

Increasing Website Traffic

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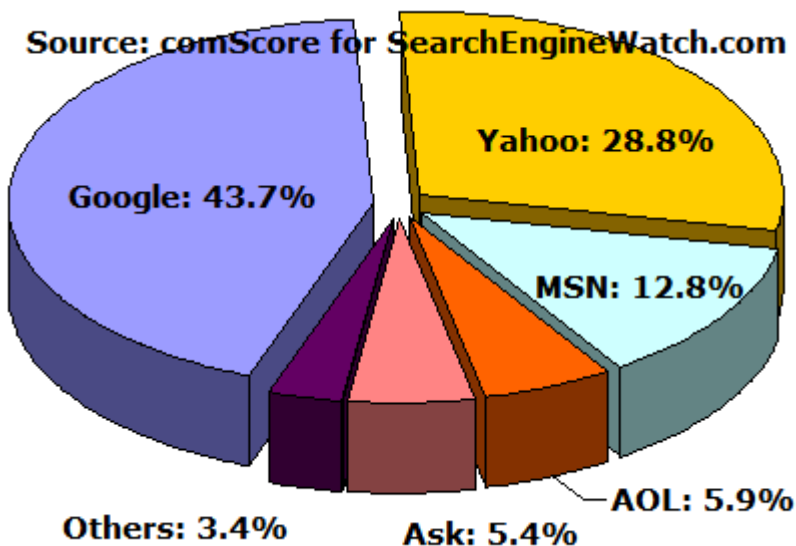
101,435,253 websites. According to a Netcraft Web survey (2006), that's how many websites you are competing with to get visitors to your site.

My business is to create websites, so it's not my goal to discourage anyone from having a website, however I do want my clients to have a realistic view of what a website can and cannot do for them, as well as the work involved in getting the site where it needs to be. Creating the most elaborate website in the world will not help your business if no one knows it is there. Remember those 100 million+ other websites? It's highly unlikely that someone is just going to stumble across your site while surfing the internet. Creating the site is only part of the process, promoting your site is also a big factor in its success.

What about Search Engines?

As the following chart shows approximately 97% of searches are performed using the top five search engines – Google, Yahoo, MSN, AOL, and Ask, leaving only 3% for everything else. Don't fall for companies or ads that claim they will submit your site to hundreds or thousands of search engines for varying fees. To spend any money on the 3% of people using something other than the top search engines would be a waste.

V-Web submits to these top search engines, only billing for the time it takes for the submissions.



Keywords

There is nothing magical about keywords. In every HTML web page there is a section reserved for a list of keywords. Many web novices think that all you have to do to get your site to appear in the search engines is to place the right keywords in each page. Although years ago this was a valid technique, it's not that easy anymore.

The use of keywords has been so badly abused by the unscrupulous, that the major search engines no longer even look at that list of keywords. Keyword optimization is an art and science of its own now. The current trend is to use your desired keywords, legitimately, in as many areas of your site as possible – page titles, file names, content in articles, tags for images, etc.

What the search engines are trying to refine, is a method that places websites that have legitimate, useful content at the top of the search results. If your site contains lots of useful information, particularly related to a specific topic, and you try to repeat several keywords on each page, you should be okay here. To go overboard in this area may get your site banned as fraudulent.

Lack of Keyword Popularity

Another factor to consider is whether anyone is actually searching the internet for what your site offers. A few years ago I thought I had a great idea for a site to create a recurring income for myself – a directory of golf instructors. I would set up a listing by state/city of golf instructors and they would pay me an annual fee to include a listing and web page describing their teaching practice with rates and contact information.

I ran my idea by an internet guru who has made millions on the internet. He thought it was a really good idea, except for one thing – almost no one searches for golf instructors on the internet. How did he know that?

There are programs and websites that will, for a fee, provide counts for the number of searches for any given keyword phrase. When I checked “golf instructor” the results were less than ten searches per day. It would be impossible to convince golf instructors to pay me for a listing that would not provide any additional students for them.

