

The Internet Treasure Chest

50 Ways To Advertise Your Web Site Worldwide!

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Second Edition

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Advertising Your Web Site

Congratulations! You have your own Web business and are on your way to making your dreams come true. There are few things as exciting or rewarding as owning your own business!

This manual is designed as a reference. You don't have to read through it from beginning to end. You don't have to try the first idea before you try the second. Skim through this material and stop to read things that catch your eye. Try ideas that appeal to you. There is nothing special in the order the ideas are presented. Don't be afraid to alter an idea or add something to an idea. Your knowledge and experience will make all the difference.

The things you find throughout this manual are designed to stimulate your imagination. You'll learn over 50 ways to advertise your Web Site for little or no money. Use what you learn here, but don't limit yourself to just these strategies. No one knows your business as well as you and no one can "sell" it to potential customers as well as you. Take the ideas you find to "get the juices flowing." **Be creative! Be inventive! And have FUN!**

Notes

Chapter One: What You Need To Know

1

What is the purpose of advertising? There are a ton of experts who will tell you that a good advertising plan will cause your business to grow this much faster or that much bigger. They have charts and studies to prove that advertising works. We don't dispute their findings at all. But we also won't bore you with all those statistics and graphs. You know the value of good advertising. That's why you're reading this manual. When it comes to running a business on the Net, good advertising can quickly become your key to success!

So, we know that good advertising is critical. But what is "good" advertising? Again, there are experts all over the place with lots of studies who can tell you what makes up a good ad. We think that good advertising is really a simple, straightforward concept.

Good advertising brings more visitors to your Web Site and converts them to customers. That's all. If you create an idea and it generates more hits (the term used to describe a potential customer who comes to your Site) it worked.

Of course, if that were all there was to it, there would be no reason for this manual and you would be out doing something else. So, what do you need to know to get more hits? There are several things you need to determine before planning your own advertising campaign.

2 What can you do?

Take stock of two very important areas: how much time you have to use for advertising and how much money is available. If you are just starting your Web business, both time and money may be in short supply. As you look through the ideas listed in this manual, and as you begin to create your own, choose the ones that fit your own time and money limitations the best. But don't assume that because you don't have the time or finances for a particular advertising idea that you can't use that idea. Look for ways to adjust those ideas so that they do fit what time and money you have available.

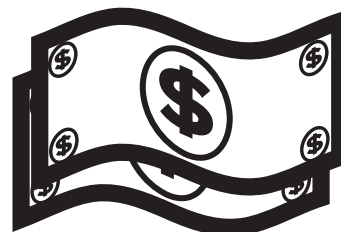
A common mistake among new business owners, and some not so new, is to misjudge what their resources really are and to use an advertising idea that they lack the time or money to do properly and completely. This leaves them frustrated with the results and angry at the wasted time and effort.

Be realistic. As your business grows you will have more of both time and money. Any advertising idea, no matter how limited it may seem, has the potential to be the first step in a very successful advertising campaign.

Notes



Time



Cost

Notes

In order to be successful you must be very clear in your own mind about what you want an advertising idea to accomplish. Certainly we all want more customers, but what do you expect a particular ad to do? How many more hits per day do you expect this ad to bring to your Web Site? If you don't have an idea in your own mind about what an ad should do for your business, you won't be able to judge whether it's working or not.

For example, let's say that you decide to place a small ad in an online newsletter for free. The average number of hits on your Web Site goes up by 25 per day. You decide this is a good number and you may then choose to place similar ads in other online newsletters.

Now, let's assume that you place an ad in a national magazine. You have now invested a rather large sum of money to get your ad out nationally. If the result is the same increase, 25 hits per day, you would probably decide that the ad was not working and would not renew it.

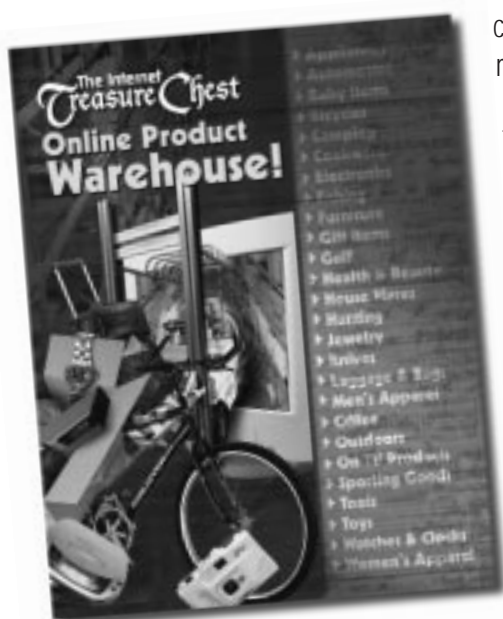
Having a clear expectation for each idea will help you determine which ones are working and which need to be adjusted and refined.

Set deadlines for each ad idea you use. We know that having patience with a new idea is usually necessary. But we believe in "aggressive patience." Set the deadline and watch the number of hits on your Site. If the number is not what you had expected, but is growing, you might want to be patient and let the ad work. On the other hand, if there is no change in the number of hits, you might want to use a different ad idea even before the deadline expires.

Having a strong product line is crucial to good advertising. Your business will grow much faster with a steady stream of "repeat" customers. If you offer products that meet customer needs, you have a much better chance of turning that "first time buyer" into "valued, long time customer." Of course one of the problems is that customers' needs and wants change with the times. Your product line needs to meet those changing needs.

