords you enter are specific to your website or product. This is to ensure that you receive the most cost-effective results. You can choose several keywords at the same time, but remember that you will have to pay for each keyword! In case of several keywords, each one should be on its own line. To do so, press 'Enter' after typing each keyword or keyword phrase. As a suggestion, the 'Keyword Tool' can help you find useful alternate keywords which you may not have considered.

Ad 3) Set pricing

i) Choose your currency
This can be any currency, depending on your preferences. The currency you select will apply to both billing and payment. Therefore, if you select US dollars, payment will be requested and accepted only in US dollars. Once you have selected a currency for your account, it won't be possible to change the currency again later.

j) Set your maximum cost-per-click (CPC)
Here you set your price per click, varying from USD 0.01 to USD 100.00. The price per click will influence the position your ad gets. The higher the price, the better the position. AdWords will calculate a suggested maximum CPC and show you the clicks and costs per day that would be the result. You can accept that CPC or enter one of your own.

In our example:
▪ Daily budget: €5.00
▪ Max CPC: €0.05

AdWords displays your ad as often as possible while staying within your daily budget. When the budget limit is reached, your ads will typically stop showing for that day. On any single day, AdWords may deliver up to 20 percent more ads than your daily budget calls for. However, you will never be charged more than your average daily budget over the course of a month. For example: if your daily budget is USD 10 and the month has 30 days, you may be charged up to USD 12 on any single day but your monthly charges will never exceed USD 300.

If you click on 'View Traffic Estimator' and enter your CPC, you can see the estimated rank, traffic, and costs for your keyword(s). Click 'continue'.

Ad 4) Sign up
After a summary of all your selections, you can sign up by entering your email address and password for your account. After providing this information, click 'Create My AdWords Account' to complete.

3.2 Submitting with portals, directories and linking
Directories are search engines operated by human editors. Getting listed with key directories is very important, because their listings are seen by many people. This means an immediate increase of traffic for your website. In addition, if you are listed with directories, search engines are more likely to find your site and add it to their listings. Moreover, an inclusion in directories could lead to a better link popularity (or: page ranking)! Be aware that the listing is often alphabetical (refer 3.2, section on ranking directories). Yahoo is a good example of a directory, as is DMOZ.

You could increase your linkpopularity or page ranking by:
I - Submitting to DMOZ
II – Do a competitors' analysis
III - Ask for link exchange

They follow below.

Ad I) Submitting to DMOZ
The Open Directory (www.dmoz.org) is a very important directory to be listed. It is a volunteer-built guide to the web. It is provided as an option at many major search engines, including Google. Being included in this directory usually leads to a better ranking with search engines like Google. Moreover, submission is free. We definitely advise you to be included in DMOZ. However, experience from practice learns that it may take some time before you are included (sometimes up to one year!). Nevertheless, keep trying, because in the long run it will increase your website promotion. In order to submit your webpage to DMOZ, do the following:

1) Go to www.dmoz.org and hit 'suggest URL'.
Read the procedure and the four steps that you could follow.
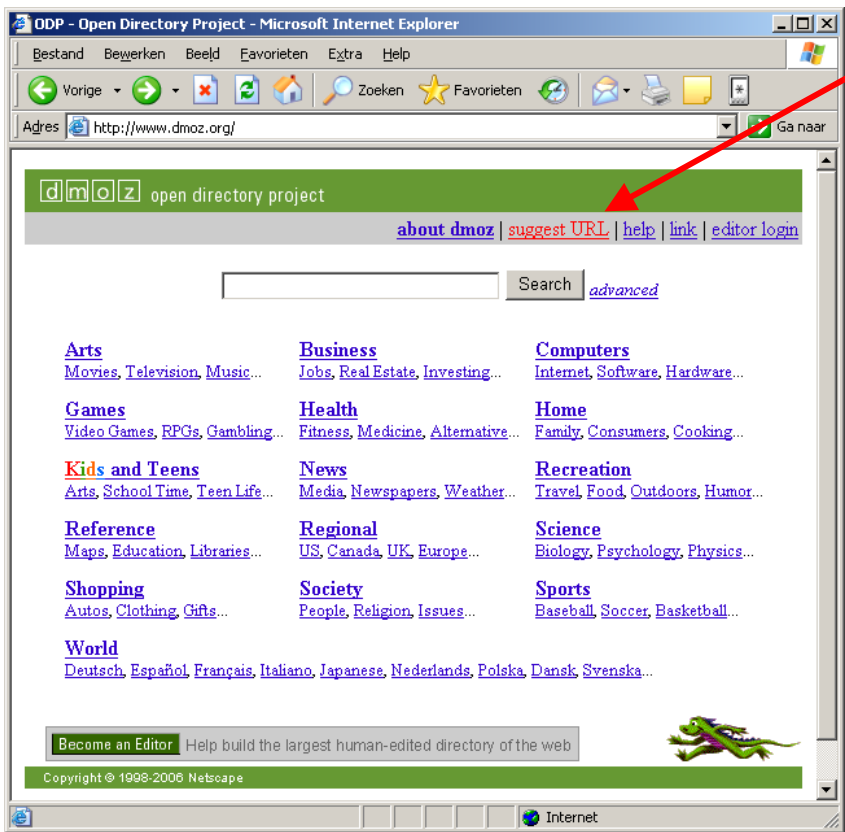
2) Search category
Go back to the homepage and search the category that matches your website best.

3) Submit
Especially the more specific categories have a button on top which is called 'suggest URL'. Hit this one in your category and fill out the required details:

a) URL of your website

---

b) Title of website
- Always opt for the official name of the site.
- Do not use ALL CAPITAL letters.
- Exclude promotional language in the title.

c) Site description

Use no more than 25 words for your site description and make use of two or three key terms. Moreover, try to avoid marketing language. For example, if you were to sell handicrafts from India and would like to be found on phrases as 'handicrafts' and 'art works', 'home decoration' and 'gift items', a description might go as follows:

Example description text for directory

'Purchase Indian handicraft. Your specialist for gift items and art works for home decoration.'

This description is both promotional and brief. You would not want a description like ''World's LARGEST online handicraft store with the best prices and the BEST quality!!!!' This one is full of marketing hype, which most editors dislike.

d) Hit 'submit' button

Suggestion

Before submitting to directories, read their FAQs and use a log book to note at what time you submit your website and what are the most important suggestions. It is wise to log the date of your website submission. With this date you can monitor the progression of the ranking of your website.

Avoid link farms!

Links from free-for-all link farms that are set up to increase the participants' link popularity should be avoided at all costs. It didn't take long before clever webmasters found ways to spam the link popularity ranking, by establishing link farms where the members are guaranteed links from the other member sites in return for adding a similar link page to their own site. Google has started penalizing sites that have link-farm pages.

Ad II) Do a competitors' analyses

You could also increase your link popularity by analysing your competitors that rank well in search engines. A useful tool to do so is the website http://www.iconinteractive.com/tools/pop/index.php, where you can discover which links your competitors have with other sites, such as directories and portals. You can see which directories and other websites have included an external link to the website of your direct competitor. It goes like this:

Step 1: Go to http://www.iconinteractive.com/tools/pop/index.php

Step 2: Fill out your URL in the box and hit 'go'

LINK POPULARITY TOOL

This is an all in one tool to check the number of pages that link to you in AlltheWeb, AltaVista, Google, HotBot, MSN Search, and Yahoo!, as well as check for your site's presence in DMOZ and Zeal.

A site that has a Link Popularity Score of 1,000-5,000 is considered average. A site with a Link Popularity Score of 20,000 is considered popular. Sites with a Link Popularity Score above 100,000 are Internet "Icons".

Domain www.cbi.nl [Go!] (www.domain.com)

Enter URL and click on 'GO!'