Overly Popular Keywords

At the other end of the spectrum are keyword phrases that large numbers of people are searching for.

For example “make money” has over 13,000 searches daily - sounds great. The only problem is that 173,000,000 web pages are already focusing on those keywords. Trying to get to the top of a search engine with that much competition is nearly impossible.

If you're relying heavily on search engines to provide traffic to your site, you need to find a niche where there are a good number of daily searches, with minimal competition.

Other Techniques to Increase Traffic

The good news is that you don't have to rely totally on search engines to bring new visitors to your site. There are other techniques.

Fresh Site Content

Keep adding new, interesting content to your site! This is vital to ensure that visitors return to your site and recommend it to others. If they see that the content never changes, they will not return.

Email Signatures

One easy thing to do is to include a link to your website in your email signature. Signatures are automatically added to the bottom of each email that you send. Check your email software for directions on how to set one up.

Offline Marketing

This is the good, old-fashioned way of marketing. Add the website address to your business card, letterhead, and other print materials. Include it in any advertising whether print, radio, or other. Use word of mouth. Tell everyone you know about your website. Put the website address on your car.

Tell-A-Friend

There are various scripts you can include on your site that allows a visitor to click a link and send an email to one or more friends inviting them to visit your site.

Emailing Periodic Updates/Newsletters

Include an opt-in form on your site inviting people to sign up for your online newsletter or periodic notices by email. You need to be organized and provide periodic useful information to them, otherwise they will lose interest. You'll need a way to send mass emails to the list as well as providing a means for people to unsubscribe.

Contest or Prize Give-Away

Hold a periodic contest or drawing for prizes on your site. For example visitors could submit entries to win a prize for the best photo of the month, best essay, best review, best question/answer, etc.

Investigate any regulations in your area regarding contests. Also consider how you will handle things if you receive thousands of entries!

Incoming Links

In addition to analyzing the content of your site, the search engines, especially Google, pay close attention to how many other sites link to yours. If you have more than one site yourself, you can include links to your other sites from them. Also contact people you know with websites and ask them to link to your site.

You can also search for websites of related areas and request links. For example the Teen Challenge Christian Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation site could contact area churches and request that they provide a link to their site since they are providing a service that might be beneficial to people in those congregations.

Try to get links to your site from any of these additional sources.

Blogs – Post about your new site on your own blog, or include comments on others blogs with links to your site (your comments must be relevant)

Forums – Find a forum related to the topic of your site and make relevant posts including your website link in your posts and/or forum signature.

Social Networking Sites – If you or your friends have pages on MySpace, Facebook, etc. add links to your site from those.

Social Bookmarking Sites

Sites like digg.com, reddit.com, stumbleupon.com, del.icio.us etc. can bring you traffic. You would need to join these sites and promote your website to other members.

YouTube Videos – Create a promotional video or something related to your site. Include the website address in the video or in your author profile area.

Online Articles – Contribute articles on something related to your site to ezine article sites. These sites allow you to include links to your site in your author tag lines. The articles submitted to these sites may be freely used by anyone on the internet. Wherever your article goes it will include a link back to your site.

EzineArticles.com is one of the best. You'll need to sign up as an author first.

<http://www.ezinearticles.com/>

Good articles can give you lots of traffic over a long time frame since they tend to circulate widely over the internet.

If your site is brand new you will probably have few, if any, incoming links, but as the site ages and you have tried some of these techniques you may want to check to see how many and which sites link to yours. The following link provides a tool to do that.

<http://www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/default.htm>

Enter the url of the website you want to check on the Link Popularity Checker from MarketLeap. I used www.v-web.biz

Marketleap Search Engine Marketing Tools
Link Popularity Check

LINK POPULARITY CHECK | SEARCH ENGINE SATURATION | KEYWORD VERIFICATION

Enter your URL here: (ex: www.yourdomain.com)

Enter up to 3 comparison URLs here

Select your industry (optional) General

o d 5 To improve performance and prevent unauthorized scripts we have implemented an Access Code for this tool.

