

Building Traffic Tributaries

The World Wide Web can be viewed as an immense ocean of traffic that is just waiting to be tapped for your online business. The traffic already exists, either on other people's sites or through online connections, that are plugged into terminals that go directly into a person's home or office. In this respect, you don't have to create traffic; you have to learn to build tributaries that lead from that large ocean back to your online offerings so that existing traffic has the opportunity to flow back to you. The inlet that brings this traffic from the ocean to your tributary is the numerous backlinks that you post all over the Internet in various places. It's these links that will bring traffic from one area of the WWW to your business website.

THE INDIVIDUAL AS A DROP OF WATER

Taking this metaphor a step further, each individual who is searching the Internet can be viewed as a drop of water that has the capacity to flow from one area of the Internet to another. If you also take into account not only the behavior of each individual, but also the way the water is distributed on the Internet, you will find that people congregate in various areas, and some places are not meant to hold traffic,

but to distribute it even more, like search engines. Ultimately, a search engine will list results from a search that is done using a set of keywords, and based on that result, the drop of water or individual typically chooses a few places to hop to next. That's one way that water is moved across the network of tributaries on the Internet.

The other way is accomplished when the force of gravity itself pushes water from one area to another. On the Internet, this occurs when so many people find something of value that they start posting more and more backlinks back to the same area. When that happens, the popularity of the Web page increases and more water or people flow back to the site on the strength of mass exposure alone. We will explore these two mechanisms in depth to show you how to get more traffic to your site.

PAY SOMEONE TO BUILD A TRIBUTARY

Lastly, another way that is not as natural as the two ways mentioned above is to pay someone to come in and dig a tributary, or tons of links back to your site. If you do this through marketing strategies like affiliate and referral programs, it's considered okay. If you do this through spamming and coercion, you'll end up getting into legal trouble. It's important to note that when you are trying to

get attention to your website, what you do has to fall between good, legal behavior. Cybersquatting on someone else's trademark name as your domain name to grab traffic, for instance, may be doable, but it's going to get you into trouble and should be avoided.

Targeted Traffic

The Internet as an amorphous ocean of traffic is a great way to understand the dynamics of traffic flow. This network of waterways has already been very highly developed in some cases, with some people already experiencing great traffic flow on their sites. This is important to know because you don't really want to just put an inlet next to an amorphous ocean and drive tons of untargeted traffic back to your site. Each of those drops may represent a person who is online, but are they the type of person who is going to buy your products and services? Obviously not! There is much more to building traffic to your site than just numbers. It has to be quality, targeted traffic that stands a good chance of creating sales conversions.

TARGET TRAFFIC RELATIVE TO YOUR NICHE

Whether you're getting traffic from a search engine or from some other site, your backlinks should be showing up in areas where the niche is similar to your market segment. You don't want to be selling jewelry and posting backlinks on pet sites or adding keywords for pets. That would only bring in traffic that isn't interested in buying your products in the first place. In order to get high quality traffic that wants to buy, you have to first make sure that your efforts are being placed in the right demographic.

THE LARGER THE POND, THE BETTER THE EXPOSURE

You want your niche to be something that isn't so narrow that few people will be interested in it, yet not be so broad that you won't define your demographic well enough to target it either. If you find that the keywords that you are using to generate traffic from search engines has a low search volume, this indicates that relative to other niches, it probably is a smaller pond of water. It would be better to identify a niche that has some inherent strength in numbers before you actually start to market it online.

Once you find a popular niche, you will also find many other people marketing to that niche. The best niches are those that have a high search volume and a low competitive factor, but even highly competitive niches can be used to bring traffic to your site. You can target high traffic places around the WWW that are discussing your niche to add backlinks back to your site. These can include high profile blogs, discussion groups, websites that allow commenting, news stories, and online articles. The more traffic that a site has already established in your niche, the more likely that you can siphon off that traffic back to your own ventures by posting backlinks in those areas. Even for social networking sites that have large numbers of people visiting daily, you want to target the traffic to your niche rather than to indiscriminately market to everyone and anyone.

Build It Well

Before we go into the many areas with high traffic that can be utilized to bring people back to your website, let's discuss the mechanism of the backlink in more detail. This is going to be the string of text that will be used to bring people from one area of the WWW back to your website. For that reason,

you want to be sure that you build these backlinks in the best way possible, to not only attract people who might be reading, but also to get the search engine's attention too.

THE BACKLINK

A backlink is a piece of HTML that is embedded in other text and that is generally highlighted via a different text color and bolding. It uses an anchor text format that in its simplest form is like this:

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<a href="http://www.myurl.com">Myanchortext</a>
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What appears to a person reading your backlink is the text that is written in the "Myanchortext" area. The actual URL that you point to is not viewed, only the anchor text. This is important to remember so that you build your links in a way that is not only interesting to your readers, but that is also search-engine friendly too. This way, you double your chances of getting traffic, not just from visitors who are visiting that page, but also from search engines that are analyzing the anchor text of these links for content.

