

Traffic Generation Tactics

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The days of tricking the search engines into long-term high rankings are gone. The value of reciprocal links is greatly diminished. The competition just keeps growing with over two billion websites and one trillion pages indexed by Google.

That doesn't mean you can't enjoy a successful website!

While the tips described below can help, they are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. If you're not already a subscriber to Almost a Newsletter, now is a good time to [sign up](#). It's 100% free, and you'll discover many website design and marketing insights, techniques, and tactics that will help you achieve your share of online success.

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Introduction

The traffic generations tactics listed here are not intended as detailed guides or step-by-step how-to instructions, but more as general overviews of the various individual strategies to spark your imagination.

Much has already been written about each of these tactics. A quick search will lead you to free website content and commercial ebooks on the various traffic generation tactics. Trying to give detailed how-to instruction on all these tactics in one ebook would take a great deal of time—time that could only be justified by placing a price tag on this ebook rather than offering it as a gift.

With these tactics, a good plan you stick with, and a little luck on your side, you may find others telling their friends about you or your website. When a message spreads from person to person like a virus, it is referred to as “going viral.”

I'll mention the viral nature of some of these tactics, after all, that is the ultimate in website promotion, to have others voluntarily give you publicity.

Viral marketing is word-of-mouth advertising, only it's online. In the online world, word-of-mouth advertising means people refer your site to others via email, blog posts, web site articles and instant messaging.

The concept is simple—someone sees or reads what you have to offer and tells a few of their friends, and then their friends tell people they know, and the more people who get involved the wider the circle grows.

Suppose you're giving away an ebook. If one person downloads it and likes it and tells two others about it, and the next day they do the same, here's how that can grow in just two weeks if every person told two others:

Day 1	$1 \times 2 = 2$
Day 2	$2 \times 2 = 4$
Day 3	$4 \times 2 = 8$
Day 4	$8 \times 2 = 16$
Day 5	$16 \times 2 = 32$
Day 6	$32 \times 2 = 64$
Day 7	$64 \times 2 = 128$
Day 8	$128 \times 2 = 256$
Day 9	$256 \times 2 = 512$
Day 10	$512 \times 2 = 1024$
Day 11	$1024 \times 2 = 2048$
Day 12	$2048 \times 2 = 4096$
Day 13	$4096 \times 2 = 8192$
Day 14	$8102 \times 2 = 16,384$

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That's a lot of traffic in two weeks! Realistically though, it's not very likely that everyone will tell others, but suppose that you tell 100 or even 1,000 people about it, whatever "it" turns out to be, and one in four tell others. You could easily tell that many people all at once if you have a mailing list, or within a few days via your website. If it's got the goods, that will get things started fast!

Viral marketing taps into pre-existing social networks that your visitors are already using. By creating something that is worth talking about and passing along, you create a "buzz" that spreads across the internet that drives new traffic to your website to see what the buzz is about.

Once these new visitors are there, if they like what they see, many of them will also pass the word along, and the buzz continues to grow.

Word-of-mouth marketing is by far the most effective way to get word out about your site if you manage to pull it off. Why? People will listen to others that they already know and trust much more readily than they will listen to you.

There are several reasons why you should try viral traffic generation techniques to build your business and attract customers to your website.

1.) It can be a fast, effective way to drive traffic to your site.

Once the word starts to spread, it can spread very quickly, and there is no limit to how many people it reaches. Once a message starts to spread it picks up size and speed as it goes, like a snowball rolling down a hill. You may start out thinking that your efforts were not very effective, then one morning you open your email to find it full of new orders. When it works, it can work very fast.

2.) It can be very inexpensive.

Once the word starts to spread, there is not much additional cost. More than likely, the biggest expense will be the upfront set up or production costs, depending on which technique you decide to use. After that initial expense, any remaining costs, if there are any, are nominal.

3.) It can help shield you from negative comments

One thing to remember is that a negative message can go viral, too. Unfortunately, you are not going to be able to please everyone. If you do enough business or are online long enough, eventually you are going to have

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someone who is unhappy with you or your business. It only takes one unhappy customer to put doubt in a potential customer's mind about whether they should do business with you or not. Once that doubt is there, it's hard to overcome it. If people are not happy with the service they received, they are more likely to tell people about it than happy customers.

If your message goes viral, and a negative message gets started, it will have a much harder time spreading, because the good will of those spreading the word can act as a buffer, insulating the malcontent to a small group of individuals.

4.) It can find hidden customers.

Despite the time, money, and energy you spend to identify who and where your customers are, there will always be more people that you miss than you find. As word spreads virally about what you offer, customers will find you.

The cost of viral marketing really depends on the type of marketing campaign you decide to use. You'll find several free or low cost options among the Traffic Generation Tactics listed below, while a few could be comparatively expensive.

The most often asked question about viral marketing is this...

How can I make my message go viral?

The truth is, there is no guaranteed way to make your message go viral. There are some things you can do to increase the chances that it will take off, but as far as I know there is no way to force it to happen.

Successful viral traffic generation is part skill, part creativity, part product, part timing and circumstances, and part luck. You may try dozens of things with no real success, and then strike gold in a completely unexpected way. Or, you could strike gold the first time out and think it's easy, only to sputter in subsequent attempts.

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

- Seneca

If you continue to lay the groundwork for success, you greatly increase the odds that "luck" will meet you somewhere along your path. Just be aware that for most sites *it takes a long time to become an overnight success.*

Let's look at some traffic generation tactics with the potential to go viral...