To meet those changing needs you must be able to first determine what they are. We suggest a way to do that in Chapter Two. But even if you know what the needs are, you must be able to provide quality products to meet those needs. This is something that is often lost when advertising is discussed. Good products and good services are important parts of a good, overall advertising campaign.

The Internet Treasure Chest's Online Product Warehouse can offer you a great selection of outstanding products. With over 1000 products available, you have the type of selection necessary to meet the ever changing needs of your established customers while offering a wide choice to first time buyers.



Now that the basics have been covered, it's time to start your advertising campaign!

Remember that there is nothing magical about the order of the ideas listed here, it's you who makes the magic. Pick the ideas that interest you. Use them individually or combine them. Use them in full or in part.

BE CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE!

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Chapter Two: Online Advertising

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The Internet Treasure Chest provides you with a great jump start on your online advertising by helping you easily submit your Web Site to 25 of the most popular search engines and directories on the Internet. These search engines and directories can be used by millions of people around the world each day. This is a great way to advertise. But it is not the only way.

Online advertising is an incredibly fast growing market. By the time you read this manual there may be many more ways to advertise your business on the Internet. Make sure you check our Web Site at www.itctv.com on a regular basis for exciting new updates!

Also, be sure that you watch what other businesses do for their advertising. Surfing the Net and visiting other Sites on a regular basis will not only give you a good idea about what your competition is doing, but can be a great source for your own new advertising ideas.

Section One: Attracting First Timers

Here are some ideas for attracting first time customers to your Site. We have included an estimate of costs and the amount of time needed to implement each of these ideas. However, these two factors vary widely. Don't simply rely on our estimates. Contact the source in your area to determine what your costs might be.

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Remember, no one knows your business like you. When you read these ideas, apply the concepts to your business. Combine your own imagination with these ideas.

1. Link To Other Sites.

One common way for first time visitors to find your Site is through a link from another Site. Linking with another Site can be free and is easy to do.

The first step is to find a Site that is, in some way, related to your merchandise. Contact the "Webmaster" for this Site. Explain who you are and provide information about your great new business. Stroke his ego and tell him what you like about his Site and why you think your link would be a nice addition. Ask if he or she would be willing to place a link on his or her Web Page.

If you have a variety of products available on your Site, be sure to look for Sites for all of them. The Internet Treasure Chest's Online Product Warehouse gives you the option of selecting from over 1000 great products. If you are using this service be sure to contact Web Pages for each of the types of products you select. The more links you are able to establish, the greater the number of potential customers you'll attract.


The Internet Treasure Chest

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 **Cost:** Normally there is no cost. If a Site requests a fee, we suggest you politely decline and find another Site. The Web is a huge place and there are lots of Pages that will do a link exchange for free.

 **Time:** The biggest time consumer will be locating the Sites. However, a few hours using two or three search engines should be enough for you to get started. We suggest that you create an easily altered form e-mail letter that you can send to all of the Sites. There are two things that you want to do. First, make sure that you personalize each e-mail. Use the name of the Webmaster if you know it. Second, send each request separately and don't forget to compliment his Site. This will add to the time a bit, but will increase the chances of a positive response.


It is possible to send all of the e-mail requests at one time by sending copies of the letter to all of the Sites. While this does save time, it may not be very successful. An individual request is more professional and more likely to get you the answer you want.

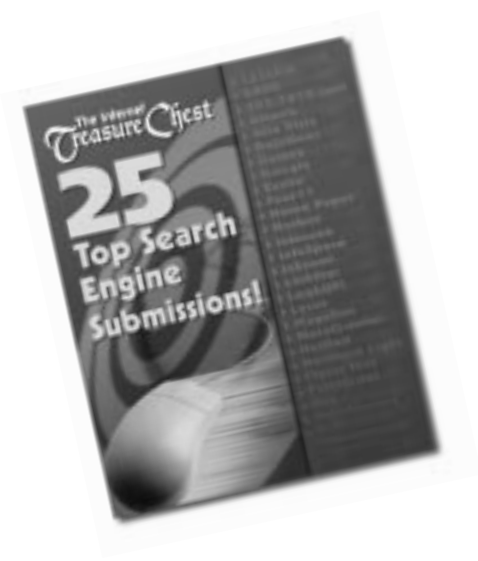
2. Submit To Other Search Engines.

The Internet Treasure Chest helps you submit your Web Site to 25 of the most popular search engines and directories. But don't stop there. Use several search engines. Create a list of other search engines and submit your Web Site to them. Not all search engines find exactly the same Sites. The more opportunities you provide for customers to find your Site, no matter which search engine they use, the better your chances of gaining a customer.

Everyone has a favorite search engine. It would be a mistake to assume that everyone uses the same one you prefer. Increase your exposure as much as possible.

 **Cost:** In many cases there is no cost for submitting to a search engine.

 **Time:** Without the assistance of a custom submission tool, like the one provided in your Internet Treasure Chest, the amount of time it takes for submissions can be a little exhausting and will vary depending on the number of search engines you decide to try. Be sure to determine what information each search engine requires and provide that information accurately and completely.




3. Submit Your Web Site To Other Directories.

Just as with search engines, The Internet Treasure Chest helps you submit your Site with some of the most popular directories on the Internet. But as you explore the Web you may find specialty directories that you can use to let potential customers know you are online and available.

Look for directories that seem to specialize in topics related to your products. Determine what information needs to be included for each directory and submit that information completely and accurately.