MAKE THEM INTERESTING TO BOTH!

One of the biggest mistakes people make when adding backlinks to high traffic areas is that they don't pay attention to the details of the link. Instead, you will see poorly built links that say, "Click this," as their anchor text. Honestly, is that an invitation to either a person or a search engine that will grab either one's attention?! No! You have to take the view that you only have one chance to grab that person or search engine's attention, and that is going to be done via the quality of your backlink. Make it count.

Try to use keywords that you've researched in your anchor text to grab the search engine's attention. However, don't just leave it at that. Also, try to make the copy as interesting to a visitor as you can so that he/she literally feels compelled to click your backlink and be directed back to your site. You can do this by adding quality comments related to your niche in other areas and then choosing to tell people about some fabulous offer or information that is on your site instead of inviting them to click. Tell your reader why he/she should click on that link; don't just ask him/her to do it!

It's All About Marketing

At first, you will have a little trouble figuring out what is working and what is not. For that reason, it's a good idea to track the results of your backlinks so that you can fine-tune how you present them based on the results you obtain. That means that when you insert a backlink into a high traffic area, you want to get a good idea of how it is functioning. How well did your copy attract people to click through to your site? Even in email marketing, you want to know not just how many people have opened your emails, but how many have clicked back to your site when they read the copy. This will give you a good idea as to what is most attractive to your audience and what will help you to build copy that almost seems like you're reading their minds.

USE A URL SHORTENER OR ANALYTIC PROGRAM

There are various tools you can use to gauge the traffic levels coming back to your website via your control panel. They will even show the referring site to you. The problem is that you want to be even more specific than that. You want to see which links and marketing copy are more effective than the others. For that, you want to track traffic by each link. You can do this by using a URL shortener, or you can

buy a service like AWeber.com for email marketing that offers an analytic program to track link click-through rates. When you are first starting, try using a free URL shortener, like <http://bit.ly>, to track how many people are clicking on your links without paying anything. It'll help you get used to tracking links and what to expect when you post a link.

PLAN YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

Next, you'll want to set up links to various promotions and offerings and set up a marketing strategy for different sites around the WWW to generate exposure for those offerings.

For instance, say you are marketing an ebook. You've decided that you want to market it on Facebook, Twitter, and some blogs. You set up the shortened URL, and then you think of several interesting ways to frame your link to attract attention. Create different variations using keywords in your anchor text, but use your shortened link. After, you've brainstormed several versions, you might want to use one version on Facebook, a different version on Twitter, and a different one on blogs.

You send a status update to Facebook using one version, a status update to Twitter via another, and so on. You look up the results and see which version was the most attractive.

You will find as you do this more and more that some interesting patterns will show up, not just with the sites themselves, but also with the demographics that you are trying to leverage. You may find that a link you think is awesome gets very few hits, while another that seemed somewhat vague gets the most hits. There are a few variables that can affect this, and when you've got some results, do some analysis.

Timing Traffic

Before you go blaming or crediting the copy and the keywords, you have to take into account that traffic is not a constant on any site. Just like the ocean has tides, the WWW has traffic tides that come and go at different times of days, depending on the niche and the demographic. It's your job to figure out when the optimal time to post is to get the most traffic. This is true whether you're trying to grab the most attention for an eBay sale or whether you just want to get the most traffic from a website back to your site. Timing isn't the only variable that can affect your traffic statistics, but it is the most influential.

WHEN IS EVERYONE ONLINE MOST?

The key question you have to ask yourself when you plan on posting is, "When are people most likely to be online to see your posting?" You stand to get much more traffic when there are more people online just by working the odds. It stands to reason then that you want to know when people are most active on different sites and plan your postings accordingly for the best performance.

It can vary by demographic too. If your demographic is comprised of people who work days and are up at night, then your traffic is going to show up at night. If your traffic is mostly coming from a different country than where you reside, it makes sense to post on their hours and not on your own. Pay attention to your website traffic logs from your existing website, and it will give you a good indication of when people are visiting it.

WHAT DETERMINES THEIR ONLINE BEHAVIOR?

If you analyze traffic trends based on the days of the week, you may find that you aren't getting good traffic on weekends when everyone is out, but you get great traffic on Friday when people are looking forward to the weekend. You may find traffic spikes at 7 pm at night if your niche is

something outside of work, but it might spike at 8 am Monday morning if it is something that is vital to a working environment. You really have to get into the mind of your average customer to learn how to time your posting to get the most exposure.