Please enter the Access Code as displayed above:

→ GENERATE REPORT (Results are collected LIVE from the Internet.)

***Important Announcement!**
MSN Live has recently started reporting results for the operator '+linkdomain:'. As such, we have updated our Link Popularity tool to report MSN's results.

Leave the comparison URL's blank, enter the authorization code, and click "Generate Report."

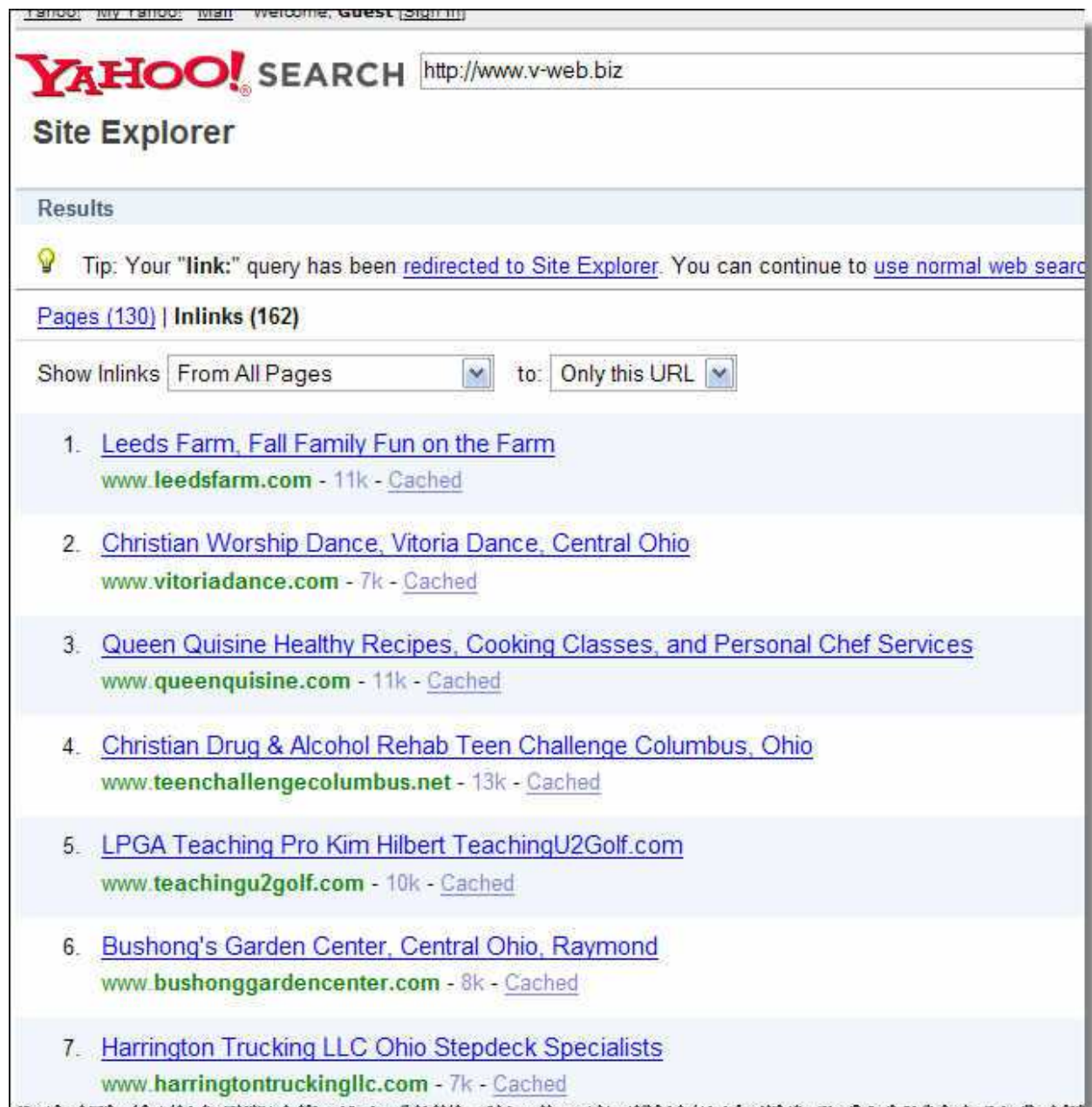
INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT | TREND/HISTORY REPORT NEW!