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19 Potential Viral Tactics

Below are 19 tactics that are proven to drive traffic to websites. Whether that traffic is a raging flood or a small stream is the only question. Remember though, several small streams can add up to a significant river of traffic even if it doesn't become a dam-bursting flood.

It is also important to remember that people are not stupid. They will know whether what you are offering is something of value or if it is a cheap advertising ploy. If it is a ploy, it will not become viral.

The key to all of these techniques is to give something that adds value to the user's experience. This can be accomplished in many ways:

- Offer something new
- Offer something useful
- Offer something entertaining
- Offer something educational
- Offer something controversial

Those are among the most common ways, but not all of them. High quality is usually helpful, but the original [Numa Numa](#) video on YouTube was very low quality and yet it has had over five million views. It has also spawned dozens, perhaps hundreds, of imitators.

For many people, going viral is a one-time accomplishment, while others manage to see repeated success. I've had success in driving traffic to my site, but have yet to come up with that one really big hit like the Numa Numa fellow.

Even without the big hit, many of the tactics below have brought a steady stream of traffic to my site. Some tactics I haven't tried, but I know the methods have worked for others.

Lastly, viral traffic generation should not be your only method of traffic generation. Success comes from a larger marketing strategy that includes [link building](#), [search engine optimization](#), and above all else, quality content.

Look through the list of items below and think about which ones might work for you. Chances are, not all of them will appeal to you. Some I will probably never try. Focus on a few you like and become good at them.

Lastly, be creative. Methods and tactics are being rewritten each day. Modify some of the ideas and come up with something new that is unique to you and your business. The only limit to what is possible is your imagination.

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1. Provide Quality

Providing quality content, products, or service is by far the best way to build your reputation and build repeat traffic to your site. Research has shown that on average, when someone has a positive experience, they will tell two other people about that experience. **Quality content is itself viral in nature!**

On the other hand, if they have a bad experience, they will reportedly tell seven other people.

To build a returning customer base you need to establish a reputation as an expert in your field, or be entertaining, or offer unique insights, or something. For me, I make web design friendly.

That's why it doesn't pay to be a copycat. No matter how much you might want to be like someone else, that job is taken! But...no one can be you except YOU. There is the key to your ultimate success—be true to yourself. It's a shame that some people think they aren't good enough being who they are, and have to mimic someone else, because being who you are is the key to success.

It's really simple—make sure that what you offer is your own work, and something that is different from what can be found on every other website. It has worked for countless individuals and companies. Having said that, it doesn't mean you can't do what others are doing, just do it in *your own way* and in *your own words*.

As your reputation grows, other websites and bloggers will take notice. They will begin to talk about what you are doing and link to your website.

Soon, their readers become a potential customer of yours. The higher the quality of the material that you produce, the more often your website will be linked to, and each link is an entry point for new visitors.

If you don't think you can create something that will act as a viral agent, an alternative is to hire someone else to create something for you. There are several services that will put you in touch with freelance writers, site designers, and programmers. You only need to supply the idea.



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If you do have an idea about what you want, chances are there is someone available to do it for you, and do it to your specifications. If you are willing to take a chance on a freelancer who is not yet established, you can often find one that will work for a very low wage in exchange for the work experience. Be careful though—inexperience can also mean problems.

Sites like [Elance](#), [Odesk](#), and [Rentacoder](#) are well known places to hire writers, software programmers, graphic artists and more. When I had the idea for Background Magic I simply did a Google search for a programmer offering his or her own software. I asked a few and one guy stood out, so I hired him. That may not be the best way to go about it, but sites like those just mentioned weren't around back then (or if they were I hadn't heard of them yet). It worked out well, and we did it the old-fashioned way, taking each other at our word.

2. Give Something of Value Away

One of the best early and most often cited examples of building a business by giving something away is Hotmail. Hotmail gave away free email services and email addresses to anyone who signed up, and people signed up in droves. Today, millions of users have Hotmail addresses.

What made Hotmail successful was viral marketing. At the bottom of every email that was sent through one of the free Hotmail accounts was a little ad telling others how they could get a free Hotmail account. Every time a user sent an email, they were helping spread the name of Hotmail.

How did Hotmail make any money off of free accounts? They did it by selling ad space and by offering upgrades to their customers, such as additional storage space and the ability to send emails without any advertising attached.

Hotmail became successful enough that in 1997, less than 2 years after it was created, it boasted over 8 million users and was purchased by Microsoft. It is still one of the most well known and biggest web based email services in the world.

While you may not be able to achieve the same amount of buzz that Hotmail was able to generate, it does demonstrate the power of getting your message out by attaching it to something that people are willing to share with their friends, family, and co-workers.

People love freebies. If it looks interesting and it is free, many will be more than happy to give it a try. If they like it, many will also be more than happy to share it with others. Ebooks are great for this, or a small software application that does just one simple thing well that saves people time, money, or frustration.

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Whatever you are offering has to be functional, easy to use, and add value to the user. Your customers have to feel that it is worth their time and effort to pass the information along. Then, and only then, will they be willing to tell their friends and family what they have found.

3. Require a Referral

An added twist to the idea of giving something away for free to your customers is to require them to refer someone to your website in order to get what you are giving away. Simply install a “tell-a-friend” script on your website, and let the thank you page take them to the freebie.

By having the ability to use the friend’s name, it helps to establish your credibility with the person he or she refers. In a weird way, it’s kind of like being able to spam people without doing the spamming yourself!

