

Promote Your URL on All Communications

Once you've invested time and effort to produce a great Web site for your company, be sure to let your customers know it's there. Place your URL prominently on all your stationery, promotional materials, and T-shirts, as well as on packaging, invoices, and receipts -- in other words, wherever you would print your company's name or telephone number.

If you have only a limited budget to promote your Web site, including the URL on **all** communications is one inexpensive way to increase traffic. If your potential customers know they can find out more about your products or services by visiting your Web site, many will do so.

If your company sends out any business letters **before** your letterhead has been reprinted with the Web site URL, be sure to type the URL and the company's main e-mail address under the signature of the sender.

There are three main areas to consider when you set out to promote your URL. Follow our checklists of all the instances of each category, and work through the various pieces as you reprint current material or design new advertising. If you can think of more, let us know!

Checklist for Developing Direct Marketing

Direct marketing materials, including direct mail pieces, point-of-sale packaging, and trade show displays, should include the Web site URL and, wherever possible, an e-mail contact address. Run through this checklist to make sure your company is making use of the marketing dollars you would have budgeted anyway.

- Direct mail letters
- Direct mail envelopes
- Flyers, or inclusions with other senders' direct mail
- Product displays, for retail or trade
- Trade show brochures
- Tent cards
- Postcards, or direct response cards
- Entry forms, for contests or sweepstakes
- Promotional items or giveaways, such as
- Pens or pencils
- T-shirts
- Calendars
- Memo pads
- Magnets
- Coffee mugs

Checklist for Developing Awareness Advertising

Another essential place to include your URL is on your company's awareness advertising. Wherever you've found advertising to be effective, such as display or classified ads you purchase in trade journals or newspapers, your URL should direct customers to your Web site.

Remember to include even less obvious awareness advertising, such as resource guides or your Yellow Pages listing. View your site as an second layer of information connected to the ad. Your ad will catch readers' attention; then your Web page offers a more detailed explanation of your product, and perhaps offer the opportunity to place an order on the spot.

- Print advertising, in newspapers, magazines, or trade journals
- TV advertising
- Radio advertising, if your URL is short and easy to remember
- Yellow pages listing or page ad
- Business White pages listing or page ad
- Other directory listings, in trade journals or local resource guides
- Classified advertising
- Employment advertising

Checklist for Developing Collateral

Collateral material includes all your company's literature, whether it's traditional stationery materials or flashier four-color brochures you might send to potential customers. Be sure to include materials that wouldn't be managed from a marketing department.

- Letterhead, all sizes
- Envelopes, all sizes
- Boxes or other packaging
- Business cards
- Receipts
- Invoices
- Packaging inventory lists for mailing
- Fax cover pages
- Account statements
- Order confirmations
- Thank you cards
- Annual reports or informational brochures

User Domain Report

Find out where your customers are located, both in cyberspace and worldwide, by looking at the top-level domains visitors to your site are coming from. All visitors will have some kind of identifier attached to their IP address that tells you about the server that assigned that particular address. Your server logs will track this information, which is like a footprint your users leave behind when they visit your site, at varying levels of detail.

For samples of this type of report, view Flashstats reports User Domain Analysis and Types of Domains, WebLog, or WebTrends under the category "Visitors and Demographics."

Each reporting system will have its own particular manner of presenting this information to you. Some, like the Flashstats 1.5 reporting system, will show you just the basic information. One report shows the actual top-level domains from which people are visiting your site (for example, 134 users from www.microsoft.com), and one shows a list of the most active types of organizations (for example, .com, .net, .gov, and .edu).

Other reporting programs will break down the information further, such as by specifying the top 10 international top-level domains sending visitors to your site. WebTrends shows you a breakdown of where the most popular top-level domains are registered by city and state or province (for example, www.microsoft.com is registered in Washington state), but keep in mind that these figures can be misleading. You will often see a high number of visitors from Virginia, for example, because that is the registered domain location for all accounts with America OnLine. However, you should be always be on the lookout for other high spots of activity. You might have not known that your company's product or service is particularly popular in Australia, for example. A trend is always worth further explanation -- you never know where you might find a previously untapped market.

How to Use This Information

If you do find a particularly high number of visitors from a certain region (and there are no mitigating factors to explain why this is), examine your customer base and look for corresponding data.

Here are some examples of ways you can use this information to identify new markets or market trends among your visitors:

Learn more about a geographical group. Let's say, as we hypothesized above, you find that 12 percent of your site visitors come from the ".au" domain suffix indicating that they are in Australia. Only 4 percent of these visitors buy your product, as opposed to 9 percent of U.S. visitors to your site. You could try to e-mail several of your Australian non-buying visitors and ask them why they haven't ordered. Or, if you don't have their e-mail addresses, look for factors such as international ordering information that might be missing from your order form.

Identify a potential market. Suppose your logs show that your page on East Indian cricket leagues, which you had put up only because your Jamaican marketing manager is a big fan, is the second most visited page on your site. You offer a "Caribbean discount" on that page and get 130 orders in a week. You later develop a strategic marketing alliance with a network of Caribbean Web merchants ...

Look for strong regional markets. If you see high volumes of visitors from a specific part of the country, for example, the Southwestern states, you can dig deeper into those numbers to find out when those visits happen each day -- are these work or home time visits for this time zone? This could lead to valuable clues for future business growth.

Seek out target groups. High volumes of visitors from a certain company might indicate potential for reciprocal site links, or perhaps even a partnership or marketing affiliation with that company. A high number of hits from the domain name "localcollege.edu" could suggest the desirability of advertising your site in the college paper, or offering some kind of student discount to those visitors.

Sometimes trends will be obvious, sometimes more subtle. The key to taking advantage of this new-found customer knowledge is to take it slow. Try making only one significant change at a time to your site in order to measure its effectiveness. Too many changes at once can hinder, rather than help, you in making the most of your new customer relationships.