Step 3: Results
The number of links to your website appears on your screen. This is measured at 6 separate search engines. The number of links differs per search engine, as their databases are different. For example, the link popularity of www.cbi.nl is almost 20 thousand. About 50 percent is from Google.

Link Popularity Report	
Domain	**www.cbi.nl**
Alexa Traffic Ranking	(view)
Present in DMOZ	Yes (view)
Present in Zeal	No (view)
AlltheWeb	564 (view)
AltaVista	1,900 (view)
Google	10,200 (view)
HotBot	(view)
MSN Search	5,192 (view)
Yahoo!	1,930 (view)
Link Popularity Total	**19,786**
Link Popularity Report executed in 13.58 seconds.	

links to www.cbi.nl from mentioned search engines

Step 4: Learn from competitors
You can analyse these websites by clicking on 'view', which appears after the number given for Google. This will give you an overview of all websites in Google with a link to e.g. www.cbi.nl. You could do the same to find all websites that link to the website of your competitor. There is a good chance that these websites may also be willing to link to your website!
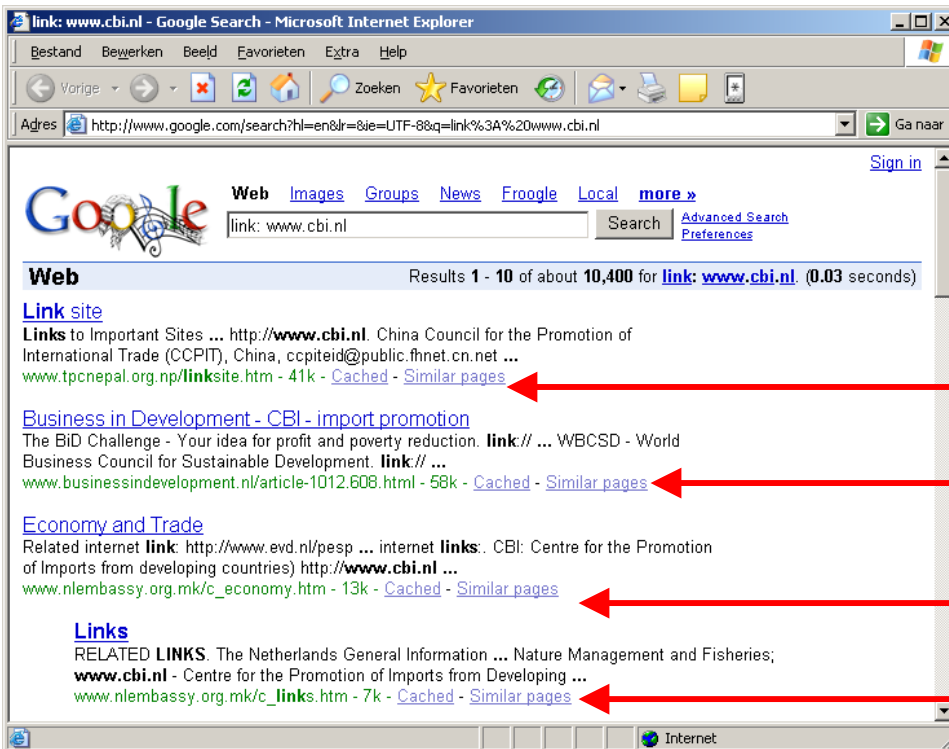
Websites that link to www.cbi.nl

Please note that there are more methods to locate directories and portals. Just use search engines and look for keywords like 'portals', 'directory' in combination with a description of your product.

Ad III) Ask for link exchange
You could ask webmasters of other websites to include a link to your website. People like to link to other sites that are going to make theirs look good. Try to find the name of the webmaster and use it when you contact him/her. Open with some flattery, but be specific. Tell them that you've already given them a link on your site or will do so, and give them the URL of that page. Finally, tell them what your site has to offer and what kind of extra interest it offers for their visitors.

Figure 3.6 shows an example of a possible link request. Make sure that the text of the proposed link includes the keyword phrase the page is optimized for. Hence, for the Bed & Breakfast Hotel in the old City of Quito, a link named 'Bed & Breakfast Hotel in the old City of Quito' will be much more efficient than a link that simply said 'Bed & Breakfast'.

Figure 3.6 Example link request by e-mail

Subject: request for website link exchange

Dear Mr Brown,

We found your name on the contact part of your excellent website. We especially like the fast navigation and the up-to-date content on your new products.

The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) is a Dutch agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aims to assist exporters from developing countries in entering the EU market. The CBI website contains EU market information on import, export and consumption, market trends, distribution and pricing, market access requirements and marketing guidelines for about 35 market sectors. This information could be interesting for the visitors of your website.

We are hoping you will consider a link from your website to ours: www.cbi.nl, as we feel it will benefit both parties by leading more visitors to both websites and resulting into a higher (page) ranking with search engines. In return, the CBI will be happy to include a link to your website.

Here is the necessary HTML-code for the link:
```
<a href="http://www.cbi.nl" target="_blank"> CBI</a><br>
Centre for the Promotion of imports from developing countries<br>
```

We'd be grateful if you could let us know (by e-mail) if you are happy to set up the link. Or alternatively, please contact us if you have any questions or comments.

Yours sincerely,

<< name >>
<< contact details>>

3.3 E-mail
'In a survey of fair trade organizations, e-mail was identified as the most important communication medium, ahead of fax and telephone, by both producers and importing organizations.'
Source: Big world

E-mail can be used both as a communication instrument and for commercial use. In this section you will find some suggestions for sending e-mails. They are:

1 - Mass e-mailing / spamming
2 – Creating an E-mail list
3 - Suggestions for sending e-mail
4 – Autoresponders

They are discussed below.

Ad 1) Mass e-mailing / spamming
As a start: sending unwanted e-mails is illegal practice in the European Union! You are highly recommended to abide by this law! This means you can only target people who have agreed to be contacted by you.

Ad 2) Creating an E-mail list
The best way by far to use e-mail addresses for direct marketing purposes (and to attract visitors to your website) is to use an e-mail list that you have created yourself. Some suggestions:

- Select e-mail addresses from your own contact database. Compile the list of people who have done business with your company before. Add people who have been successfully contacted but haven't yet purchased. Then add the people who have asked for further information directly from your company;
- Include registration possibilities on your own website;
- Offer a subscription to your electronic newsletter;
- Increase the response rate by guaranteeing that all replies will be confidential and that you will not distribute the respondent's e-mail address.

The actual sending of e-mails can be done for a limited number (i.e. a few thousand) by Microsoft Outlook. For much larger numbers of e-mail addresses, specific products can be bought. At all times make sure your provider does support mass e-mailing.

Ad 3) Suggestions for sending e-mail
E-mail is an informal medium of communication, but some basic rules of style or Netiquette (network etiquette) are expected. They are, among other things:

a) DO NOT TYPE IN ALL CAPS
This is perceived as shouting!

b) Try to make your e-mail personal
The most important element is to make your e-mail personal. Business people in the EU receive so much e-mail that you have to distinguish your e-mail from the other e-mails. To give you an indication, they receive 100 e-mails per day! The first thing they do in the morning is to move as many e-mails as possible to the trash bin.

If you really would like to increase the effectiveness of your e-mail, then telephone the receiver in advance. For example give him a telephone call and ask him whether you may send him more information about your company. Repeat your name and company and send the e-mail to him. Furthermore, you could mention your company's name in the 'from' box of the e-mail. The receiver will see that he/she has received an e-mail from, for example, 'Mr Bupai / Exim Software'.

c) Attractive subject lines
Again, most EU buyers are very, very busy. Mostly they will only open messages with captivating subject lines. Think creatively!

Example: attractive subject line

A software company in Quito used the following subject line in a successful email campaign.

"Joost, tonight you will have saxo on the roof of hotel Quito"

d) Other tips

1) Activate your readers
Be as specific as possible about what the action is that you expect from your readers. Example: 'Could you please give feedback on this offer?'