Now, I have to tell you I’m not a fan of this method at all, but I know some people have had great success with it. The reason I don’t like it is because it’s asking someone to use their friends like a commodity to be spent on things they want for themselves. I don’t treat my friends like that, and I’d never ask someone to do it for me. That’s just me though, maybe you think differently.

Note that this is not the same as using a tell-a-friend script to let people send a web page link to their friends. People do that all the time, you’re just making it easy for them. I’m referring specifically to *bribing* people to use their friends in order to gain a freebie from you.

4. Create a Video Clip

I already mentioned YouTube and Gary Brolsma, the Numa Numa kid. There are thousands of videos at YouTube that have received over a million views.

YouTube, Google Videos, and other video sharing sites take advantage of the fact that more and more people are seeking “visual mind food” online. This visual mind food could be:

- Entertainment videos
- Instructional videos (how-to information)
- Inspirational videos
- Educational videos (science topics, for example)
- Self-development videos

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Really, just about anything has a chance to be successful. If you are creative enough, or cutting edge, or wacky enough, you could quickly be the next hot video sensation.

You don't need network quality equipment to produce a decent video. While you do want reasonably decent quality, the biggest key to this is good content.

Videos don't even have to be full motion. Screen shot videos are easy to make and can be done using free software like [Cam Studio](#). If your computer is Windows XP or later you have Windows Movie Maker already installed, or at least on your Windows CD.

Even simple screenshot videos can get a lot of views. For example, [this video](#) is just some screen shots of quotations with some background music. I'm sure whoever made this video is illegally using the song *Imagine* by John Lennon, but he's been getting away with it for almost one million views.

Side Note: In the new member site that I'm building this winter there will be a few hundred music clips you can use as video background music. They're not by famous musicians, but they're pretty good and they are 100% legal. There are many other great new additions coming, such as free software and ebooks, links to buy my products at a discount, and whole lot of other things to help you achieve online success.

Warning: If you're thinking of waiting until the new member site opens to join up, I feel obligated to warn you that the price will be going up when the new site opens. Join now and you not only get the old price, but you'll keep the old price too. Those who are members when the price increase takes effect will never be subject to the higher price as long as they remain members in good standing.

Getting a million views of your video is great, but it's even better if you promote your website with it. At the end of your video place a 3 – 5 second promotional slide showing your domain name so viewers can check your site out.

Make sure the landing page you send them to matches the tone of the video. If the video you use is quirky and humorous, and the landing page is dead serious and all business, most visitors won't stay long because you jumped outside of their current mindset and expectations.

Once your video is produced and looks the way you want it to, upload it to YouTube and Google Videos. These sites allow website owners and users of social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook to place videos on their site. If your video goes viral, not only will potential customers be able to see your

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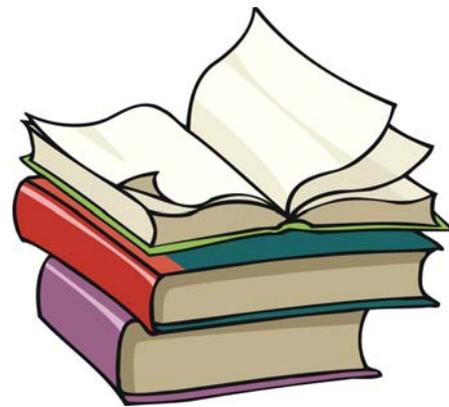
video on the host site, but also on all of the personal sites that pick it up. The amount of traffic that could flood to your site is huge.

5. Create a Brandable E-Book

Have you noticed the number of sites that offer free e-books to subscribers? Give your email address, click the link and you have instant access to an ebook full of useful information. The reason so many sites use this method of advertising is because it works, and here is how you can make it work for you.

Write a short ebook on a topic that relates to your business. In that book you include a little information about your business. At a couple of key places include a link that will drive traffic from the book to your website.

Post it on your website and let anyone interested download a free copy, however, that's only the beginning. Encourage anyone who likes your ebook to offer it as a free gift on their website as well.



I often put this information in the footer so it's obvious, and sometimes on the splash page under the header graphic as well.

If the information is useful or entertaining or is valuable in some other way, and the book is well written, the number of websites that are offering your book will begin to grow. Maybe 10 at first, then 50 or 100, or if it's really good, hundreds of other sites will be helping you spread the word about your business.

A successful campaign viral product could keep driving traffic to your site for months or years to come. You can also submit it to ebook directories, many of which will link to your website, giving you important backlinks that help increase your site's search engine popularity.

Be careful not to overdo the information about yourself in the ebook though, or include too many links back to your site unless they are really relevant and not including them would be a strategic omission. The more back-patting and crowing you do about yourself, the less likely others will be to give your book away for you.

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Another advantage of having your ebook before thousands of people's eyes is it establishes your credibility. People give more credence to a published "expert" than they do to someone who has not written a book, even if the book is very short and self-published like an ebook is.

You begin to build name recognition this way, and when people see your name associated with something in the future, they will be more likely to check it out. Blatant self-promotion usually backfires though, and not just in ebooks, but in forums, blogs, and other venues as well.

Internet marketer David Meerman Scott used this successfully when he released an ebook titled *The New Rules of PR*. He posted a link to the book on his blog, and sent the link by email to friends and colleagues. Within 3 days his ebook had been downloaded over 1,000 times. At that point it caught the attention of a couple of established internet marketers who talked about it on their own blogs. In the 3 days following those blog posts Scott's ebook had been downloaded over 15,000 times.