Limited Presence - 0 to 1,000 references Average Presence - 1,001 to 5,000 Above Avg. Presence - 5,001 to 20,000
 Contender - 20,001 to 100,000 Player - 100,001 to 500,000 900 lb Gorilla - 500,001 and up

Current Benchmark: General Category
General Category **→ GENERATE NEW REPORT** NEW! [Click here for your trend/history report.](#)

URL List	Total	Google/ AOL/ HotBot	MSN	Yahoo/ FAST/ AltaVista
www.Travelleap.com	16	0	5	11
www.v-web.biz ★	144	2	0	137
www.popcornpalace.com	400	7	179	214
www.spinnakersailing.com	767	34	291	442

From the report screen (above) click any of the numbered links in your website's row to display a list of which sites link to yours. In the previous image there are 137 incoming links listed in the Yahoo search engine column. Clicking the 137 displays the following list of sites.



The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Site Explorer interface. At the top, the search bar contains the URL "http://www.v-web.biz". Below the search bar, the title "Site Explorer" is displayed. A "Results" section contains a tip: "Tip: Your 'link:' query has been redirected to Site Explorer. You can continue to use normal web search". Below the tip, the statistics "Pages (130) | Inlinks (162)" are shown. A filter section allows users to select "Show Inlinks" from "From All Pages" and "to: Only this URL". The main content area lists seven inlinks, each with a numbered title, a green URL, and a count and status (e.g., "11k - Cached").

Yahoo! SEARCH

Site Explorer

Results

Tip: Your "link:" query has been [redirected to Site Explorer](#). You can continue to [use normal web search](#)

[Pages \(130\)](#) | [Inlinks \(162\)](#)

Show Inlinks to:

- [Leeds Farm, Fall Family Fun on the Farm](#)
www.leedsfarm.com - 11k - [Cached](#)
- [Christian Worship Dance, Vitoria Dance, Central Ohio](#)
www.vitoriadance.com - 7k - [Cached](#)
- [Queen Quisine Healthy Recipes, Cooking Classes, and Personal Chef Services](#)
www.queenquisine.com - 11k - [Cached](#)
- [Christian Drug & Alcohol Rehab Teen Challenge Columbus, Ohio](#)
www.teenchallengecolumbus.net - 13k - [Cached](#)
- [LPGA Teaching Pro Kim Hilbert TeachingU2Golf.com](#)
www.teachingu2golf.com - 10k - [Cached](#)
- [Bushong's Garden Center, Central Ohio, Raymond](#)
www.bushonggardencenter.com - 8k - [Cached](#)
- [Harrington Trucking LLC Ohio Stepdeck Specialists](#)
www.harringtontruckingllc.com - 7k - [Cached](#)

Directories

Directories help provide incoming links as well as serving a role similar to search engines. Rather than typing in a search phrase, users select various categories in a directory to locate websites related to their area of interest.

You should find it beneficial to submit your site to various directories. Even if they don't generate much traffic to your site, they can provide incoming links which will help your positioning with the search engines.

The following list contains many free directories that you can submit to. Look for a link that says "Add, Suggest, or Submit a Site" or something similar.

Be prepared with a brief description of your site that you can copy and paste into the submission forms. The directories have varying regulations as to the permitted length, so you may want to have several of differing lengths. Word can give you word counts as you enter the descriptions.