2) Use simple words and short sentences

3) Limit the line length to 65-70 characters
Some e-mail programs will wrap the text in the wrong places.

4) Avoid attachments at the initial contact.
5) Http:// for quoting websites
When sending a website address, always type it in the form of "http://…" because some e-mail programs will permit the user to click on a web address to go there straightaway.

6) Review before sending
Review your e-mail before you send it. Although e-mail is a more informal method of communication than writing a letter, be sure you make your points clear and concise. It is a permanent record and can easily be forwarded to others. Use a spell checker if available.

7) Use your signature line (see section 3.3)

8) Sending to several recipients
When you send a message to several recipients, it is usually sensible to use BCC (Blind Carbon Copy). This is handy when you want to mail the same information to many people, but do not wish to reveal each person's e-mail address. To use this BCC in Outlook Express, add it by selecting a new message, and then choose 'view' and 'all headers'.

9) Make back-ups
Make regular back-ups of your messages and address book. In case your computer crashes, your contacts and messages will be stored safely.

Ad 4) Autoresponders
Business people tend to expect immediate responses to e-mail these days and when they do not get them they feel they are being ignored. So setting up an auto-responder is a good way of keeping people tuned to your movements.

If your Internet Service Provider has activated the option 'autoresponder', you could answer every incoming e-mail automatically. You could write this message yourself, make it short and state that you are not available at the office for some days/weeks. Include the date of return as well. It is possible to set up an auto-responder in Outlook Express. However, a limitation is that you have to leave the computer turned on, the e-mail program running and the system connected to the Internet. This will work if you have an always-on Net connection, but you do not want to do this if you use a dial-up Internet connection.

Signature line
Signature lines are the letterhead of your e-mail message and could be included in every e-mail you send. Typically they include 5 -10 lines of contact information for you and/or your business. It usually includes contact information and may also include a line or two of promotion for a product or service, the so-called tagline. Because Internet e-mail functions with ASCII text (no bold or italicized characters, for instance), these signature lines are often dressed up with other keyboard characters (= = =). Figure 3.7 shows you an example of a signature line.

Figure 3.7 Example e-mail signature line

= =
Alan Smith (example)
Intelligence BV
Specialized in market research
Lange laan 1, 2512 FG Amsterdam
Tel: + 31 (0) 99 - 153555 Fax: +31 (0) 99 - 161616
Alan.smith@intelligence.nl
http://www.intelligence.nl
"Experience the power of market research": http://www.intelligence.nl/marketresearch
= =

Tips
Of course you can adapt your tagline ('Experience the power of internet …') to your target group or to your content message. The most important advantage of a signature line is that you can trigger your target group to visit your site. Some tips are:
- Put something up for sale, present a special offer or give something for free
- Announce a contest
- Announce a fair
- Announce the prizes your company has won.

3.4 Newsgroups

Small Dutch vineyard 'De Linie' sells its wines to the USA
Web marketer Hoogendonck has used the Internet intensively to promote the website of the Dutch wine makers among prospects, trade press and importers. 'There are special sites like www.wine.com, which is a form of electronic platform for the wine industry. I left some messages and it has led to a number of reactions from importers.'

Source: Buitenlandse markten, July 2002

A newsgroup is a discussion about a particular subject which consists of messages submitted by many users. All members can view all messages posted to a newsgroup. Make sure you are in the correct newsgroup before posting a message. Avoid widespread, unwanted postings, so called 'spamming'. Read the following case of Canter and Siegel and see what misusing newsgroups can lead to.

Spam case: Canter and Siegel
Mister Canter runs the law firm Canter & Siegel with his wife Martha Siegel. They sent a message over the Internet offering the firm's services to anyone who wanted to take part in a US government lottery of 'green card' work permits. He posted the message to approximately six thousand (6,000!) of the electronic forums known as 'Usenet newsgroups'. By doing so, he breached the unwritten rules of the Usenet and provoked an enormous row. The typical response of annoyed readers is to e-mail an insulting message or 'flame' to the writer, or send a 'mail-bomb', a huge, useless program that takes up large amounts of the receiver's disc space.

Canter and Siegel received 20,000 flames and reams of junk faxes. Mail-bombs sent to them congested the computer system of their 'service provider' that linked their PC to the Internet. After the system crashed more than 15 times, the company terminated Canter &Siegel's account, stating that its actions were interfering with the service to its other clients. The couple immediately switched to another service provider, called Netcom. However, Netcom also cut them off after some weeks.

Lesson learned: avoid spamming on the Internet!

Source: http://www.kkc.net/cs/new-sci1.txt

3.5 Affiliate marketing

Affiliate marketing, also known as performance-based marketing, allows online businesses to expand their reach and distribution through commission-based partnerships across the web. This is a program where a person (an affiliate) is paid a commission to advertise a particular product, service or website. The affiliate is given a special link to refer customers to the target website.

The company pays a commission based on hits and/or sales from these links. The amount of the commission paid varies. Most programs pay for sales; some programs pay for clicks on their site. Some programs even pay for finding new affiliates. Associate programs are often used by very well-known websites such as Amazon.com. Under this scheme, associate sites encourage their surfers to make transactions on another site such as Amazon.com. In case of successful redirections and/or transactions, affiliate sites are rewarded with commissions. Figure 3.8 shows you a simple picture of the affiliate program of Amazon.

Figure 3.8 Affiliate program Amazon

Source: www.amazon.com

3.6 Viral marketing

Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for growth in the message's exposure and influence. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, or even millions. The advantage of viral marketing is that the receiver knows the person who sent the e-mail and will open the mail and read it with more interest. The picture below makes in short clear what is about: 'introduce this site to a friend now!'.

Example: Classic from Hotmail.com

The classic example of viral marketing is Hotmail.com, one of the first free Web-based e-mail services. The strategy is simple:

1) Give away free e-mail addresses and services
2) Attach a simple tag at the bottom of every e-mail message: 'Get your private, free e-mail at http://www.hotmail.com'
3) Everyone who receives that e-mail will see the tag at the bottom. Here starts the snowball effect!
4) More people sign up for their own free e-mail service and
5) Send messages to their own ever-increasing circles of friends and associates.

3.7 Testimonials

Another possibility is to consider a page of Testimonials. A testimonial is a personal recommendation of a product or service by a customer. Examples:
- 'Item arrived in perfect condition, was very well-packed'
- 'Beautiful artwork. I look forward to purchasing more items'

The following example of a testimonial comes from the tourism sector (figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9 Testimonials Tourism

Source: www.ginz.com/new_zeeland/comments/

Some tips for using testimonials:

- Always use real testimonials instead of made-up ones.
- Longer testimonials -two or three sentences- come across as more believable than just one word.
- Specific, detailed testimonials are better than general or superlative testimonials.
- Use full attribution. Include the person's name, city and state, and (if it is a business customer) their job title and company (e.g. 'Rob Westerhof, President, PSV Eindhoven').
- Get permission. Make sure you get permission from your customer to reprint his words before including his testimonial in your copy.

3.8 Newsletter or E-zine

Advantages

This is a brief digest of important or noteworthy information. A newsletter may be developed by individuals for sale or distributed for free by associations, professional societies, and companies as a method of reaching various audiences quickly. E-mail newsletters continue to be among the most important ways to communicate with customers on the Internet. Newsletters build relationships with users, and also offer users an added social benefit in that they can forward relevant newsletters to friends and colleagues.

Customer made

Still, users are highly critical of newsletters that waste their time, and often ignore or delete newsletters that have insufficient usability. People get a lot of e-mail. They do not have time to read a lot of text. The most frequent complaints about newsletters are that they arrive too often and with too much information; "Keep it brief." Newsletters must also be designed to facilitate scanning.