Six days total, over 15,000 downloads. That's a lot of good publicity in such a short time. To date, the ebook has been downloaded over 60,000 times and continues to drive traffic to his website. It's also resulted in several speaking engagements—you just never know what may come.

You can write your ebook in most any word processor or text editor, but it needs to be converted to a PDF file to be a successful ebook. You can use a free online converter, my favorite is [this one from Neevia](#); or you can use a free program like [Open Office](#), or you can use [Adobe Acrobat](#) like I do. Acrobat is expensive; you'll probably want to use one of the free solutions.

Side Note: I also sell [eWriter Pro](#), a PDF compiler. It's not great, but at least you can password protect your ebooks and disable copy and paste to protect your content with it. It also comes with Master Resale Rights, which means you get the rights to sell the program and keep all the money you make for yourself. That's how I got it. Like I said, it's not great, it's just adequate, but it's only \$10.00 too.

A twist on this is to get an ebook brander. With a brander you can place a special code in the ebook and give the ebook and brander to people and they can place their link in your ebook too. This is often set up as a "Sponsored by" link at the top. It adds extra incentive for someone to give your ebook away, because in doing so they are also promoting their own web site.

A quick search for "PDF Brander" at Google will turn up several options.

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6. Blog for Traffic

Of all the techniques I have listed, blogging is one of the slowest growing methods on this list, and it can be a chore. In order for one of your blog posts to go viral, people have to know your blog exists. With so many quality blogs already in existence, it will likely take time to get your blog noticed.

It requires persistence, but it also takes consistency. Before you decide to begin blogging make sure you have time to post at least 3 – 5 articles a week. While the posts do not need to be long, they should at least contain one or more of the elements that any traffic generating technique needs to go viral: a unique point of view, informative, entertaining, breaking news, instructional, etc.

Not only do you need to be consistent in posting new information, you also need to work at marketing your blog. There are several easy ways to start getting other people to pay attention to your blog.

Start by finding other popular blogs that covers the same or a complementary subject to yours. Leave insightful comments on their blog. When you leave a comment, you can include a link back to your own site.

If someone reads your comment and likes it, they may head over to your blog to see what else you offer. If the blog you leave a comment on is very popular, this could drive some direct traffic to your site. It can also help with search engine rankings. If you consistently post worthwhile comments on the same blog over time, many blog owners will add your blog to their blog roll, which is another way of saying they'll add a permanent front page link to your blog.

Another method of getting your blog noticed is to write a post on your blog commenting on something you read on someone else's blog. You add a link in your post pointing back to the blog you mentioned. In blog language this is referred to as a "trackback".

When you put the URL of the other blog in the trackback section of your blogging program it sends a message to the blog you are linking to informing them that you mentioned them in your blog. The blog owner may then visit your blog, and if they like it, they may write something on their blog about your blog or the post where you link to them, which will drive traffic to your blog.

It is very easy to get started blogging if that is an area you are interested in. There are several good online blog services that will allow you to set up a blog for free. Some of these services, like [Blogger](#), even allow you to set up AdSense advertising on your blog, which will let you earn a little extra income with it.

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There are many blogs on Blogger that are there only for the purpose of earning AdSense income. I may write more about that at a later time.

If you would rather have a blog as part of your own website, a blog software program like WordPress is fairly easy to set up and use. It's free too, and can usually be installed from your hosting account's control panel with a click or two with most web hosts. Customizing it can be tricky, but getting started is easy.

If you write good posts, sooner or later your readership will grow. The more readers you have, the greater the chances of one of your posts going viral. The key to success is quality material that is fresh and holds the readers attention. You cannot get away with recycling what you read on someone else's blog.

When visitors come to your blog, make sure you give them a compelling reason to go to the main part of your site to look around. If your blog becomes popular, this method could drive a flood of traffic to your site that will continue on an almost daily basis.

7. Use Social Bookmark Sites

Something that has really flourished in recent years is the popularity of social bookmark sites like Digg, Stumble Upon, and Delicious. These sites allow users to search, set bookmarks, organize, read, and rate anything on the internet.

If something you have written is posted to one of these sites, other readers get a chance to vote on whether or not they like it. If someone thinks it is good, and worth sharing, they can vote for it. The more people vote for it, the higher up in the rankings it moves. The higher it goes, more people see it . . . it can become a self-feeding viral traffic source that can last for days, and the search engine value can last for weeks or months.

The good part for you is, even if a reader doesn't vote on your article, they still might go to your site to see if there is anything else there that they might like.

One important thing to note is, these social bookmark sites do not like you to vote for your own articles, web pages, or web sites. In fact, if you do vote for your own, it could cause it to move lower in the rankings. You have to have something that other people find interesting enough that they feel compelled to vote for it.

Having said that, you can, and should, submit your own pages, if for no other reason than a majority of people do . . . you just have to be smart about it.

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Submit pages from other sites (like BoogieJack.com! :) as well as your own, and don't submit more than one of your pages per day. If you are suspected of spamming your account will be deleted.

These sites attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every day. If you are fortunate enough to have your site ranked toward the top on one or more of these sites for even one day, the flood of traffic to your site can be tremendous.

8. Use an RSS Feed

Another way to build returning traffic to your site is to provide an RSS feed. RSS is short for *Really Simple Syndication* or *Rich Site Summary*, depending on who you talk to, although *Really Simple Syndication* seems to be the consensus pick.

