



AMAZING INTERNET TECHNICAL BULLETIN

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GETTING LISTED ON SEARCH ENGINES (REV.1)

Quick and Dirty

For those of you who don't have the patience to read the whole of this document, here is the short version on how to get yourself on two of the most widely used search engines:

DMOZ:

1. Go to this page: <http://dmoz.org/>
2. Navigate through the sections until you find something appropriate to your site, e.g., 'Arts: Photography: Techniques and Styles: Infrared: Photographers'
3. Click the 'add URL' link at the top of the page
4. Fill out the form
5. Click the 'Submit' button
6. Done

Google:

1. Go to this page: <http://www.google.com/addurl.html>
2. Fill in the short form
3. Click the 'Add URL' button
4. Done¹

The procedure is very similar for all other unpaid search engine submissions. The only difference on the paid ones is that you get to hand over your credit card number (and associated cash!).

I urge you to read the rest of this document. It will give you the necessary background information towards understanding how to get your website well placed on search engines – a difficult task at best.

¹ Google will only add a site to its index that is either a) linked to from another site already in its index or b) listed in one of its affiliated sites (such as DMOZ, Yahoo!, etc.).

The Juicy Bits

The Internet is a very large place. It consists of many parts, one of which is referred to as 'the web'. One search engine today advertises that they have over 2 billion - that's 2,000,000,000 – web pages in their index and this is certainly not the whole of the web. So your few pages are very much the proverbial 'needle in a haystack' and the question is: How do people find the needle in the haystack?

The answer to this question is not straightforward – there are many ways that people arrive at your website. Using a search engine is just one of them. Some of the others include:

- Word of mouth – tell people that you have a website: have the address put on your stationery, create a footer that is attached to all your email, and so on. If people find your site interesting, they'll tell others about it.
- Advertising – make sure your website is given space on your usual advertising, e.g., pamphlets, fliers, brochures, paper directories, etc. You can also think about banner advertising through commercial websites in the field of your website.
- Links – many non-commercial, and some commercial, websites have link sections on their websites. Contact those in your field and ask if they will link to your site. While many will do so, some will ask that you link back to them. You should be prepared to provide the reciprocal link before you make the contact.
- And so on, ad infinitum.

So back to search engines.

Search engines index their pages by several pieces of information, minimally:

- Page title
- Page description
- Page keywords
- Page content

Search results are then returned by weighting the appearance of the words searched on as they appear in the above pieces of information. Words may also be negatively rated if they appear too often so simply repeating the word you want to match over and over will not work. What will work is sensible and in-context values for the above pieces of information. Recommendations are:

- The title should be up to 10 words
- The description should be 10-25 words
- The keywords should be a maximum of 50 keywords and phrases

All of the above should be relevant to the page content.

Most search engines will use the context of all the pieces of information with the words searched on to rank the results returned. In addition some search engines, most notably Google, will rank higher those sites that are linked to from other sites that match the same search words. The importance of getting your site linked to from other sites cannot be overstated so it is well worth the effort to do this. You may well make some 'net friends along the way!

Types of Search Engine

There are essentially two types of search engine:

1. Index type search engines such as Google²
2. Directory type search engines like DMOZ³

The former are easier to submit your page to – just look for a link on the search engine home page worded like ‘add your site’ or ‘add a URL’⁴, click on it and enter the information requested.

The directory type search engines take more time and effort to add your site to. Typically, all websites in a directory are also reviewed (in the case of DMOZ, by volunteers) which itself takes time. The procedure here is to navigate through the directory sections until you get to one that fits your site subject matter then look for the ‘add your site’ link as above.

In both types of search engine, most of them have help pages that you can refer to for more information – the search submission procedure is usually slightly different for each search engine and can change over time so look for the ‘help’ or ‘how to submit your site’ link.

A list of the major search engines and other useful links can be found here:

<http://searchenginewatch.com/links/major.html>

Bear in mind that your site will not appear on the search engine listing immediately. The usual delay is anything up to six weeks so have patience. Do not repeatedly submit your site to the search engine in an attempt to speed up the process; you only risk having your site rejected from the next index run.

Commercial Search Engines

In today’s financial environment, many search engines are turning to paid-only submissions in order to maintain cash flow and subsidise declining advertising income. Should you use these services? That depends on the purpose of your website, it’s current level of exposure, and the amount of money you have to spend.

The paid search engine submissions also generally come with a guaranteed time for your site to appear in the index/directory, assuming it is accepted.

A word of warning: there are many scams on the Internet and search engines are not excluded from this. I get many ‘offers’ every week about how I can ‘Promote your website on 1000’s of search engines for only \$29.95!!’

I estimate that greater than 90% of all web search engine traffic goes through the top 10 search engines so adding a website to ‘1000’s of search engines’ will not get very much in return for the \$29.95, especially since many of these so-called search engines are syndicated and link heavily between each other to generate income in various ways (advertising income being one of the main ones).

There are legitimate services that companies offer with respect to search engines. The main datum to use when evaluating these services is: If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Common sense is the way to go – there are no ‘get rich quick’ schemes that pay off other than plain hard work and a quality product.

² <http://www.google.com/>

³ <http://dmoz.org/>

⁴ Uniform Resource Locator – the address of a resource on a network, typically a website on the Internet, but is used for lots of other types of resource as well.

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