Newsletter formats

Newsletters can be produced in several formats. For businesses, the most economical and most readily acceptable newsletter formats are plain text e-mails, HTML e-mails, an HTML page on your website, PDF, and print. Each newsletter format has its own advantages and disadvantages. (See table 3.3). If you send in HTML-format, once again, make sure that your customers can decode it.

Table 3.3 E-mail newsletter format: pros and cons

Format	Pros	Cons
Plain text	• Easy to format	• Limited to text only
HTML E-mail	• Visually appealing • Allows for creativeness	• Restricted in size • Can only be fully viewed while reader is online
HTML Web Page	• Endless possibilities for design • Room for lots of content & graphics • Can be as extensive as you like • You do not need to send it as e-mail attachment	• Takes time to design • Reader has to be online to view it
PDF	• Endless possibilities for design • Room for lots of content and graphics • Can be as extensive as you like • You only need to send a text e-mail with a link to the page • Readers can save it to their computer and read at their leisure	• The larger the format, the longer it takes to produce • You need to have the full version of Adobe

Source: the Internet and own experience

Basic elements

Newsletters contain several basic elements:
1) Name and introduction
2) Colophon
3) Table of contents
4) (Un)subscribe possibility

Ad 1) Name and introduction

Put the company name at the top of the newsletter. It is the first thing the receiver sees and it is a sign of recognition. Use your own logo and colours. Briefly present the content and the goal of the newsletter (tagline). Mention the date and number of publishing.

Ad 2) Colophon

The colophon shows information about the writer of the newsletter and the contact possibilities. Put the colophon at the bottom at the newsletter. Also include the possibility to unsubscribe and the person who is responsible for the newsletter (company name, contact person, address, phone number and e-mail address).

Ad 3) Table of contents

The table of contents is a very important part of the newsletter. You must put it at the beginning of the newsletter. This way your customer can scan quickly on what is coming. You have to trigger the reader to read more. But be realistic.

Ad 4) Possibility to (un)subscribe

Always give your customers the possibility to (un)subscribe in an easy manner.

Content

What newsletter content should be included? Again, your target audience will be the main factor that will determine what you want to include. However, no matter who your audience is, be sure to make your newsletter content timely. Other ideas for possible content for your newsletter are:

- special dates
- helpful links and tips
- testimonials
- profiles of your clients or contacts
- upcoming events in your industry
- information about what your (new) business offers.

Creating subject lines

When you send newsletters to potential customers, you will want to avoid having them hit the "delete" button. The goal is to get your e-mails opened, read, and acted upon. Be aware that you offer your customer something he really wants, and try to be as specific as possible. Instead of saying, 'A software solution that gets results!', a better subject line would be: 'Our monitoring software decreases downtime by 15%'.

Newsletter promotion

The next step in the success of your newsletter or e-zine is its promotion. The following are just a few suggestions for newsletter promotion:

- Include your article archives on your website and be sure to have an online registration form for your visitors.
- Put a link to your newsletter in the signature lines you use in your e-mails.
- If you write articles, be sure to add a short sentence about your newsletter in the contact information that you include at the end.
- Invite your newsletter readers to pass on each and every issue of your newsletter to their friends and associates. Forwardees are a great source for new subscriptions. Follow-up a forward with a brief note encouraging them to subscribe by clicking an included link.
- Exchange ads or information with other newsletter publishers.
- Submit your newsletter to various relevant other sites.

Tool to rate spam level of newsletters

As described in section 3.3, sending spam or unsolicited e-mail is the fastest way to generate ill will. The American Marketing Association offers a free tool to evaluate whether your e-mail marketing efforts will be blocked as spam. Go to http://www.marketingpower.com/spamchecker to see how your e-mails and newsletters rate.

E-zines

E-zines are similar to newsletters. An E-zine is an electronically distributed magazine. It can be sent by e-mail or shown on a web page. You can make an E-zine on your own but you can also promote your website and company in E-zines of others. There are many directories of "e-mail newsletters" (otherwise known as "e-zines") on the Internet. In such a publication you can sponsor someone, you can advertise or write an interesting article. Most important is that your target group will read the E-zine. Again ask your clients and relevant (EU) associations which E-zines are relevant.

3.9 Returning visitors

A site cannot become truly popular unless it also appeals to new users so much that they decide to come back again and again. In most cases it will be more profitable to sell more products to existing clients than to new clients. Another advantage that arises from such visitor loyalty is that those who regularly visit your site often mention it to their friends, family and colleagues. That is why you can find several tools here to get returning visitors/customers to your website. An important instrument is the newsletter, discussed in section 3.8. Beside newsletters, there are more instruments to make sure that visitors will return to your site. The following elements will be discussed:

1 quality content
2 favicon
3 add a button 'New'
4 events calendar
5 interesting links (site of the week)
6 chat sessions/bulletin boards / forum

Ad 1) Quality content

'Content is king'

To get returning visitors, the content on your website must be of high quality and good usability. It must contain added value for your target group. Refer to sections 1 and 2 for more information.

Ad 2) Favicon

You can have your page's place in a list marked with a customised icon. This is a good method to get people to remember your site among the pile of web pages they have in their folder of Favourites. The icon consists of a small (16 pixels by 16) graphic beside your website's name in the list. The only thing you have to do is come up with an image small enough to be an icon, yet recognisable as being linked to your site.

Source: www.favicon.com

The favicon is a simple piece of promotion. Look at all the extra exposure you get from readers who add your site

- In the folder
- In the Links bar
- In the Address bar

Ad 3) Add a button 'New'

You can put a button 'new' or 'news' on your website. Here you can introduce new products, trends and/or new developments. This makes it attractive for people to return to the website.

Ad 4) Events

Put an extensive and up-to-date event calendar on your website that is relevant for your target group.

Ad 5) Interesting links (site of the week)

Include interesting links on your website. As long as you have (new) interesting links your customers will come back. A 'site of the week' is a possibility. An alert service can be a possibility as well.

Ad 6) Chat sessions / bulletin boards / forum

An option is to start an online community where visitors may read and post topics about your company, products and business. The task for you is to give quality advice and invite famous persons. The major challenge is that your site must be popular when you start your forum. A forum needs to achieve critical mass before it starts working on its own. If your site does not get enough traffic, the forum will not be frequented by many users and they will write very few new messages. So wait until your site has grown somewhat before you try this trick.

3.10 Press release

> **NO ATTACHMENTS**
> *The best way to make internet journalists angry is to send them an e-mail with an attachment only. The text in the e-mail only states 'press release attached'. The name of the attachment often is 'pressrel.'. The software used is completely unknown. Sometimes it is a Word-file, a WordPerfect-file or even PowerPoint. Sometimes it states 'pressrel.fax'. The best way to treat these attachments is to move them to the trash bin directly, unopened'*

Source: Erwin van der Zande and Francisco van Jole, internet journalists

A press release is the most common contact method with the press. Make them short and punctual and send them well in advance, depending on the target group. Remember that it is a neutral message with information, it is not an advertisement! Some practical suggestions for press releases include:

1) Write it as if you were the journalist (saves time for the receiving person!)

2) Tailor made
A tailor made press release may be worth considering: a journalist of a magazine may write another text than a national newspaper journalist

3) Mind the timing!
Newspapers will be interested in recent events, while supplements and event listings are written weeks (or sometimes months) in advance. Some monthly magazines are even planned up to a year in advance.

4) Lead
Pay special attention to the introduction (lead). It should briefly answer who, what, where, why and when

5) Most important information at beginning
Put the most important information at the beginning, followed by less important details

6) Quote
An attractive quote may make the information even more interesting for the readers

7) Maximum length 1 A4 (in general)

8) Contact details
Include contact details of yourself or your staff (e-mail and mobile phone number)

When sending it by e-mail, please mind the following:
9) BCC
Put all e-mail addresses in the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) address field of the message so that the receivers cannot see to which other parties (competitors) the e-mail has been sent.

