



## 5 Ways to Put Your Website to Work

By [Sandy Cahill](#)

One of my new clients invested a significant amount of his marketing budget on a new website. He spent a considerable amount of time with a website designer on the content and graphics that would bring it alive. When they launched the new site, there was a sense of pride and accomplishment along with the expectation that the site would help increase revenue and generate leads.

The site had been up for several months with a dismal amount traffic when my client said he regretted investing so much money with no return on the investment. Since his target market was a local one, he questioned whether he really needed this 'global' presence.

After learning a bit more about his business, I thought about several tactics that he could use to increase the amount of local visitors to his website. Try to apply them to your business as I think they can be effective for retail or B2B marketing efforts.

### **#1 - A Fun Giveaway**

Create a co-marketing venture with strategic business partners for a high profile drawing. These can range from hotel gift certificates, to electronic prizes, or anything that's fun or interesting that you can negotiate or purchase. Hold a drawing for your customers as a way of saying thank you for doing business with them.

Send your customers to your website and have them enter their email address so they may be considered for the drawing. You are not only driving new traffic to your website, but you are building an in-house database of email addresses that I tell my clients is worth more than gold.

When you announce the winners you can require them to come to your office to pick up the prizes. That way, you have driven them to your website but you also arranged for a face-to-face visit with them and a little goodwill.

### **#2 – Business Card Drawing**

Ask local businesses such as restaurants and dry cleaners to sponsor a monthly business card drawing giveaway with you in exchange for an electronic list of their customers.

The restaurant, for example, would have a small bowl or box for business people to drop their business cards into for the free giveaway. You pay for the two free lunches and to convert the business cards into a database list for the restaurant. The restaurant commits to sponsoring the business card drop boxes and to an endorsed monthly email to their customers plugging your business.

Once you have the endorsed mailing you can continue to mine your 'golden' in-house list by sending an informative article like this one, a special offer that will get their attention, or drive them to your website for more product information. This is the beginning of building that all-important relationship that's so necessary to making a sale.

### **#3 - Referral Email Marketing**

Your in-house mailing list starts by collecting the email addresses of all your current customers, if you don't already have them. One way to do this is by setting aside a day or two to call customers and offer to send them a coupon via email in exchange for their email address.

A second way is to send out a physical newsletter and extend a great offer to everyone who sends you an email within the next 48 hours.

Put a viral marketing spin on this strategy by emailing your customers an offer for a free gift or valuable coupon if they forward your email offer to three local friends using a tell-a-friend or refer-it script.

### **#4 – Joint Email Mailings**

Partner with another local vendor or business whose services you trust and suggest a joint-email. You send an email endorsing your partner's services with a link to their site and they send an email to their customer base endorsing your services with a link to your site.

Choose partners whose customers would benefit and potentially purchase your product and service. In email marketing, as well as traditional direct mail marketing, the list is crucial to the success of the offer.

### **#5 – Local Search Engine**

Be sure you optimize your website for your product or service and include your location. Then, submit your site to the big search engine sites like Yahoo, Google and MSN. Some are free and some charge a couple of hundred dollars as an annual fee. But remember, you could get that back and more with just one new sale. Many times I have found local suppliers that fulfilled my requirements by using the Internet.

Note that Google and Yahoo have created local search engines that may be worth exploring. Much of my research points to this as the wave of the future and will be replacing your local Yellow Pages book.

### **Finally**

A little creativity and effort will draw attention and visitors to your website. You could spend a lot of money by advertising your website address but the most successful, low cost, alternatives to drawing traffic to your website are joint ventures with local business people who also have a web presence.

Remember to always include your website address on all your promotional materials. If you're going to have a website, you need to promote it regularly and add it to anything that would normally have your business name and phone number.

All of these website tactics are viable and easy to do. Some are easier than others or may be more appropriate for your business. But no matter what your business or industry, consistent promotion will put your site to work for you by making it a powerful marketing tool.