An RSS document (which is called a "feed", "web feed", or "channel") includes full or summarized text, plus metadata such as publishing dates and authorship. Web feeds benefit publishers by letting them syndicate content automatically.

People can elect to subscribe to your feed, which is read in a feed aggregator, often simply referred to as a feed reader. The feed reader checks the user's subscribed feeds regularly for new content, downloads any updates that it finds, and provides a user interface to monitor and read the feeds.

So, by adding an RSS feed to your site you have a chance to tell subscribers about anything new you have going on. The feed can't be blocked by spam filters so it is always delivered to all subscribers

Another way to use an RSS feed is to pull RSS feeds *to* your site and let others supply you content. By putting fresh, up to date information on your website you give visitors another reason to keep coming back.

Both uses of RSS are designed to keep your visitors coming back. The more often they come back and get new, useful, or entertaining material, the more likely they are of spreading the word to their friends and family about it, and that is the first step of going viral.

9. Be a Content Provider

Another way to spread the word about your website is to provide free content to other websites and blogs. Everyone wants fresh, well written content, but not

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everyone has the time or the ability to create it themselves. With the ever increasing number of websites and blogs on the internet, there is an ongoing demand for article writers and guest bloggers.

If you have the time and talent, providing free content for someone else to use will get your name and website link out there in the public. Some may even pay you. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

Look around for blogs and websites that cover your area of expertise and offer your services to them. They may want you to show them a sample of your writing before they are willing to take you up on your offer. After all, they have their own reputation for quality to consider.

If you have a specific article in mind, you could show them the first couple of paragraphs. If you are extending an open offer, write a sample article that shows what you are capable of doing. Just make sure your sample displays the kind of quality they will be looking for.

After you write your article, you can place a short "About the Author" paragraph at the end. Included in that paragraph is information about your business and a link back to your website. Not only do you get a surge in traffic that comes from their website, but the more different places your material appears, the better the chances that one of your pieces will get picked up by one of the social bookmark sites or another blogger and starts to go viral.

Using this tactic to submit your articles to article directories is called article marketing, which is a good way to build one-way links to your website from sites the search engines consider high value.

I mentioned earlier that people are more likely to listen to someone that they consider to be an expert. Why can't that expert be you? If you know enough about a topic to build a business around it, you are an expert to everyone who knows less than you do about it.

If you post a few articles to article directories, people looking for content browse these directories may select yours to publish on their site or in their ezine. Because they have to include your resource box—which has a link to your website—you not only gain more links, but your article could suddenly be read by tens of thousands of people on someone else's mailing list!

Ezinearticles.com is the granddaddy of all article directories. Here are a few other good ones: ArticlesBase.com, Buzzle.com, ArticleAlley.com, and GoArticles.com.

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Sites like [Associated Content](#) and [Helium](#) let you have a content publisher's page that will allow you the room to write quite a bit more about the services you offer and point them to your website.

When readers click a link to come to your site they are what marketers refer to as "pre-qualified". They chose to be there based on the information they read. They were not tricked or spammed or misled, they are there by choice, and that makes them more receptive to your message.

Beside the traffic that comes to your site directly from your article, if the article is really good it may end up on one of the social bookmark sites. If your article gets ranked in one of these sites, it can bring a lot of visitors to your site in a very short period of time. That burst of visitors might last for only a day or two, but it could also linger in the top rankings for days or weeks.

Another side benefit of writing articles is that they can provide a small amount of residual income to you. Many of these sites offer revenue sharing that will give you a small portion of the advertising that the article generates. It may not be much, but it can add up over time.

10. Go Fishing with Link Bait

The term "link baiting" is met with mixed reactions among internet marketers and bloggers. While it really means to practice the art of "baiting" viewers into linking back to your site from their site, most people think of it as writing something controversial, and the controversy is the bait.

As for controversy, by taking a contrary position on a popular subject, or attacking a popular person, other bloggers start to comment on what you said, usually because they can not believe you had the nerve to write it or because they are coming to the defense of the person or topic that was attacked.

This can cause more of a stir than you want though, as anything controversial will mean others are going to be very much against what you say. They could write trash about you or your site, trash that could be false, simply because you've aroused their emotions. This happens in politics quite a bit. The largest group of liars in the world is those who are passionate about their politics!

Of course, that's just my personal opinion, I mean no harm. I said it as a small example of controversial link bait. Anyone that is passionate about their politics probably felt a little stirred up there for a few seconds. ☺

The danger of this last method is the damage it could do to your reputation. If it insults too many of your regular visitors they may leave your site and begin frequenting other sites that are a little more in line with their way of thinking.

So why would site owners risk damaging their reputations for links? The first reason is the immediate flood of traffic it can send to their site.

The second reason is that links represent popularity, and some search engines, most notably Google, uses the number of sites that link to your site as one of their most important ranking factors. When other sites link to yours, it improves your ranking with Google. This is especially true when the sites that link to yours are ranked higher than yours.

For some site owners, the traffic generated by getting links using controversy outweighs the negative consequences. For your purposes, you need to consider whether it is more important for you to have a quick burst of traffic to your site, or whether you would rather build a steady stream of regular customers that will continue to return to your site long into the future.

There are several legitimate styles of link bait, controversy isn't the only bait:

- Offer fresh, hot information or news.
- Humor works well if it's good and in good taste.
- Offer freebies: software, games, ebooks, etc.

