



Your Website Coach



Search Engine Basics I – 3/23/06

If you own a website, you understand that it isn't enough to simply have a website; your site must also be *found*. I've touched on some search engine tidbits in the past, and Ted Edginton of *AssuraFirst Financial* (www.tededginton.com) poses questions which require me to delve deeper:

"The National Association of Realtors has said that in 2005, 77% of home buyers used the internet to search for a home... I currently am driving customers to the site via word of mouth, but the site is not being used to its greatest capacity. How do I drive potential customers to my website, via search engines such as Yahoo! and Google? Also, how do I keep my site near the top of the list, without paying someone to manage this for me?"

Driving potential customers to your site via search engines. You often hear of being registered with *thousands* of search engines and it sounds like that is the answer to your dreams. The truth is, if you submit your site to a few of the major search engines, the rest of those *thousands* piggy-back off the big guys. Who are the big guys? Google, Yahoo!, Ask (formerly Ask Jeeves), MSN and DMOZ are a few of them. There are really only about 10 that are considered "major". An excellent website that shows relationships among the search engines can be found at www.search-this.com/search_engine_decoder.asp.

Keeping my site near the top of the list, without paying someone. It's going to cost you a few shekels if you want optimal visibility; however, you want to know about doing it for free. You are referring to objective search engine results, a.k.a. "natural" and "organic". There are a lot of things you can do for your pages that will welcome search engines; here are some:

TITLE tag – Make each word count and try to incorporate words that describe your goods/services.

Appropriate Key Words – Use your keywords liberally, but naturally on your pages. Choose keywords based on those used by people searching for your goods/services. If possible, try using the sentence in your title tag as a sentence in your page.

ALT tags – If properly used to describe the image, it can benefit you. No keyword stuffing, though!

Link popularity – Increasing the number of sites that link to you can boost your rankings, but beware of "link farms", they are bad news.

Affiliate programs – Reputable programs can drive visitors to your site AND make you money.

Word of Mouth – Send people to your site every chance you get.

Fact: More visitors click on organic results than paid results, simply because they *are* objective.

Written by Christine Chubenko, christine@yourwebsitecoach.net