For instance, if you are trying to rent a house or room, you can put yourself in people's shoes and realize that Thursday and Friday postings after working hours work best. That's when they are most likely to be online looking for a place to rent and visit over the weekend. The rest of the week, their minds are on other things, so why waste your time posting when they're not even noticing? Time your postings to when you already have their attention.

Good Ways To Capture Attention

Now that you understand the mechanics of generating traffic back to your site, let's talk about some not so obvious ways that can help to build excitement and buzz for your backlinks. You can see that by using these strategies, you will get more clicks on your links when you go to analyze them. Why they work is partly human nature. People are by

nature curious. All you're doing is raising that curiosity to a higher level.

BE VAGUE

When you go to buy something, the first thing you look for is defects. It's only human nature. We don't want to feel like we've been taken, and most people really hate clicking on a link only to land on a link farm or spam page. That's why you don't want to give out too much information when you add your link. You want to be descriptive enough to engender excitement and curiosity, but not enough to give them all of the details upfront so they can pick your offer apart. By doing so, you will also ruin the surprise.

One of the best marketing strategies out there is to avoid giving out too much information in your backlinks; you never, ever sell based on features, only on benefits. Thus, if you're trying to get traffic to a book on how to garden, you don't add a backlink that says: "Come check out my book on gardening." That's a killer right there. Instead, you sell a benefit and make it a little vague, like: "I saved hundreds on grocery bills, find out how!" If you've also researched the keywords and "saved hundreds on grocery bills" was one such phrase, and you used it as your anchor text, you're attracting attention from the search engines too!

HEADLINES AND PICTURES

Even if someone isn't interested in what you are selling, he/she may still want to look at your post just to see what the picture is that you've inserted there along with your post. This works great on Craigslist and on other sites that allow pictures, but don't necessarily post them to view until someone has actually clicked onto your posting. Instead, the person reading ads may see a ton of ads with nothing different, but one that says "pic" next to it. Voila

Even if he/she doesn't care much for your headline, he's/she's going to click onto that ad just to see the hidden picture. If you pair that picture with an attention-grabbing headline, you can be sure you've created a psychological trigger that few will be able to pass up. Once you've got him/her to click on the general ad, he's/she's already there, so you can bet he/she will at least read your post, increasing the chances of getting him/her to click on the backlink too.

Magnetize Your Online Presence

Another strategy that you can use in relation to pulling people from different areas is to carefully magnetize your online presence to make it attractive and appealing to your target demographic.

This is important to use in conjunction with practices that pull people from other sites, like Facebook and Twitter. After all, on social networking sites, the product is you until they get to find out more about your business. Until then, you're selling who you are until some level of trust is reached and people are willing to visit your sites due to your online presence on social networking sites.

CAREFUL PROFILE BUILDING

People on social networking sites tend to want to network with other people of similar interests. This makes these types of sites very valuable to help you find new customers to target in your niche. However, they're not going to search these sites the same way that they use Google to search for a product because the product on a social networking site is

a person first. They are generally known via their social networking profiles and then are harvested off these sites and converted into customers later. This makes the careful and thoughtful building of your social networking profile extremely important to attract the right demographic to you as your friends and followers.

The way to get the right people to connect to you on these sites is to use your profile to list activities and interests that coincide with your marketing niche. If you are a financial planner, for instance, you might want to list some good financial planning books in books you've read. Maybe you follow a specific financial guru, then list their DVDs. The more descriptive and targeted your profile happens to be, the more likely people of similar interests will want to connect with you online.

POST FREQUENTLY

Once you've got the right profile, you want to post frequently to get people used to visiting it. You can post informational links from other sites, as well as your own copy from your own sites and offerings. When you mix in other people's links with your own, the odds that people will click your links increases too since they won't know which links are promoting your offerings and which are

informational ones that you're posting to be helpful. Some sites will require even more frequent postings, like Twitter. There, it's not unusual to post 140 character tweets 7 to 10 times a day. On blogs, posting daily or every other day works great. Some bloggers, however, even post twice a day. The more you post, the more traffic you will generate.

Get Traffic Through Social Networking

As was mentioned earlier, you want to visit and maintain an online presence on sites with large traffic audiences. Twitter and Facebook have massive audiences, and they can be highly targeted once you know how to set up a profile that attracts only the demographic that you seek. However, you still must learn the intricacies of each site and seek to set them up so that you can literally update your posts in your sleep.

TWITTER

Twitter is called a "microblogging" site because the posts consist of 140-character updates that are called tweets.

Obviously, it doesn't take long to craft a tweet, but it does take skill to do it well. Just tweeting isn't going to generate traffic back to your site if you have no followers. That's why it's important to build an attractive and magnetic profile and then actively seek followers. You can do this by just going out and following others in your market niche.