 **Cost:** Submit to directories that do not charge a fee.


 **Time:** Expect to spend several hours researching the directories you plan to use and several more hours (depending on the number of directories) submitting the required material. Don't forget to look at directories that offer products and services that complement yours.


4. Participate In A Banner Exchange Program

Banners are those flashing ads that you see occasionally when you visit a Web Site. You can participate in a banner exchange program that allows you to place a banner on another Web Site in exchange for banners being placed on your Site. Two places to go for more information on banner exchange programs are LINK EXCHANGE (<http://adnetwork.bcentral.com>) for general banners and BANNER WOMEN (www.bannerwomen.com) for Sites that are geared primarily for women.

Before using a banner exchange program be sure you understand the requirements of the exchange program. Most programs use a rotating banner format. Your banner is alternated with other banners. Determine how often your banner will be visible. Also be sure you know what type of banner will be located on your Site as part of the exchange.

Do not confuse banner exchange programs with a banner ad purchase program. In a purchase program you are buying the ad and paying someone to put it on a Web Site. We do not recommend these for businesses just starting out. The cost can grow very rapidly with purchased banners. We suggest that if you wish to use banner advertising you try the exchange programs first.

 **Cost:** A banner exchange program is free.

 **Time:** Most banner programs will provide you with all the information you need to place the banner. Banner exchange Sites will have a tutorial available to help you create your banner. Some offer other tools to help you track your banner and its impact on your business. Shop around before committing to one program.

Notes

5. Use Your Auction Site Listing.

As part of The Internet Treasure Chest package you received a manual introducing the amazing world of online auctions. Auctions have become a major market on the Web and a major source of potential customers for you.

By listing items for sale on one or more auction Sites you can be exposed to hundreds or even thousands of new potential customers everyday. And remember, while you may have 20, 30 or 50 bids for the listed item, only one bidder will win. So what are all those other potential buyers going to do? If you let them know that you have other items for sale and how reach you, they might just become your next customers!

One of the things you will need to do when you list an item on the auction Site is provide a description of that item. Let bidders know that you have other items available.

Be sure to check the rules of each auction Site. If it is permitted, list your Web address as part of the information submitted. If the auction Site will not allow this, don't be discouraged. You will be required to post an e-mail address and, as you will see shortly, that will work just as well.



Cost: Some auction Sites charge a listing fee at the time you list the product and a commission, based on the selling price, after the item is sold. However, several auction Sites do not charge a listing fee. Currently, Yahoo.com doesn't have a listing fee, and it is one of the largest auction Sites in the world! You should also consider that this might be the only method of advertising in the world that has the potential to directly add to your profit margin. While you are cleverly advertising in the description of the product, you can also be making a sale!




Time: The biggest time factor is setting up your initial seller's account with the various auction Sites. Since you've created great product descriptions that attract bidders, most of your time spent on this method will be in answering customer e-mail.

6. Use Your E-mail Signature

Most e-mail programs allow you to create a signature that will automatically go out on all e-mail you send. You should use this function to create a signature that includes your Web address and, if you have one, your company slogan or logo.

E-mail has become a major force in the communications market today. Many individuals who don't have any other access to the Internet have e-mail accounts. You no longer have to print expensive envelopes with your company's name to have a visible presence. You can create that presence with e-mail.

 **Cost:** Free (don't you just love that word!)

 **Time:** Almost none. Your e-mail program probably already has this function. Take a few minutes to understand how to create your signature, if you haven't already done so. Then determine what you want to be part of your signature and put those elements into the program. From that point on, the computer does all the work.


7. Join Newsgroups And Discussion Groups

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Newsgroups and Discussion groups are Web Sites dedicated to a specific topic. People post messages about specific topics on these Sites. These Web Sites are filled with potential customers who have a common interest. If you have products related to that interest they all become potential customers. Standard practice is to not openly post messages promoting your Web Site business. This will often cause a very negative response. Rather, participate in the discussion and establish yourself as an expert. It is then possible to work into your messages that you have a Web Site that contains information others may find useful (see tip number 8).

Large corporations spend huge amounts of money finding "target audiences" for their advertising. Newsgroups and Discussion groups do that for you.


 **Cost:** Free (There's that word again!)

 **Time:** Only as much as you wish to spend. The more you participate, the more chances you will have to put in a plug for your Web Site. You may also find that these Sites will have useful information and are enjoyable.

8. Create a Page on your Web Site for information of interest to potential customers.

Everyone likes something for free! You can give away information at no cost. Place useful tips and advice on a separate Page within your Web Site. Label each section using terms that search engines can find. For instance, if you were to create a Page of tips on purchasing a mountain bike be sure that the term MOUNTAIN BIKE is used early and often. Then, be sure that there are clear links from the information Page to your catalog Pages. Include suggestions throughout the information Page that visitors use the links to view the outstanding products available.

 Cost: Free


 Time: With the Internet Treasures Chest, creating new Web Pages for your Site is fast and easy! Do some research and talk to those who are experts. Gather information that will be useful to others as they become potential customers.

9. Contribute To Other Web Sites

As you "surf cyberspace" make note of specialty Pages that provide articles of interest for their readers. Determine what type of articles these Sites include and write articles that they would be willing to post.

For example, we recently viSited a Site for mountain biking enthusiasts. On the Site was an article on bike handling tips. When we scanned the article we discovered that it had been submitted by a commercial mountain bike company. There, at the bottom of the article, was all the information about how to contact them. The article gave useful information and we left that Page believing the commercial company was not just selling bikes, but customer service as well. Without any personal contact that company had begun to establish a sense of trust with us. What a powerful way to advertise!