List of Online Directories

Free

<http://www.illumirate.com>

Free

<http://www.jayde.com>

Free (dmoz feeds the Google directory, so this is a good one)

<http://dmoz.org/add.html>

Free

<http://www.scrubtheweb.com/addurl.html>

Free

<http://www.skaffe.com>

Free

<https://advertising.superpages.com>

Free, aimed at businesses providing products or services

<http://www.bizweb.com/InfoForm/>

Free

<http://www.where2go.com>

Click the Advertising link, they do offer free listings also

<http://www.yellowpages.com>

Standard listing \$2.95/mo.

<http://www.askmyyellow.com/home.php>

\$49, for hotel and travel sites
<http://www.hotelstravel.com/addsite.html>

\$9.95 to \$99.95
<http://www.einet.net>

\$25-\$40
<http://www.gimpsy.com/gimpsy>

Yahoo Directory (Standard is free, \$299 year for commercial listing)
<http://dir.yahoo.com>

Yahoo has two submission options: "Standard," which is free, and "Yahoo Directory Submit," which is \$299. Anyone can use Standard submission to submit for free to a non-commercial category.

Non-commercial doesn't mean that you can't sell things on your site. If the only purpose of your site is sales, that would definitely be considered commercial. But for example, if your site provides useful information, such as software reviews, in addition to selling software, it would probably be accepted in the non-commercial category.

Start at the Yahoo directory home page.

<http://dir.yahoo.com>

Then click the appropriate links to lead to where your site would be placed. For example for a Christian dance site, you would click – arts, performing arts, dance, religious and Sacred Dance, Christian, to end up at the following page:

http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Performing_Arts/Dance/Religious_and_Sacred_Dance/Christian/

From there you see the two submission options, the \$299 and the free option. The free option may take a little longer to be included, but most sites wouldn't benefit enough from the listing to make the \$299/year option worthwhile.

Finding Specific Directories For The Topic of Your Site

You should be able to locate directories that are targeted specifically toward your site topic by doing a Google or Yahoo search using the topic of your website with the word "directory". For example a search for "Christian Dance Directory", "Christian Dance School Directory", "Christian Dance Studio Directory." You should be able to find plenty of free ones. I wouldn't pay for a listing unless you thought it was a very worthwhile site.

Check Google Page Rank

It's a waste of your time to list your site in a directory if no one is visiting that directory. A quick way to tell in general how much traffic a site gets is to check the Google Page Rank. Page ranks

go from 0 (bad) to 10 (the best sites). The screen shot below shows www.google.com with a Page Rank of 10. The Alexa rating is the opposite, the lower the number the better. The Google page shows an Alexa rating of 3, meaning it is the third most popular of all websites. It's not uncommon to see Alexa ratings in the millions.

Of course if your site is relatively new you won't have a high Page Rank either, so use your own judgment on the directory sites. You want to give someone a fair chance if they're just getting started, but if it looks like they've been around a while and they have no Google Page Rank or if it is very low, you might want to pass.

You can use the Google Toolbar in either Internet Explorer or Firefox. It has an option to automatically display the page rank for any page you visit.

<http://www.google.com/tools>

I use an addon for Firefox called SearchStatus. It displays the PageRank and Alexa Rating of each site. The screenshot below shows the SearchStatus results for www.google.com

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/321>



If your site is primarily involved in selling products, you can submit to shopping engines or shopping directories.

Comparison Shopping Engines

<http://www.google.com/products> (must sign up for a free Google account)

<http://www.pricescan.com>

<http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com>

<http://www.shop.com/market-intro-a.shtml>

<http://advertising.microsoft.com/home/home>

<https://merchant.shopping.com/enroll/app?service=page/Register>

[http://merchant.shopzilla.com/oa/shopping_search/?](http://merchant.shopzilla.com/oa/shopping_search/)

<http://www.become.com/merchant>

Comparison Shopping Directories

<http://www.shoppingspot.com/site/suggest.htm>

<http://www.netshoppers.com>

These are all things that most people can do themselves to increase traffic to your website, however if you don't have the time, but still want to implement some of these techniques, contact me to request these services for your site.

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