I could make a much bigger list, but really, anything of quality can work as link bait. My tutorials on BoogieJack.com are link bait because I'm told they are easier to understand than the tutorials many other similar sites offer.

There are a number of ways that have effectively used unusual strategies to get other sites to give them a link. Most notable are *The Million Dollar Home Page*, *One Red Paper Clip*, and *All My Life for Sale*. All three of these sites used unique ideas that made other site owners and bloggers want to write about what they were doing.

There is the real secret, but in case you missed it, here it is in clearer terms:

Link bait is doing something interesting that has broad appeal that no one else is doing!

I reckon that is clear enough! Simple, eh?

11. Run a Contest

People love to win things, and they love to be recognized for winning. Be creative in deciding what the prize should be, but consider how much value it will have for your visitors.

While the prize doesn't have to be something of great value, it does have to be something that is useful or of some value to the winner. Digital products, like this ebook for example, are ideal because the investment is mainly the time it takes to create it.

Whatever you choose, make sure the prize is more than just a blatant advertisement for your business or website. Don't get me wrong, it's okay to fit in a little self-promotion, just don't go overboard.

If you are running a business-to-business website, free advertising on your site for the winner is something that wouldn't cost you anything, but if your site doesn't generate very much traffic or if the kind of traffic it does draw is not a responsive audience, the prize may not be seen as being very valuable.

If you can come up with an interesting contest with a desirable prize, it's a great way to drive large amounts of traffic to your site. Other than the cost of the prize, there is not very much cost involved in this technique.

There are websites and blogs that are in the business of telling their audience about contests that other people are running. They will do the marketing for you—just submit your contest details to them.

If the contest is good enough or creative enough, it may catch the attention of a blogger who will spread the word to others. The better the prize package, the faster and farther it will spread.

A good way to take advantage of this technique is to have a repeating contest, or a series of contests. This will keep customers returning to your site to sign up for the new contest and what the new prizes are.

If you've been a long time regular of BoogieJack.com you'll remember the Guess the Celebrity contest I used to run. That was a hoot and brought in hundreds of visitors just for the contest each and every month.

Note to self: It's been a long time since you've done that, think of a new contest!

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12. Make Referrals Easy

Have you noticed the number of websites that include a button that lets you tell others about the site you are visiting? You might have seen this button:



...on some of my pages. It makes it easy for people to email the page to friends, to bookmark the page in their Favorites folder, or to add it to their social bookmarking or social networking sites. You can go to AddThis.com and get a free button for your own website.

Site owners have learned that if you want your visitors to do something for you, you have to make it as easy as possible. If you want your site visitors to tell others about it, it does not get much simpler than giving them a button to click.

You can also use a "tell-a-friend" script. When your viewer clicks the tell-a-friend link it opens up a small window or a new page where they enter their friends email address and a short message so they can tell them about your site. Some people also use these to send themselves the link to your web page so they remember to come back.

The power behind this script goes back to what I discussed back at the beginning of this book; people will listen to what their friends and family say more than they'll listen to you—at least until they get to know you! There is a level of trust there that you can not come close to, at least not initially. Trust has to be built over time.

The tell-a-friend script may generate more email referrals because it's usually more obvious, but the Add This button has all the social site options, plus it also has the email referral.

13. Branding Products

Games are another thing that is very popular on the internet. I'm not talking about complex multi-player games, just simple games that people can play at their desk on a break at work.

If you or someone you know has any experience using Macromedia's Flash, creating a simple game can be an excellent way to get your businesses name in front of a lot of eyes.

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Like everything else, if you do not know how to do it yourself, all you have to do is look around and you will find someone who is willing to do it for you. As mentioned earlier, [Elance](#), [Odesk](#), and [Rentacoder](#) are sites where you can hire someone to create a product for you.

You don't even have to have your own idea. There are companies that offer rebrandable software. You just choose a program from among their offerings, come up with a name for it, pay a fee and they'll customize it for you. Just search for "rebrandable software" and you'll find many choices. Prices can run anywhere from the cost of a pizza to thousands of dollars, depending on the program and the vendor. Do be careful though, some of it isn't very good.

This is an idea where being creative will serve you well. If you go for a game, it does not have to be an entirely new idea, but the more unique it is, the more interest and traffic it will generate.

Do a search for "flash games" and you will see thousands of games that people can play without any downloading or programs to install. You can also see that many of the games are not entirely unique. Some are simply a twist on an older classic game, but there has to be something different for it to work for you.

If your game catches on, there are quite a few sites that will advertise it for you, and some that will even host a copy of your game on their site.

When someone decides to play your game, you can put an advertisement about your business that they can see while they are waiting for the game to load. I should warn you though, games are not a good fit with just any type of business, and converting free game players into paying customers could prove very difficult.

One great example of using a free game for marketing is Peerflix. They created a game called "Paparazzi" that makes fun of celebrities. The idea went viral and was quickly picked up by *Entertainment Weekly*, *E Online*, and most of the game sites. Within 90 days of the games launch, it had logged over 2 million unique visitors. You don't have to convert a large percentage of players to buyers to make good money when you get that kind of traffic.



If your game is fun or your software program works well and is useful, users will tell other people about it, they will write about it on their blogs, and they will link to it from their websites.

The great part about both of these options is it gives you repeat visibility. Marketing experts have determined that on average it takes being exposed to something at least 7 times before people will act on it. The more often people see your message, the more likely they will eventually act on it. Advertisers and politicians put their message in as many places as possible so people will get exposed to it multiple times. That's what gets their attention.