 Cost: Free

 Time: You will need to spend time locating the specialty Pages and determining the type of articles that will best suit each Page. It may take several hours to write each article. However, the potential payback is very high. Not only are you letting customers know that your Site is out there, but you are establishing an expertise. For us, that translated into a sense of trust, and we can't think of anything that is more likely to bring customers to your Web Site than that.

10. Ads in E-Zines

E-Zines are online magazines. Their big advantage over print magazines for a Web business owner is that they are online. Therefore, everyone who sees your ad has the ability to visit your Site. This cannot be said for print magazines.

Some E-Zines are directed at a very focussed audience. If you have a product that is related to that audience, E-Zines offer an interesting option.

When considering whether to use an E-Zine ad or not remember that because the reader is online when your ad is seen, that reader can, with a few mouse clicks or keystrokes on the keyboard, become a potential customer.



Cost: This will vary with the E-Zine. Consider placing ads with small, topic-focussed E-Zines to determine how effective they will be for you before placing ads in the larger E-Zines.



Time: You will need to research the E-Zines to determine their intended audiences. For some this will be very obvious, but others may require that you read several issues. Be sure to pay attention to the ads that are already in the E-Zine. This will be a good indication of the type of reader the E-Zine is attracting.

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11. Place An Ad In E-mail Newsletters

There are a vast number of newsletters published every day. Normally these are created by and for people with a common interest. Subscriptions to e-mail newsletters are often free. Consider subscribing to a number of these that are related to the various products on your Web Site. Take the time to read them and determine which you find easiest and most enjoyable to read. If you like reading it others probably will as well. Newsletters that are read are the ones to use for placing ads.



Cost: The cost here will be relatively low, especially if you choose the smaller newsletters with fewer ads already in place. However, be sure that it is a newsletter you think will be read. Placing an ad in a newsletter that isn't read, regardless of the price, is not a good investment.





Time: At first it will take time to locate, subscribe, and read a wide variety of newsletters. However, once you have done the initial work and have selected the newsletters to use the time factor is minimal.

Notes

12. Join One Or More Web Rings

A Web Ring is a group of Web Sites all linked together. All of the Web Sites in a Web Ring deal with the same subject. You would put the Web Ring control panel on your Site and visitors could use that to move around the Web Ring. The advertising advantage is that the people using the Web Ring have a common interest.

 **Cost:** Some Web Rings are free to join. Others will charge a fee. The charges vary widely. Be sure you know exactly what fees, if any, exist before joining any Web Ring.

 **Time:** You will need to do some research to determine which Web Rings to join. You will need to install the Web Ring controls onto your Web Site. However, after that the time commitment is minimal.

Section Two: Getting Customers To Come Back Often

Notes

Up until now we have focussed on ways to get first time customers to your Site. Finding new customers is essential for any business. But turning them into repeat customers may be the key to fulfilling all of your dreams.

In this section we are going to focus on ways to get customers to come back to your Site, even if they don't think they need anything or are not in the market to buy. If they come to the Web Site they just might discover that you have something that they have wanted forever but couldn't find. Or maybe you have added a new product that they just have to have. Maybe they see the perfect gift for that birthday next month. The list goes on and on. But it all begins with getting them to the Site again. The goal of this section is to get your customers to "bookmark" your Site!

13. Offer An Advice Page That Changes Regularly

In the last section we suggested that you create a Page filled with useful information that search engines would find. That Page doesn't need to change often since it was designed for first time customers. However, for customers who have already found your Site, you will need to offer advice that you update on a regular basis.

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The more often you update this Site, the more often customers will return to see what advice is there. Be sure to put on the Page how often it will be updated and maintain that schedule. If customers come back several times expecting changes but find none, they will lose interest and not come back.



Cost: Free



Time: With the Internet Treasures Chest, creating new Web Pages for your Site is fast and easy! When considering this as a possible ad technique be sure to allow for some research time. You may find that gathering information for this Page may become one of your favorite parts of running your own business.


14. Offer A Free "Joke Of The Day"

Having a new joke each day available on your Web Site is one way to encourage customers to "bookmark" your Site and come back often. Of course, it would be very time consuming to have to put up a new joke each day.

You can install a "joke engine" that will automatically place a new joke on your Web Site each day. And the best part is you can do this for FREE! There are Web Sites that have joke engines available that you can install on your Web Site that will do all the work and are free of charge. One such Site is NewJoke.com (<http://newjoke.com/Home.htm>).

A note of caution is needed here. Before you decide to use this option or what Pages to use it on, remember that you don't control the jokes. There may very well be jokes that are not suitable for all audiences. This may be an effective way to get customers back, but if they are offended by the jokes you can be sure they won't return soon.

 Cost: Free

 Time: This will depend on the joke engine and how complicated it is to install and your familiarity with your computer. It might take only a matter of minutes. Check to determine how time consuming installation will be.

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15. Create Links To Other Useful Sites.

If you are a source for useful information, customers will come back to make use of that information. There are several ways to approach this option. The first is to create links to Pages of related interest. For instance, if your Page contained mountain biking products you might create links to mountain biking clubs and organizations around the country. This would allow your customers to use your Site to gather information.

The second way is to include links for Sites of general interest, such as the National Weather Service. Links that allow customers to get news and weather can also bring them back to your Site on a regular basis.

In either case you will want to maintain these links so that your customers know where to find them. It is also a good idea to check the links periodically to make sure the Pages they go to are still up and running smoothly. Normally there is no problem putting a link on your Page. However, it is always a good idea to contact the person or group that owns the Page and ask permission first.