10) Always refer to your website.
A great advantage of a press release is that the information is much more reliable for readers than, for example, an advertisement. An advantage of an online press release is that you can reinforce your article with hyperlinks that will contain interesting background information.

3.11 Trade leads
A trade lead is a place on the internet where real buyers and sellers can meet. On those websites it is possible to post:
1 offers to sell
2 offers to buy
3 business opportunities

Ad 1) Offers to sell
On a trade lead site you can announce with an offer to sell that you are looking for a customer. Selling leftovers on trade lead sites is very handy. Example: you can announce on such a website that you are e.g. selling organic cacao and that you would like to sell your products to a buyer in the EU.

Ad 2) Offers to buy
A trade lead site can also offer you the possibility to look for foreign clients. For instance, you can look for anyone interested in the products you supply. You can find an example in figure 3.10, in which a UK importer is looking for a supplier of organic chickpeas.

Figure 3.10 Example offer to buy

Source: www.alibaba.com (January 2006)

Ad 3) Co-operation / business opportunities

Finally, you can use a trade lead site to announce that you are looking for a business partner. For instance, you can indicate that you are looking for an agent or an importer in France.

There are hundreds of available trade lead sites. How do you choose the right ones? Which ones are reliable? How should you (re)act to enquiries? Below you will find some guidelines and suggestions which can be used in practice.

Evaluating trade leads

Following are some guidelines for evaluating trade leads:
1) Be very wary of companies who post trade leads for large orders and are not easily located in any company or industry directories.
2) Ignore any trade lead which has "letter of intent" or "letter of interest".
3) Ignore companies who claim to deal in any commodity traded on world markets and who are placing trade leads. Traded commodities such as coffee, sugar, urea, oil and gold are handled by well established companies in well established markets.
4) Be suspicious of anybody who prefers phone conversations to written documents.

Responding to trade leads

Following are some guidelines for responding to trade leads:

1) Design materials to answer the most basic questions and provide enough information for a buying decision to be made. Invest some money in a digital catalogue of your products which can be easily transmitted via e-mail or sent by cd-rom. For simplicity's sake, keep the price list and the actual graphics separate, so you can easily edit either one.

2) Do not fall into the sample trap. Unless your samples are extremely inexpensive, charge a minimal fee for them.

3) Understand that most foreign distributors do not make fast buying decisions. It is not at all unusual for an initial order to require 9-18 months from the time of the initial solicitation, depending on the cost of the item.

4) Understand the difference between selling to an end user on a one time basis and selling to a foreign distributor for future distribution. Obviously, in the latter case you would want to give the distributor more attention.

5) Identify your buyer. Check with the Chamber of Commerce, embassies or professional organisations like Graydon and Dun & Bradstreet, and verify that the buyer is trustworthy and financially sound. In some countries, selling to one distributor can by law oblige your company to designate that company as your distributor in that country. Be very careful about designating any company as a distributor without verifying whether or not this will grant exclusivity by law.

Select the right trade lead sites

In order to make a rough selection, have a look at the following different categories of trade leads that are available. Trade lead sites can be categorised as follows:

- Geographically specific trade leads
- Industry specific trade leads
- Government procurement
- Free and fee based

All of these have pros and cons. Whether a trade lead site is suitable for your company depends on several factors. Some filter criteria to select the best trade lead sites are

- Reach
- Target area in EU
- Activities competitors
- Common sense
- Free or fee based

Always be aware that trade lead sites are in fact no more or less than an extra promotion instrument for your company and website. Should you encounter a serious business contact, the normal export conditions and procedures are of importance as well. Trade leads have to fit into your export goals, your entry strategy, the marketing mix and the financial and legal aspects of your marketing plan.

3.12 Marketplaces

E-marketplaces can be described as virtual online markets where buyers, suppliers, distributors and sellers find and exchange information, conduct trade, and collaborate with each other through a collection of information portals, trading exchanges and collaboration tools. E-marketplaces could be e-commerce only (when they offer only transaction facilities), but can also be e-business tools when solutions for integration with other internal processes are provided. A business-to-business e-marketplace:

- is open to several buyers and several sellers
- has a focus on business to business or business to government
- is a trading platform, while the e-marketplace itself does not sell nor buy goods or services traded on the platform
- has at least one trading function

The most important strategic questions for you are:

1) Are you ready to use an E-marketplace?
Even if e-marketplaces are relevant to your business, your company may not be ready for this step. You have to consider whether the cultural environment within your company is right for being able to accommodate change.

2) How do you select the Right E-marketplace?
If you have decided that an e-marketplace may be of interest to your company, we recommend the checklist of www.emarketservices.com. It includes more useful information on marketplaces and gives practical suggestions. Refer to figure 3.11 as well.

Figure 3.11 E-market services
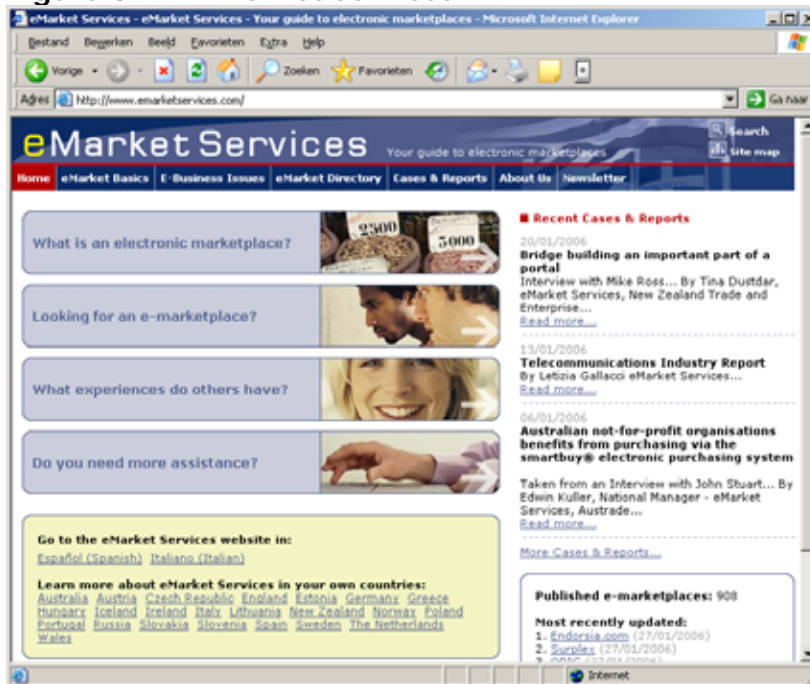
Source: www.emarketservices.com

On the Internet, some very interesting reports about marketplaces (and auctions) and developing countries are available. You will find the web addresses at the end of this subsection; refer to 'more information'.

Main conclusions from these studies/reports are:
- the sales of small exporters from developing countries in market places are disappointing for coffee, handicrafts, garments and horticulture. Important fail factors are, among other things, that e-markets are doing very little do build trust and personal contact, while both are very important in these sectors. Furthermore, a barrier on the internet is that you can see, but you cannot touch, feel and smell.
- the sales and the prices at auctions (like the Cup of Excellence in Brasil) were a great success.

3.13 Offline promotion
So far we have only discussed online promotion instruments. But this does not mean that only online tools must be used. On the contrary, experience and research indicate it is usually best to combine online and offline promotional instruments. Offline promotional methods (including face-to-face contacts) are usually necessary to create basic confidence and awareness while

online promotional methods can be instrumental in reinforcing the effects created by earlier offline promotions.

Below you can find some examples of offline promotion:
1) Classical advertising in newspapers, on television, radio, billboards (very expensive)
2) Print mass-mailing: you can target specific client segments.
3) Physical sales outlets; use the retail outlets of partner companies.