14. Offer an E-Card Service

Once upon a time I offered free e-cards from my BoogieJack.com website. It really did bring in a lot of traffic. I can't remember why I quit offering that service—maybe it was when my host just disappeared overnight and I didn't want to set it all back up.



Card sites have maintained their popularity over the years. This type of software comes in several different varieties, with or without music, and can be static or animated. Some are very simple animations; others are very elaborate Flash animations.

A couple friends and I set up a greeting card website, CardYard.com, which uses an out-of-box solution. It came with the cards, sounds, and everything needed to set up an ecard site. I was really only involved in setting things up, my friend Shannon has maintained it and added cards over the years.

Once the person finds the card they like, they can fill in the message box, add the email of the person they are sending it to, and press the send button. An email is sent telling the recipient that their friend has sent them a card, and it gives them a link to click that will allow them to view the card.

Every time someone sends an ecard from your site, the recipient has to come to your site to view it, giving you a chance to interest them in your other content. You just have to give them a good reason to click the links that will take them where you want them to go.

In early 2006 the job listing service *CareerBuilder.com* launched a program called Monk-e-mail. With the click of a mouse you could choose which chimpanzee you wanted to use with your card, and then personalize that chimp with different

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clothing, glasses, hats, and backgrounds. Users also had the option of writing or recording their own message, and even had a text-to-speech function that allowed the chimp to deliver your message in audio. As an extra bonus, when you move your mouse around the screen, the chimp follows your movement.

Within 3 months of launching, over 14 million monk-e-mails had been sent. While that may be beyond your programming expertise, you just need to come up with a unique angle or a specialty that no one else is doing to have a good chance for it to take off.

If you're good at making graphics your unique position could be the quality of your cards. Or, you could specialize in a specific type of card, words of encouragement for example, or Bible verse cards, or poetry cards, etc.

15. Build a Community

One of the reasons for the ever increasing popularity of the internet is that it allows like minded people to get together from anywhere in the world. From sports fans to politics to Pez collectors—if it is something you are interested in, chances are very good that you can find someone who shares your interests.

Take a look at Yahoo Groups. They host hundreds of thousands of different groups from around the world. A search for “viral marketing” groups brought a list of hundreds of separate groups.



While I'm not suggesting you try to become the next Yahoo Groups, it does demonstrate the desire for internet users to get together with people who share their interests.

There is even a hosting company that specializes in setting up your site with community building software. You can read about it [here](#). That link goes straight to their Social Engine page rather than their front page so you won't have to hunt for it.

Should you choose this route, you should encourage your users to participate and to establish themselves as experts. You might even want to create an

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incentive plan to help it take off. You see, most people are not leaders, they are followers, and won't take any risks until braver souls show the way. Incentives can fill the timid with a measure of courage!

Make your community a safe, friendly environment where people can share their opinions and insights and it should grow into a viable community in time.

Building a community in this way will bring people that are interested in your line of business to your website. Once they are there, it is easy for them to look around at what you have to offer them.

Free membership sites are another example of community building, though it's more one-sided. I'll soon be announcing some big changes coming down the road in my membership site. Stay tuned to [Almost a Newsletter](#) for details.

16. Employee Evangelism

The best advocates you have for your business may already be on your payroll if you have employees other than yourself. Your employees already have a vested interest in getting the word out about your company, but most won't understand that, so you need to educate them.

Your employees know your business like no one else does. They can discuss the ins and outs of your business, and tell others why your product or service is superior to the competition. Enthusiastic employees can spread the word to family, friends, and colleagues in the normal course of casual conversation.

Back in the early days of the computer industry, IBM ruled the world of technology. A lot of computer companies were trying to get their legs under themselves, but IBM was the king. One of the reasons IBM was able to continually withstand the ever increasing competition was that they understood the power their employees had to market the company.

From the day they were hired, IBM employees were taught how to be advocates for the company. They were trained in the company's values, and were shown the quality of the products they were helping to build. They bought into IBM's culture, and in turn, shared what they knew with anyone who would listen. The technology world heard the message so often, and from so many different people, that few questioned the fact that IBM was the best.

So if you do have employees, the key to success is your ability to assemble a loyal, dedicated workforce. If you can do that, then you have the potential to tap

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into some of that worker evangelism power as well. Turn your employees into a marketing team and let them spread the word about how great your company is.

If they truly believe it and believe it is in their best interest, their enthusiasm can be very convincing. People will believe what your employees say because it will be obvious that your employees believe in your company.

17. Start an Affiliate Program

If you have never thought about using an affiliate program to sell your products, you might want to consider it. There are perhaps, hundreds of thousands of people online who would like to be able to tap into online sales, but they lack a product to sell. If you can convince them to promote your product and you pay them well, you could have an army of sales people marketing your product on a commission-only basis.

The easiest way to set it up is to use one of the affiliate marketing sites like [ClickBank](#). ClickBank specializes in digital products. If you are selling an e-book or a downloadable software program, this could drive traffic to your site and increase sales.

There is a one-time set up fee to get started. After that there are no upfront costs, they just take a percentage of every sale. They will list the site in their searchable database where people interested in selling online can find you, but don't count on that as an affiliate building tactic. There are over 100,000 products in their database, the chance of someone just choosing yours isn't that great. The best course of action is to invite your website visitors and especially your customer to become affiliates.