 Cost: Free


 Time: After you have determined what Pages to create links for, the only time factor will be the occasional check to make sure the Page is still in operation.

16. Create Links To Interesting Web Sites

This is sometimes called a "Best Of the Web" section. Make note of interesting new Sites you find as you "surf" and post the name of the Site, a brief description, and the Web address for those Sites in a section on your Web Site.

Be sure to change at least some of these on a frequent basis and place the newest ones at the top of the list.

 Cost: Free

 Time: This will depend on how much time you normally spend "surfing." If you are a dedicated surfer there will be little additional time needed to update this. If you are really busy handling orders and tracking the action on the auction Sites this might become time consuming.

The next several suggestions all involve using your e-mail lists. Be sure to maintain a listing of everyone who contacts you. Add them to your mailing list. Be sure to include contacts made because of your auction listings. It is always a good idea to let people know that you have included them on your mailing list. If they do not wish to be included, be sure to remove them. They may still be future customers, unless they are angered.

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17. Use E-mail To Notify Customers When You Update Information On The Web Site.

When you put new services on the Web Site, be sure to notify your customers that there is something new or different to see. Be sure to include the Web address and a brief description of what has been added.

 Cost: Free

 Time: The actual writing and sending of the e-mail will be minimal. The majority of the time will be in constructing the new portion of the Web Site.


18. Use E-mail To Notify Customers About New Products.

This should be done when you have a new product that is being introduced to an existing line of products or when you are introducing a whole new line of products. If you are using The Internet Treasure Chest Online Product Warehouse you will be able to use this technique with some frequency.

Let customers know if you will be offering related products to an existing line. For instance if you have been selling mountain bikes and will be adding a line of mountain bike clothing, e-mail your customers and let them know.

Provide a brief description of the new products, but don't be too specific. The point of the e-mail is not to tell them everything about the product but to make them curious enough to click to your Web Site.

 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** You will need to compose the e-mail about the new product. However, with practice, this will take little time.

19. E-mail Your Retail Customers About Items You Have Listed On Auction Sites


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We previously mentioned that you could use your auction listings as a way of finding new customers. You can also use auction listings to bring old customers back to your Web Site.

E-mail your customers announcing those items that you have listed on auction Sites. If the product you have listed is a real bargain, be sure to include that in the e-mail. But the most important thing is to let them know that they can connect directly to the various auction Sites directly from your Web Site!

We have already talked about the tremendous potential of linking your Web Site with auction Site listings. This is another example of that power.

 **Cost:** Listing fees, if any and commission fees after the sale


 **Time:** Once you are experienced in posting listings on auction Sites the only time requirement will be in writing the e-mail.

20. Use E-mail To Announce Sales And Special Events.

Consumers want bargains! So, when you are going to have a sale be sure to let your customers know. Reward them for shopping with you in the past.

When you write the e-mail be sure to tell them, generally, what types of things will be on sale and how much they might be able to save. Be sure to include a phrase inviting them to visit your Web Site for more information and other offers. Don't put everything in the e-mail. Always remember that the purpose is to get them back to the Web Site. After all, they can't place an order by reading the e-mail you sent. They need to come to the Web Site.

 **Cost:** Free


 **Time:** You will need to compose the e-mail and determine how best to announce the sale on the Web Site once the customer has read the e-mail and decided to see what things are on sale.


21. Offer Giveaways

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We have mentioned before that everyone likes something for free. Giveaways are a popular way to attract customers. If you have any doubts about the power of "the giveaway," listen to most popular radio stations during either the morning or afternoon rush hour.

Your giveaway does not have to be a large item. Discounts on purchases or "Two for One" offers have the potential to bring customers back.

 **Cost:** This will vary with the giveaway. It is important to keep in mind that this type of advertising has the potential to be very popular. Don't make an offer that will become expensive if there is a sudden rush to take advantage of it. One good way is to "give away" discounts on products purchased. This will protect you since the only time you have to "give away" is when you make a sale.

 **Time:** This will require some planning and then will require some record keeping time. However, much of this time is required for your business. Additional time required may be limited.

22. Post A Calendar Of Upcoming Events


Providing a place where your customers can gather information about upcoming events will give them a reason to come back to your Web Site on a regular basis. Consider attaching more than one calendar depending on the variety of products you offer. If you have several different types of products you might want to link a calendar to each type.

The calendar could include events from all over the country. It might include special product shows or demonstrations, competitions or exhibitions, club meetings, social gatherings, or charity events. The list is as long as your imagination. You can choose to post a weekly or monthly calendar. The advantage of the weekly calendar is that customers need to come back each week for updates. The drawback to the weekly calendar is the amount of time needed to keep it current.

A monthly calendar may be an easier way to start. Once you have established the calendar and groups learn that you are willing to place their information on your calendar you may have all the information you need sent to you.

Also remember that when groups submit information to you to be placed in your calendar, they will become a source of advertising for you. They will tell people about your Site.

 Cost: Free

 **Time:** There is some time commitment when you first establish the calendar. It may take several hours or more to gather information for the calendar. However, as your willingness to include information on your Web Site becomes known, you should expect this time commitment to go down.

23. Add A Guest Book

A "guest book" is a software program that allows customers to "sign-in." The program will allow them to leave their name and e-mail address along with other information depending on the program.

There is a free Guest Book provided to you within your Internet Treasure Chest's Page Manager area of your Administration Site!

This can be an easy way to build your mailing list at no cost.