An example can be found at www.ethiogift.com, an online gift delivery service for Ethiopia based in Addis Ababa. Promotion of this website is ensured by the retail outlets of partner companies, Ethiopian restaurants abroad, mostly in the USA and in the UK. The target group is Ethiopians living abroad. Refer to figure 3.12 as well.

Figure 3.12 Ethiogift, off line promotion by Ethiopian restaurants abroad

Source: www.ethiogift.com

4) Existing advertising/mass-mailing material
Add Internet addresses to existing promotional materials like business cards, writing paper, brochures, leaflets/flyers, envelopes, news letters, stickers, mouse pads, pencils, note papers, calendars, key cords, cars and/or clothing.

5) Press coverage
Free publicity is the best promotion there is. The challenge is to get the interest of the journalist. To be regularly covered by the press is important because it is a high impact media and a free form of publicity. However, good press coverage rarely happens by chance (see section 3.10)

It is of the utmost importance that you choose the right combination of online and offline instruments that are complementary and reinforce each other. Refer to the CBI publication 'Your image builder: a guide for establishing and improving commercial images' for background information.

4 EVALUATION

> *"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."*
> *(Sir Winston Churchill)*

The last part of your promotion policy is to evaluate your website promotion instruments. Now you have to discover whether the instruments that you use will are achieving the website goals.

Generally speaking, it is important to consider the results of your website promotion campaign and to evaluate the impact that the Internet had on achieving your marketing goals. For example, if you had formulated a goal to 'Increase online sales by 20% compared to 2005', you can evaluate whether this goal has been realized. Other examples of elements that can be evaluated are:

- Have online sales decreased your offline sales (i.e. cannibalization)?
- Increase/decrease of customers' loyalty (i.e. How often do they buy? How much do they buy per transaction? How long do they remain clients?)
- Average time needed to solve clients' problems (i.e. Do clients effectively use a "selfhelp" website?)

But there is one thing all websites have in common. You want more traffic from your target group(s)! On this information you are able to make a new promotion policy, if necessary. This section deals with information about:

- Trackers
- Search engine ranking and link popularity
- Other possibilities

4.1 Trackers

Trackers provide visitor statistics, such as the URL that your visitor came from, average number of visitors per day, keywords that are used to find your site and the browser or operating system of your visitors. They enable you to analyze the effectiveness of some promotion instruments. Evaluation of these data could mean that the promotion policy has to be changed. Careful analysis of the information of your trackers can give you a lot of promising traffic-building ideas, and can also help you determine which promotion instruments live up to your expectations.

I - Statistics

You would like to know more about your visitors and their behavior, such as the following:

- How many visitors does your site attract?
- Where are your visitors coming from?
- What keywords did they search to find your site?
- What pages did they view?
- Did they buy or convert?

Most trackers offer you basic statistics, like for example:

- Visitors and page views / per hour/day/week
- Page counts - the number of times a page was viewed
- Entry pages - pages that visitors enter your site on
- Exit pages - the last page a visitor viewed on your site
- Referrers - where your visitors came (Google or any other link)
- Search phrases - words used on the search engines to find your site
- Other stats - browsers used and geographic locations

Visitor information

Figure 4.1 shows what kind of information you can retrieve from your visitors. You can get information about the number of unique visitors by day, by week, by month. Furthermore, much more information is available.

Figure 4.1 Summary visitor statistics
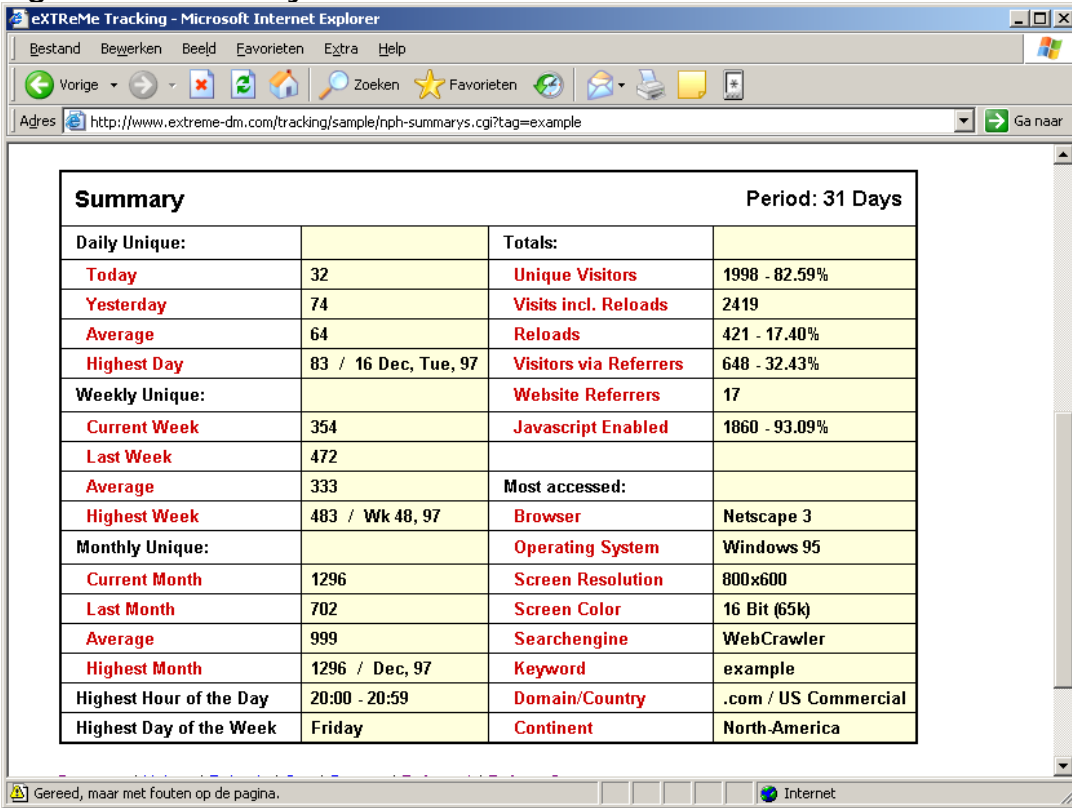
Source: Extreme Tracker

II - Analysis

Search phrases / keywords

As an example, figure 4.2 gives you an overview of keywords used by the visitors of a website. By looking at the search phrases / keywords, you can see what visitors are actually looking for when they come across your site. For example, let's say that you have a site where you sell certified shrimps. Now, you might have decided to put a lot of advertising money into the search phrase "certified shrimps". However, after checking your stats, you realize that visitors to your site were actually searching for "organic shrimps." When you know these search preferences, you can change your focus to different keywords.

Figure 4.2 Keywords analysis
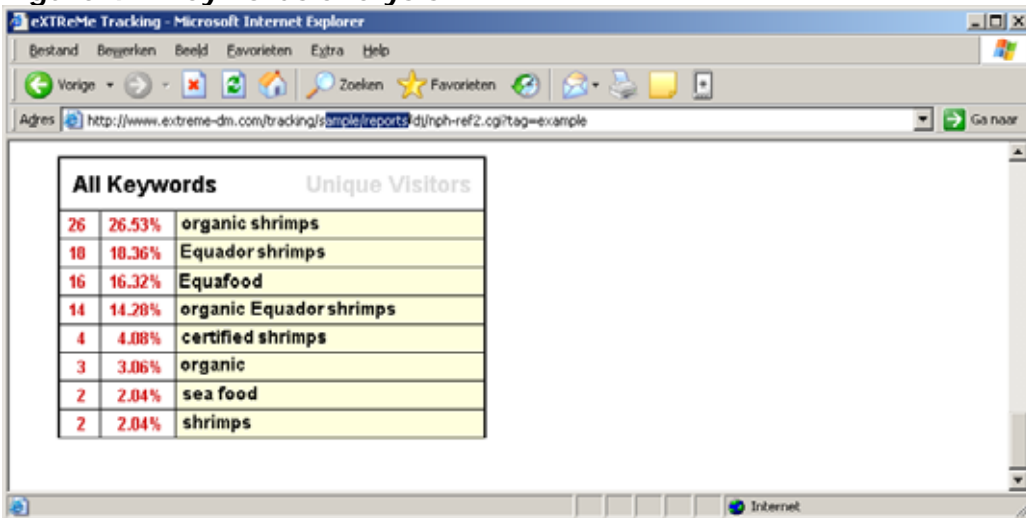
Source: Extreme Tracker

Referrers

Figure 4.3 gives you an overview of the search engines and directories your visitors used in order to find your website. When analyzing the referrers in this example, a very important conclusion is that this website has problems with one of the most popular search engines of this moment. Google is totally missing in this list of referrers! With this knowledge you can adapt your search engine marketing.