Many will follow back out of pure courtesy. Even if you only have a few followers, you can still gain massive exposure if your tweet is picked up by someone in your audience and retweeted (reposted) to his/her audience too. If that keeps going from one person to another, your tweet can go viral and reach millions, even if your group of followers is quite small. It is always better, however, to get as many followers as you can in your target niche to increase exposure.

Twitter presents some interesting dynamics in that it's acceptable to post links to your own offerings, whereas other sites might consider them as spam. They also let you tweet many more times a day than other sites will let you post. This is really great to know so that you can automate tweets using services like SocialOomph to schedule tweets at different times of the day, even if they're the same tweet text.

FACEBOOK

Facebook also lets you put in a status update with links, images, videos, etc, but if you post as frequently as you do on Twitter, you'll more than likely lose friends. Tone down the commercial tones for Facebook. The key to all of these sites is to participate and not just post. You want to give as much as you get, and vote "like" for different people's links and comments so that they will do the same for yours. When they do that, more people will see your content than just your immediate circle of friends due to a sharing feature within Facebook.

Other High Traffic Sites To Mine

Social networks aren't the only places you can add backlinks and comments to get people to come back to your own website. There are many other such places all across the Web, and they all have their pros and cons. Let's take a look at a few other places to concentrate on posting backlinks back to your website.

POPULAR NICHE BLOGS

If you don't know what high-traffic blogs are out there in your niche, take a look at Technorati.com. They list all manners of blogs out there and can give you some idea of their popularity. All you have to do is to locate a few within your market niche and then go out and visit them online. Read a few of their posts and then post a comment. Many blogs will allow you to post a link back to your own website if you are participating and contributing to the conversation. If you are just self-promoting, your link will not be posted, and you may get banned from that audience too as a spammer.

ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUPS

There are groups within Yahoo and also within Google. Even Facebook supports groups that meet to discuss a specific topic of interest to its participants. When you have a number of people all looking for information within your market niche, it makes it the perfect place to go, establish an online presence, and make yourself the expert there. More people will follow you back, particularly if you are allowed to post

your backlinks as part of an automatic signature line that gets added to every post you answer within that group.

ARTICLE DIRECTORIES

Article directories attract many different people who may not be on other sites around the Web. They are highly indexed by the search engines too. It's a very easy thing to post a few articles within your niche in these article directories and use the resource box to set up links back to your online activities elsewhere. As long as you are following the terms of service with regards to your links, you can use them to help promote different areas on the Web where you are doing business. You may not be able to put a link directly to a product sales page, as some sites won't allow this, but you can certainly drive traffic back to a page on your website that is more informational and that also has links back to your products. Use keywords in your articles to make these search-engine friendly as well as people-friendly, and you will have better results with article marketing to create more traffic for your links.

Paying For Traffic

Lastly, we want to discuss the possibility of paying for traffic. The previous strategies that were discussed are known as “organic” ways to generate traffic; however, you can choose a more direct way and simply pay to bring in traffic. We don't recommend that you pay for the traffic itself, as this won't be targeted and can literally kill your Google standing. Instead, seek to use advertising platforms to pay others to build traffic streams back to your site by paying for effective backlink creation and advertising exposure without actually paying for hits to your site. This is done by setting up advertising campaigns, affiliate programs, or referral incentives.

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

We already talked about Social Ads from Facebook that can be used to generate traffic back to your site. Google AdWords campaigns is a pay-per-click format that offers good exposure based on the keywords that you select, and you set your pricing in many cases. Other search engines also have their own advertising platforms that can be set up

to create a campaign where you buy traffic for your goods and services online.

AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

Affiliate programs include Google AdSense, where publishers get paid to advertise the offerings in Google AdWords campaigns. However, there are other networks that offer affiliate programs for other types of marketing that pay on a commission structure for a sale of a product or for an action performed that generates a sales lead in some cases. Take a look at setting up your own affiliate program to create traffic back to your site on any number of affiliate networks, including JVZoo.com, Commission Junction (CJ.com) or ClickBank.com. It can be very expensive to join as a merchant, but it's worth it to generate sales as well as traffic back to your site.

REFERRAL INCENTIVES

If you are the only person setting up links back to your site, it's going to take a whole lot longer than if you can persuade others to start doing it for you. One way to do that is through referral incentives. If someone knows that if he/she refers someone to your site, the referral signs up, and that person makes an easy \$10, he/she will be more motivated

to do that for you. You will want to limit the payouts to customers who not only sign up, but who also fulfill some marketing activity that helps you to cover the cost of the referral incentive too. Some places will give out referral incentives for people who refer a customer who signs up with a plan and stays with it for a set period of time. Some are multi-tiered where you get a commission off of your referrals and their referrals too if people buy something. There are multiple ways to set up effective referral incentives so that you have a whole army of people willing to go out and post backlinks for you. The nice thing is that you don't pay them unless they bring back business to your door.