 Cost: Free with the Internet Treasure Chest


 **Time:** It takes only seconds to link it to your Site!
(Visit <http://support.itctv.com> for exact instructions.)

24. Create A FAQ Section

FAQ stands for "Frequently Asked Questions." There are two ways to use FAQ's. One is to provide answers to questions about how to use your Web Site and order products. This will allow customers to feel more confident about making purchases. And if they are comfortable about using your Site they are more likely to use it again.

The second way is to answer questions about the products and how to use them or care for them. This will let customers know that you want them to get the best use possible out of the products they buy from you. This is one way of beginning to build a sense of trust.

 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** If you choose to use the FAQ section to answer questions about how to use your Site you will have already done all the research and it will be a matter of simply putting the answers on the Web Site.

If you choose to use the FAQ section to help your customers get better use out of your products, you may have to invest some time doing research. A good place to start is with the manufacturer.

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25. Change The Visual Appearance Of Your Web Site

We are not suggesting a complete change, but rather some little "touches" that are interesting. For instance, the search engine Google changed its look several times during the Summer Olympics in 2000. They modified their logo to include the Olympic rings on one occasion and to reflect various Olympic events on others.

They did not make big changes. You always knew where you were, but it was enough to bring you back to see what new changes might have occurred.

This is an easy, free way to draw customers back. The Internet Treasure Chest provides you with the tools to create a Web Site that is visually interesting and attractive. Use those same tools to update your Site on a regular basis to bring customers back.

 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** With the Internet Treasures Chest, creating and updating your Web Pages, is fast and easy!

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26. Post All Press Releases And Articles You Write

This will do two things for you. First, it is something interesting for your customers to read and is a reason for them to return to your Web Site.

Secondly, it helps establish you as an expert. Writing articles for other Web Sites, E-Zines or local print media all help establish your knowledge and expertise. This also helps build trust from the customer.

 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** This involves very little additional time. Once the articles and press releases are written, you only have to place them on your Web Site.

27. Create Surveys For Customers To Complete

These surveys can be used to help you determine what products your customers want and need. They can help you predict what changes in the market are on the way. All of these things allow you to be more responsive to your customers. If you can provide them the products they want, when they want them, why would they go somewhere else to shop?

You can also create surveys that have nothing to do with your products. These might ask about issues of the day. They might be fun surveys to determine what dessert most people like or what car they would buy if they could. Conducting these surveys and reporting the results is another reason for your customers to come back to your Web Site often.


 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** Surveys can be time consuming to create and to tabulate but can be fun and effective!

28. Use Free Classified Ad Sites

There are literally hundreds of FREE classified ad Sites on the Internet. Some are even specific to certain types of products. To locate the FREE classified ad Sites that could work best for your individual needs we suggest you perform a search for "Free Classified Ad Sites" in any major search engine. Since all search engines are different, you may want to try several of them!

 **Cost:** Free

 **Time:** Once you have created the ad and learned the requirements of the various classified Sites, there will be little time required.

So, What Do We Know Now?

So far we have looked at only online ways to advertise your business. Remember that these are only ideas meant to get you thinking about what you can do.

The purpose of any advertising idea is to get people to your Web Site. Whether they are first time customers or have been there hundreds of times, each time they visit you have a potential buyer!

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Chapter Three: Off-line Advertising

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In Chapter Two we looked at a number of ways to advertise online. It may seem strange to advertise an online business anywhere but online. Certainly online advertising is a powerful way to reach new customers. But it isn't the only way!

There are several limitations to off-line advertising that we want to make clear from the beginning. Off-line advertising will be much more "local" than online advertising. While that is true, it doesn't make off-line advertising any less valuable. Remember, potential customers live right in your hometown too!

It is also important to remember that while there are some forms of free off-line advertising, many are not. Because costs and the time needed to use these ideas vary widely from one part of the country to another, we did not include estimates of either the cost or the time in this chapter. We recommend that you contact the appropriate companies or services in your area before deciding to include any of these off-line ideas as part of your advertising plan.

One final note before we begin. Because the suggestions made in this chapter will be more familiar to most readers, we have limited our explanation and suggestions.

1. Have Business Cards Printed

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When you have business cards printed be sure they include the name of your company and the Web address (URL). A company logo and slogan are good additions if you have them.

Business cards add an air of professionalism besides being an excellent way of distributing your Web address.

2. Issue Press Releases

Press releases sent to local newspapers are an excellent source of free publicity. If you are not familiar with the structure or wording of a press release, spend an hour or two in the library with a book on journalism and public relations. If you can't find the format at the library, contact your local government and ask them to send you a copy of their last two or three press releases. Lots of times you can find these on their Web Site.

They are not difficult to write and you may be surprised by how willing newspapers are to print them. This is one of the Free off-line advertising possibilities we mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Notes

3. Place Classified Ads In Your Local Newspaper

Classified ads are relatively inexpensive. Because of this you may choose to place more than one ad at a time. Place specific ads for products rather than for the Web Site. Use your Web Site address as the means of contact.

4. Take Out An Ad In Your Local Paper

The biggest advantage to a newspaper ad is the size of the paper's circulation. A paper with a circulation of several million can put your ad in front of many potential customers. But, there is a price for this exposure. Newspaper ads can be expensive.

Before you invest in a newspaper ad spend some time examining the paper. Determine what day of the week and what section of the paper would best suit your ad. Then contact the advertising department of the newspaper and tell them what day and section of the paper you would like to use. They will then be able to give you prices for ads of various sizes.