Figure 4.3 Used referrers by visitors
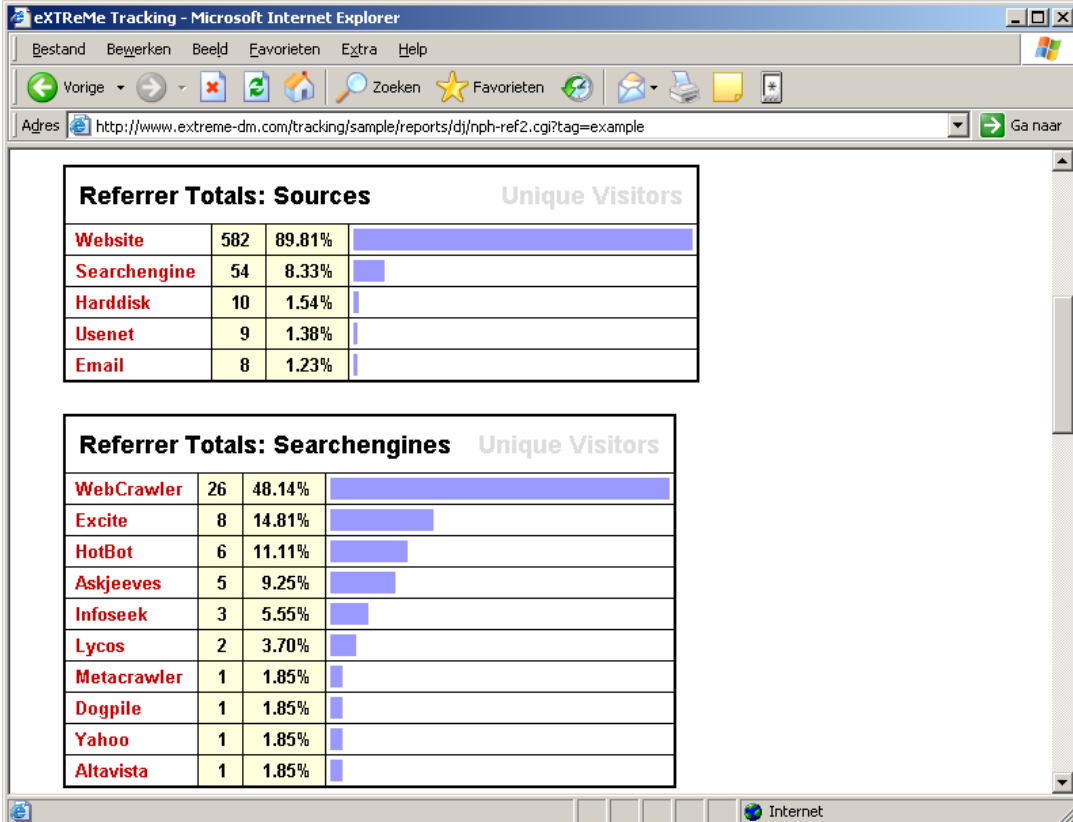
Source: Extreme Tracker

Site tuning

The page counts, entry page and exit page reports tell you where your visitors are going on your site. By knowing their viewing patterns you can fine-tune your site. If, for example, you find that most of your visitors are entering on page x and leaving on the same page, you can safely assume that page x needs some enhancements to keep the attention of your visitors. Furthermore, if you are trying to get visitors to go to your "here is where we close the sale" page, but see that many visitors are actually not getting there, you can modify your site to encourage more of your visitors to click to that page.

III – Selection of trackers

You can find a list of trackers at http://tellertest.com/en/ (refer to figure 4.4). This site tests and compares all available free visitor trackers. Top trackers in the English language for this moment (January 2006) are:

1. StatCounter.com http://www.statcounter.com/
2. CQ Counter http://www.cqcounter.com/

On this site you will find a tracker test database as well. Select the preferred features you look for in a tracker and the tracker database will show you the relevant one(s).

Figure 4.4 Tracker test

Source: http://tellertest.com/en/

Choosing the right web analytics service to provide you with good web analytics is a challenge. Just be sure that the service will give you both the statistical information and the features that you require. The web analytics service provider must be reliable and be able to provide you with good service and support. And, of course, the service should fit into your budget. Try to check the trackers on the CBI website of your competitors. Some trackers will charge a certain fee, but most of the time you will get more detailed services. Finally, your own web host can deliver many site statistics as well. Just ask for it!

4.2 Search engine ranking and link popularity

Monitoring search engine position

Monitoring your progress is a crucial step. If you are listed with search engines, but not within the first two or three pages of results, you lose. Ranking software packages such as Web Position Gold can be useful to analyze your rankings. They will search the various search engines and produce readable reports on search engine positions and trends. They enable you to check your website's position in top search engines.

Web-based

Automated web-based applications are available for checking your rankings, for example NetMechanic's Search Engine Tracker (http://www.netmechanic.com/powerpack/tracker.htm). This program will ask you for your site's URL, list of keywords and your e-mail address. Another interesting website to check your ranking with search engines is the following: http://www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/default.htm. Web-based applications are often free or offer a trial version.

Link popularity

As mentioned in subsection 3.2, a growing number of search engines uses link popularity in their ranking algorithms. Google uses it as its most important factor in ranking sites. HotBot, AltaVista, MSN, Inktomi, and others also use link popularity in their formulas. Eventually, every major engine will use link popularity, so developing and maintaining it is essential for your search engine placement. You can check your link popularity (and the link popularity of your competitors) with http://www.iconinteractive.com/tools/pop/index.php (refer to section 3.2).

4.3 Other possibilities

Other evaluation possibilities are:

- Using (web based) evaluation forms
- Just asking for comments on your site, both online and offline
- Performing usability research

Conclusion

Your evaluation efforts supply you with valuable information which can be used to improve your website(goals) and optimise your promotion instruments. Last but not least we wish you many (retaining) visitors from your target group in the EU!

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Bjørn Borg Kjølseth (2005), National Manager – eMarket Services, Innovation Norway, *Let the Search Engines Find You*

Deelstra, Keesjan, (2005) *Zoekmachinemarketing Over zoekmachinepositionering en adverteren*

Humphrey, John (IDS), Robin Mansell (LSE), Daniel Paré (LSE), Hubert Schmitz (IDS) (2003), *The Reality of E-commerce with Developing Countries*

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Monnier, P.D.(2002), *Promotion and evaluation of e-strategies*, Intracen (www.intracen.org)

Sweeny, S, (2001) *101 ways to promote your website*, E-com publishing

UNCTAD, *E-commerce and Development report 2003* (chapter 6), http://r0.unctad.org/ecommerce/

Verschueren, R.C.E. (red), (2002), *E-commerce handbook,* Weka Publishing

Vroom, B., (2002) *Checklist voor goede websites*, Kluwer

World Tourism Organization (2001), *E-business for Tourism*, Practical Guidelines for Destinations and Businesses

