

## **Promoting Your Site**

So now that your site is optimized and ready to go, how are you going to drive more traffic to your site? There are many different ways that you can promote your Web site, like paying a submission fee to search engines, manually submitting your site, or using automated submission programs. Paid inclusion programs can speed up the time it takes to have your site listed in a search engine's database, but it doesn't guarantee that you will receive a favorable ranking. If you want to insure that your site appears high in search results, there are some search engines that base ranking on the amount site owners are willing to pay (actually, "pay-per-click" listings are usually bid on, with the highest bidder securing the top spot). But if you don't have the funds for such paid submission and ranking programs, don't worry; there are still free (and effective) ways to promote your Web site with search engines, and here we will focus on two: the Site Promotion Tool, and manually submitting your site.

### **Site Promotion Tool**

All MA WebCenters Web sites come equipped with the Site Promotion Tool—a quick and easy way to automatically submit your site to some of the more important search engines like Google, HotBot, and Scrub the Web with just a single click. In the "Site Tools" section of your Web site admin, you will find a link that says "Site Promotion (Submit Your Site to Search Engines)". In the Site Promotion Tool, you can choose which search engines your site will be submitted to, which URL you would like to submit, and how you would like your company's name to appear in search engine listings. In addition, you will find links to other popular search engines and directories that do not allow automatic submission, but still offer free manual submission. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with this tool and try it out.

### **Manual Site Submission**

In an attempt to discourage spammers from mass-submitting sites, many search engines do not allow sites to be submitted automatically (like the Site Promotion tool does). Submitting your Web site manually is not a difficult process; each search engine will have detailed instructions walking you through the process of submitting your site. Most search engines have similar guidelines regarding content and site optimization, but you still need to read through each search engine's submission policies to make sure you are in compliance with their rules. In the Site Promotion Tool, you will find links to a few popular search engines that require sites to be submitted manually (Altavista, DMOZ, MSN, Fast, and Lycos). We also recommend that you to submit your site to other search engines and directories to make sure that your Web site is being promoted as thoroughly as possible.

After you have submitted your site to the various search engines, it may take some time before your Web site actually appears in the search engine's listings. The Site Promotion Tool is intended to assist you in submitting your Web site to search engines; please understand that we cannot force those companies to list your site or to speed up the

review process. Search engine companies receive millions of Web site submissions, and each company has their own timetable for reviewing and updating its search database. For example, companies like Google may only revisit your Web site every six weeks, and if they share their information with other search engines or directories, the updated database may not be filtered down to these companies for several weeks. If the search engine uses human editors instead of automatic spiders to review your Web site (search engines like this are often called "directories"), it will take even more time for them to update their database. Also be aware of the fact that there are several independent search companies that, for one reason or another, may not accept your Web site submission at all.

## **Do's and Don'ts**

Here are a few things you should do when optimizing your site:

- Use the Link Analysis Tool before submitting you Web site!
- Make sure that the keywords closely match the actual content of the site. Make sure that you have entered the URL (starting with <http://www> and including any trailing "/" etc.) completely and accurately. Your site can't be reviewed by search engines or directory editors if you have submitted a broken domain name. If your domain name is not corrected, and remains inaccurate, it may result in your site being dropped from search engine and directory listings.
- Use links...in moderation. Many search engines index the links on your site (or may find your site through links on other sites), and will be more inclined to give you a better ranking if you are linked to known, reputable sites. For other search engines, links have little or no relevance to your ranking. However, "link farms", or pages with nothing but links, rank poorly with most search engines, so don't go overboard with links. When used responsibly, giving customers links to other sites helps cultivate a "resource center" image for your site, and if these other sites reciprocate by posting links back to your site, it can be a good way to increase traffic.
- Use a relevant title and description on every page. Re-submit your site to search engines every four or five weeks (except with sites like DMOZ, who only accept one submission per site...ever!).
- But be careful: if you over-submit your site, the search engine will consider you a "spammer" and exclude you from their directory.

Here is a quick list of things you should avoid doing:

- Do not make yourself look like a spammer. Some of the red flags that search engines look for are: excessive or off-topic keywords, pages that contain nothing

but links, submission of the same site several times in a short period of time, using text that is the same color as the page background, and submitting a Web address that redirects to a different place on the Web.

- Do not use all caps. It is THE EQUIVALENT OF YELLING on the Internet.
- Do not use unnecessary promotional words like "best" or "greatest".
- Don't use Frames, Flash, JavaScript or Image Maps on your introduction page. It might look great, but a majority of search engines are still in the process of developing ways to index enhanced content. Without a way to reference the key words on the intro page, the search engine has no way to determine how to list your site. If submitting your site manually, you can bypass the Flash intro by specifying a page name in the Web address (e.g. <http://www.yourdomain.com/index2.htm>). If you are using the Site Promotion Tool, you should keep the Flash intro disabled, since the search engines may revisit your site at any time.

## **Additional Resources**

We have covered a lot of information in this three-part series, and hopefully you've learned a few new things that will help make your Internet marketing more effective. Remember—this is just an introduction to site optimization and promotion. For a more comprehensive examination of these topics, please refer to these helpful Web sites:

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com>  
<http://www.submit-it.com/subopt.htm>  
<http://www.rankwrite.com>  
<http://www.sofer.com/research/searchmain.html>  
<http://www.bruceclay.com/>

Many of the things we addressed over the past three issues can improve your site's performance with search engines, but in the end, the best way to improve your positioning with search engines is to provide high quality content and service. You cannot "trick" the search engine in to giving you a better ranking, and most of the methods employed to this end (excessive use of keywords, submission of the same site in a 24-hour period, etc.) are red flags used to identify spammers. If you missed either of the previous installments, please contact us at [newsletter@mawebcenters.com](mailto:newsletter@mawebcenters.com), and we'll gladly re-send you a copy!