5. Offer Free Seminars Or Clinics

Share your expertise with others. Present a free seminar or clinic. Use your own interests and expertise as the subject. This is also a good subject for a press release.

Contact your local library to determine if they have public meeting rooms you can use. Also contact your local city government. In some locations there are free meeting rooms available.

Be sure to have plenty of business cards available at the seminar.

6. Have Flyers Printed

Check with several local printers to find the best price. To keep the price down, limit the number of colors you use. Be sure to include your Web Site, company name, logo, and slogan.

If you are uncomfortable or unsure about designing the flyer, talk to the printer. Find one who is willing to help you design an attractive flyer.

Flyers can be handed out in a variety of places. For instance, if you give a free seminar (idea number 5) you should have them available along with your business cards. Local community groups will often have an area set aside for flyers from local businesses. Contact your Chamber of Commerce for additional locations. (idea number 7)

7. Join Your Local Chamber Of Commerce

This is an excellent way to "network" and spread the word about your business. You might be able to work out arrangements with merchants who are not yet online to place an ad for them on your Web Site in exchange for allowing you to place your brochures in their stores.

8. Sponsor or Co-Sponsor Specialty Events

If your product line relates to any events that occur in your area, become a sponsor for that event. This will put your company name and Web address in front of an audience that already has an interest in your product.

For instance, if you sell mountain bikes, contact local bike clubs and offer to co-sponsor their next race. This will normally involve some cash on your part. Be sure to be at the event with business cards and flyers in hand!

9. Contact Local Radio and Television Stations About Doing A Story

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Radio and television stations often do "human interest" stories. Contact them and let them know that you have a local business that is on the Web and are now selling all over the world. Be prepared to show them something unique about your business or your success.

Getting a radio interview may be the easier to secure, since a radio interview can be done over the phone. Ask the radio station if they would be interested in running a story about doing business on the Web, or what it takes to start a new business in today's economy. Offer to be part of a panel discussion about Web based businesses, or any other ideas you might have.

A television interview will probably be harder to get. Remember when you approach a television station that television is a visual medium. Present your idea in terms of what pictures the audience will see. If it is not visually interesting, television is generally not interested.

10. Turn Your Car Into a Rolling Billboard

You have probably seen cars with signs on the doors or on the roof advertising a real estate agent or local pizza parlor. You can use the same technique.

You can have a professional sign painter actually paint the information onto the sides of your car. However, since that is both expensive and permanent, you might want to try a different approach.

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One way to use your car is to have magnetic signs made that will attach to the doors of your car. They should contain the company name, Web address and some slogan or saying that can be easily read which will let customers know what you sell.

You can also have lettering put across the back window of your car that will do the same thing. However, before you put anything on the windows of your car check with local authorities to make sure there are no restrictions you would violate.

If you choose this advertising technique be sure to consider the size and style of the sign you use. Remember that many of your potential customers will have a limited time to read the message. Clear, simple lettering allows them to read and remember.

11. Participate In Product And Trade Shows

Check with your surrounding Chambers of Commerce for upcoming events. These provide an excellent opportunity to advertise your Web business as well as talk with customers face-to-face.

You will need to contact the service organizing the show and lease space from them. You may be required to provide the table and chairs for your booth. Be sure that you know what will be provided and what you will need to bring. Have lots of flyers and business cards available. If possible, have some samples of your product for customers to see.

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12. Write "Expert" Columns For Magazines and Newspapers

Submit articles and columns to magazines that target groups with an interest in your products. Offer the columns free in exchange for a by-line that includes your Web address.

Submit articles to the local newspapers that address specific topics. For instance, write consumer safety tips just before the holidays or the care and feeding of plants in the spring or how to safely clean jewelry just before Valentine's Day or Mother's Day. Be sure to include your Web address with each submission.

13. Take Out A Listing In The Yellow Pages

More and more phone companies are creating specific sections in the Yellow Pages for online businesses. Check with your local telephone company to see whether they have this option available. Even though the Internet is growing every day, millions of people still use the Yellow Pages to find products and services.

14. Participate In Charity Events

There are several ways to participate in charity events. One is to donate merchandise to be raffled or auctioned off. Your company will be recognized for its donation. Be sure to find out how many times your business will be named. Make sure the charity is willing to list your Web address as well. Find out if they will allow you to place flyers at the Site in exchange for the donation.

Another way is to be a volunteer or to participate in the event. For example, if the event is a charity golf tournament you can actually participate as a player, wearing a shirt with your company name and Web address printed on it. You can also volunteer to help organize or run the event. There is always more work to do at charity events than volunteers to do it. Again, make sure you have business cards and flyers available.

15. Donate Small Items To School Carnivals

School Carnivals are often very well attended events. They usually receive very good publicity through the host school and the local media. Offer to provide gift certificates to be used as prizes at the Carnival.

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We recently attended one of these school functions and were amazed at the number of people. We also found two merchants who understood the value of this type of advertising. One was a pet store owner. The owner donated a number of coupons good for one free goldfish. The winner had to go to the store to get the "free" goldfish. But, of course, the goldfish needed food and other supplies. So, for every goldfish that was given away (they sold for about \$.15 each) the owner made a sale of several dollars or more.

The other merchant was the owner of a bowling alley who gave away a "free" game of bowling when the winning child was accompanied by an adult. So the owner gave away a game but also sold a game.

Consider giving away coupons good for a discount on purchased merchandise. In order to redeem the coupon the winner would not only visit your Site but also make a purchase.