Zimmerman, J., *Internet marketing,* E-compublishing, 2001

APPENDIX I USEFUL WEBSITES

1) WEBSITE GOALS

Research
- ClickZ Stats
  http://www.clickz.com/stats/

- Ebusinessforum
  http://www.ebusinessforum.com

- New Media Review
  http://www.etcnewmedia.com/review/

- Internet Usage World Stats
  http://www.internetworldstats.com/

- eBusiness Lex - The eBusiness Legal Portal
  http://www.ebusinesslex.net/

2) WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

User friendliness
- AnyBrowser.com
  http://www.anybrowser.com
  Browser compatibility verification

- Doctor HTML
  http://www.doctor-html.com/RxHTML/cgi-bin/single.cgi
  Single page analysis

- StickySauce.com
  http://www.devmechanic.com/index.php?option=search&searchword=%20garage
  HTML validation screen resolution validator

- Techniques for web content accessibility guidelines
  http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10-TECHS/

- The usability methods toolbox
  http://jthom.best.vwh.net/usability/usahome.htm

- UPA usability resources
  http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/usability_resources/

- Web design & usability guidelines
  http://usability.gov/guidelines/
  Several detailed examples

- Web Pages That Suck
  http://webpagesthatsuck.com/

Homepage
- Top Ten Guidelines for Homepage Usability
  http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20020512.html

3) PROMOTION INSTRUMENTS

Meta tags
- Netmechanic
  www.netmechanic.com

- Scrubtheweb
  http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/meta-check.html

- Search engine marketing 101
  http://www.pandia.com/marketing101/index.html
  Optimization and promotion tutorial

- Search engine optimization
  http://www.pandia.com/optimization/index.html

- Webjectives
  http://www.webjectives.com/wse.htm

- Whitelines
  http://www.whitelines.nl

- Worldtracker
  http://www.wordtracker.com/

SEM elements to be checked
- CSE HTML Validator Download Page
  http://www.htmlvalidator.com/htmldownload.html

- HTML Help
  www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator

- W3C HTML Home Page
  http://www.w3.org/MarkUp/

Several languages
- Allwhois.com – 'whois' domain name search & lookup
  http://allwhois.com/

- Domain name lookup
  http://www.pandia.com/optimization/domain.html

- EuroDNS
  http://www.eurodns.com
  Register .EU Domain Name - Official .EU Registrar - European Domain Names

Submitting to search engines
- Free website tune-up
  http://www.freewebsiteproviders.com/website-tuneup.htm

- iWeb Webmasters Toolkit
  http://www.jimtools.com
  Collection of helpful tools and utilities

- Promotion World
  http://www.promotionworld.com/
  Free search engine submission and website promotion

- SearchEngines.com
  http://www.searchengines.com/
  Search engine rankings and search engine optimisation tips

- Search engine submissions and registration chart
  http://www.pandia.com/optimization/submit-site.html

- Web Marketing Today Info Center - Wilson Internet Services
  http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/

Google AdWords
- Google Adwords
  https://adwords.google.com/

Submitting with portals, directories and linking pagranking/linkpopulariuty?
- DMOZ
  http://www.dmoz.org/add.html.
  Submitting information

E-mail
- Autoresponders
  http://www.cyberwalker.net/columns/feb01/080201.html
  How to create an autoresponder in Outlook Express

- Everything E-Mail
  http://everythingemail.net/
  E-Mail help and tips

- Welcome to Microsoft Outlook
  http://www.slipstick.com/outlook/welcomefaq.htm
  FAQ for New Users

Signature line
- Coolsig
  http://coolsig.com/

- Signatures
  http://email.about.com/cs/signatures/

Newsgroups
- Google
  http://www.google.com
  Find relevant newsgroups (tab 'groups')

Affiliate marketing
- Affiliate Marketing
  http://www.affiliatemarketing.co.uk/
  Resources to manage your affiliate program

Newsletter or E-zine

- American Marketing Association
  http://www.marketingpower.com/live/content17625.php
  Using E-mail Newsletters as Marketing Tools

- E-mail Newsletter Usability
  http://www.nngroup.com/reports/newsletters/
  127 design guidelines

- Newsletters
  http://results.about.com/newsletters/
  Editor selected results about newsletters

- John Labovitz's e-zine-list
  http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list/

- Webpromotion guru
  http://www.webpromotionguru.com/25.html
  Get Yourself listed in these E-zine directories

Returning visitors

- Add to Link / bookmark link / HTMLSource
  http://www.yourhtmlsource.com/javascript/addto.html

- Favicon.com
  http://www.favicon.com.[2]
  Custom icons for your website

- Icon / Favicon ico
  http://www.yourhtmlsource.com/promotion/favicon.html

- Download.com
  http://download.com
  Search "bmp ico" for favicon related programs

Press release

- Press release template
  http://www.prweb.com/pressreleasetips.php
  How to write a press release that gets noticed by the media.

- The care and feeding of the press
  http://www.netpress.org/careandfeeding.html

- Writing a press release & free publicity for your website
  http://www.internetbasedmoms.com/press-releases/

Trade leads

- A Basic Guide to Exporting
  http://www.unzco.com/basicguide/toc.html
  Pay particular attention to chapter 4

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[2] Submitting icon *homepage*(index.html)
<LINK REL="SHORTCUT ICON" HREF="http://your.DOMAIN.HERE/favicon.ico">
and place icon-program (name favicon.ico) in the root of your webserver.

- E-trade-center
  www.e-trade-center.com / www.dihk.de
  The E-trade-center offers you business requests and assists you in finding business partners

- Fita.org
  http://www.fita.org
  International trade leads, global import export

- GlobalEDGE (TM)
  http://globaledge.msu.edu/
  (Select 'Resource Desk' and 'trade leads')

- Internet Guide to Export Trade Leads
  http://www.trade.gov/td/tic/
  Select 'trade events and trade leads'

- TradeWeb's TradeLeads
  http://www.tradex-consulting.com/tradeweb/tradeleads.shtml

Marketplaces
- Emarket services
  www.emarketservices.com
  Select 'emarket basics', chapter 5 and 6. The reports, case studies and the directory are also very interesting.

- Big world
  www.big-world.org
  Report, *'E-commerce options for Third World craft producers'.*

- Cup of Excellence
  http://www.cupofexcellence.org/
  With the 'Cup of Excellence auction'.

- Eldis
  http://www.eldis.org/
  Select 'ICT for development and E-commerce'

- E-marketservices
  http://www.emarketservices.com/
  Select eMarket Basics, case studies and reports

- Globalisation and poverty research
  http://www.gapresearch.org/production/ecommerce.html
  Select '*The Reality of E-commerce with Developing Countries'.* It is prepared by John Humphrey (IDS), Robin Mansell (LSE), Daniel Paré (LSE), Hubert Schmitz (IDS), March 2003 (pdf file-205KB).

- GTZ's Economic and Employment Promotion Division
  http://www.gtz.de/e-business/english

- International Trade Centre (ITC)
  http://www.intracen.org/
  Select 'business support' and 'e-trade bridge'.
  Select 'about ITC', 'e-Shop/Publications', 'search' and type keyword 'electronic commerce'.

- The European e-Business Market Watch
  http://www.ebusiness-watch.org/marketwatch/
  Select 'publications' and 'links' and 'The European e-Business Report 2003'.

- UNCTAD Electronic Commerce Branch
  http://r0.unctad.org/ecommerce/.
  Select 'E-Commerce and Development Report'. Includes report on '2003 Marketplaces for coffee'

4) EVALUATION

Trackers
- Tracking Your Visitors
  http://entrepreneurs.about.com/cs/marketing/a/visitortracking.htm?terms=site+statistics
  How (and Why) to Read Your Web Statistics

- Free Web counters
  http://webdesign.about.com/od/freecounters/

Search engine ranking and link popularity
- Check your website position in search engines
  http://www.webyield.net/position.html

Other possibilities
- Sample online web questionnaire
  http://www.questionpro.com/akira/showLibrary.do?mode=1&categoryID=6