There are pros and cons to using an affiliate program to sell your products. On the plus side, you have a motivated sales force that actively markets your product on the internet. They do much of the work for you and will reach into corners you'd never find on your own.

On the negative side, while it does not cost you much in terms of out of pocket expenses, there is significant cost involved. In order to convince someone to bear all of the expenses of marketing your product, there has to be ample compensation for them. Commission rates of 50 percent of the sale price are not uncommon for digital products.

I'll be offering a new affiliate program myself sometime in 2010. Stay tuned!

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18. Write Press Releases

Like websites, newspapers need content. It used to be mostly local newspapers that had a hard time coming up with fresh content on a daily basis because of the small staffs they operate with. But now, with all the layoffs in the newspaper industry, more and more large newspapers need content too.

Some of that need is filled from press releases.

Press releases can be done online now, and there are several sources of free press releases. A press release has to be formatted correctly and written in a certain style, but you can learn this online as well.

Remember when my site was hacked and I issued a press release to help people prevent it from happening to them? Overnight my site picked up about 2,000 new links—that's the power of a good press release!

Not only can a press release bring some good publicity, but it can also enhance your reputation, depending on the angle you take. It could help establish you as an expert in your field. It could make your one-person company seem like a much bigger business than it is. It could even bring unexpected opportunities your way. Press releases are well worth learning more about and putting to use.

Conclusion

The key to high traffic is to get your name and your website address noticed as often as possible, by as many people as possible, in as many places as possible.

Some of the methods in this book may be just right for you and your business; others may only have a limited use, or not be useful at all. Don't limit yourself to the items mentioned here. If you think you might have a good idea, try it! You might strike gold in unexpected places.

You need to be clear about what it is you want people to do once they come to your site. Take a good, objective look at your website. Once the traffic comes, what will they do when they get there? You have to make sure your design is right, your website is easy to navigate, all of the links work, and your message is tailored to convince people to do what you want them to do.

A final reminder—any one of these methods is not meant to be used as the only marketing you are doing. They should be used as a part of a larger marketing

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campaign. Everything you do to spread the word about your site can bring you traffic. If you're lucky, one may go viral, but each of them has the potential to send traffic to your site, even without going viral.

Link building is especially important, because the reality is, there is no assurance anything you do will ever go viral. Link building is the bedrock on which search engine rankings depend. Combined with search engine optimization and content building, you'll have traffic that doesn't depend on special promotional gimmicks.

If one of your marketing techniques does go viral, hang on for a wild ride. It will be worth your efforts. Until then, build your links systematically and optimize your web pages for search engine rankings.

[Industrial Strength Link Building](#) will help you get started building one-way links pointing to your site. [SEO for YOU](#) will help you optimize your website.

If you're interested in both, check my [specials page](#), where I have them bundled together at a deep discount at the time of this writing. Just look for the SEO Special when you get there.

FYI - the member's site is being rebuilt this winter to add a free level and a paid level.

Here's a sneak peak...

Free Level: It will open with well over 100 web design tutorials, free graphics, royalty free sound loops, online webmaster tools, product discounts and more.

Paid Level:

- All of the above, plus...
- More tutorials (including some that sell separately as stand alone products)
- More sound loops
- **Bigger** product discounts
- Search engine optimization content
- Internet marketing content
- **Video tutorials** – some about Web 2.0 traffic generation tactics!
- Royalty free *business* graphics (buy buttons, guarantee badges, etc.)
- Opportunities for to earn money, website traffic and one-way links.

Plus—yes there's even more—there will be products I buy the rights to that I'll just **GIVE** to the paying members. In fact, I *already have* a bunch of these products lined up.

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If I can't get the rights to give a product to members, I'll make it available at a *nominal* fee to say within the legal rights I get with the product. When I say nominal I mean \$5.00 or less in most cases—and that money will be used to buy more products to GIVE to members!

Here's the catch though . . . when the new member site opens the membership costs will go up for the paid side—**except for anyone who is already member when the switch is made!**

If you wait to join until the new site is open you'll pay the new rate, which is probably going to be in the \$7.00-10.00 a month range. A yearly subscription will be available at a lower cost, bringing the rate down to \$5.00-6.00 a month.

However . . . if you join now you'll get access from now until the new site opens for free; plus a full year in the new site after that! More importantly, you'll be grandfathered into the new site at the old cost, so you'll *always* only pay \$3.00 a month on a monthly basis, or a little less on a yearly basis.

You'll **save over 50%** by joining now, plus you'll have access from now until one year after the new site opens and will always be able to renew at the old rates, so ***you really save over 50% each and every year!***

When you see all the content and products that start flowing into the new member site once it opens you'll never want to drop out! I'm serious—you're going to love it! You'll get so much for so little you'll think I've lost my mind!

Later on there may be opportunities to earn affiliate commissions and credits toward product purchases, but I want to get the new site set up and running before looking at setting those things up.

Obviously there's a lot of great stuff coming in the very near future. If you like receiving freebies (and obviously you do since you downloaded this) you're going to love being a paid member because you'll get freebies every month—yes, that's freebies, plural, as in multiple freebies . . . **every month!** 😊

The thing is, because you're already a loyal subscriber, *I want you to get in at the lowest rate possible*, so don't delay, you must join very soon to get the very best rate. Sign up here: [sign up page](#). Just scroll down and choose your package (some packages come with other products included at a discount price).

All the best to you,

Dennis