16. Create A Sales Brochure To Distribute To Your Competition

It may seem strange to try and advertise to your competition, but you have a service they may be able to use.

Let's use the same example of mountain bikes. You have a number of different mountain bikes for sale on your Web Site. If you are using The Internet Treasure Chest Online Product Warehouse you have no inventory overhead, no storage problems and no concern about bikes that don't sell. You can use all of this to your advantage when you visit the local bike shop down the street, because the shop owner does have to worry about those things. As a result of these concerns, the shop owner needs to restrict the number of different bikes available in the bike shop.

If a customer comes into his shop looking for a particular bike and the owner doesn't keep it in stock, it usually means a lost sale. But this is where you and your brochure come in.

Create a brochure that explains who you are and the products you have for sale. Explain that you are willing to make your products available to the shop owner if a customer wants something you have that the shop doesn't carry. Be sure to explain how quickly you can deliver the product. You then become the "middle man" for the shop owner, supplying him with specific bikes when needed.

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17. Place An Ad On The Local Public Access Television Station

The growth of cable television has led to a number of public access channels around the country. Consider doing a short program with advice about your products or, if the station permits, placing an ad on the channel.

Rates for ads will vary according to your location. Contact your local cable company for more information.

18. Contact Your Local Public Radio Station

Public radio does not accept advertising in the traditional sense. But with the recent cutbacks in federal government funds, many stations now acknowledge that programs are "supported by" local companies. Consider becoming a "supporter" of Public Radio.

You can also contact them and offer to contribute your expertise. This might be in the form of an interview, or an opinion piece that you do on the air.

19. Place An Ad In A Movie Theater Slide Show

Businesses have begun to discover that movie theaters are a powerful advertising tool. The audience waiting for the movie to begin has no place else to go! The slide shows are much easier to create than commercials and can be changed more quickly.

Contact your local theaters for specific pricing. Movie theater chains have different rates for different theaters. Most will be able to provide you with printed fee scales.

20. Buy School Yearbook Ads

Yearbook ads are relatively inexpensive. They also project a good image of the businesses that buy them. Check with the high schools and colleges in your area for the cost of the ads. This will vary with the size of the ad. Also, determine if you will be able to choose the location of your ad. Remember that people read from left to right and from top to bottom.

21. Support Community Theater Groups With Program Ads

Purchasing an ad in the program for community theater groups combines many of the advantages of movie slide shows and school yearbook ads. The program ads are directed at the same type of captive audience as the movie theater ads but at a cost much closer to that of a yearbook ad. These ads also project an image of a business that supports the community.

22. Send Special Occasion Cards

Most people will send birthday cards, get well cards, holiday cards, cards for any number of reasons. If you are going to send the card anyway, include your Web address. One easy way to do this is to include a business card in the envelope.

23. Create Promotional Products With Your Web Address

You have seen them everywhere, pens, cups, mouse pads, caps, tee shirts. People like things that are free. Create a promotional product that the potential customer will use often. Contact several companies and price various items. You might be surprised at the wide variety of items you can have printed with your company's name and Web address. Many of these items can be purchased at a reasonable rate.

Please note that in most cases the price per item will go down as the total number of items purchased goes up. This is a good thing but you must decide how much you are willing to spend on pens or mouse pads.

24. Place Your Ad At A Bus Stop

Recently many cities have encouraged the use of mass transit. One of the ways that they have done this is with the creation of more attractive, comfortable bus stops. The move is away from a simple sign posted on the side of the road and toward covered areas where waiting passengers can sit. To help finance these new bus stops, many cities now sell billboard space in the bus stop itself.

These ads can be seen not only by the waiting passengers, but also by passing motorists. Contact your local mass transit authority for rate fees.

25. Advertise At Major Sporting Events

We are not suggesting that you run a commercial during the Super Bowl. And we aren't suggesting you invest thousands of dollars to buy a permanent ad in one of the new sports arenas. What we are suggesting is that you buy an ad on the huge video monitors that have become part of major sports stadiums across the country. This ad should take the form of a good luck wish or a congratulatory message. For instance, "Good Luck to the (name of the team) from all their fans at www.yourcompany.com.

An ad on one of these video monitors will have a potential audience of thousands of sports fans and can be purchased for far less than even the smallest permanent ad located anywhere in the sports complex.

26. Support Local Sports Fields With Billboard Ads.

Recreational sports complexes across the country have recognized that their fences make very good locations to place ads. Softball complexes, soccer fields, Little Leagues and high schools have all begun accepting advertising. Placing ads in these types of locations not only promotes your Web Site but also presents a very positive image of a company that supports its home community.

AND NOW TO DREAM

Radio and television are two of the most powerful off-line advertising vehicles available today. But because they are so powerful, they are also the most expensive.

When your business has grown to the point where you believe your advertising budget is large enough to buy radio or television time you can then consider using one or both of these tools.

However, before spending your advertising money on either radio or television time consider several points.

First, what portion of your advertising budget do you want to dedicate to radio or television. There is no doubt that the potential return is enormous, but so is the cost.

Second, you will need to hire professionals to put your commercials together and to decide where to put them on the air. A poorly made commercial or one that is placed in the wrong time slot is a waste of money.

Final Thoughts

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Successful advertising is the result of a number of things: an understanding of your own goals and limits; an understanding of what your customers want and need; a good product line; and a combination of patience and imagination. Use the ideas listed here as a reference and guide, but not as the answer. These ideas are your beginning. Combine them with your own imagination and determination and you will be on your way to fulfilling all your dreams!

Notes