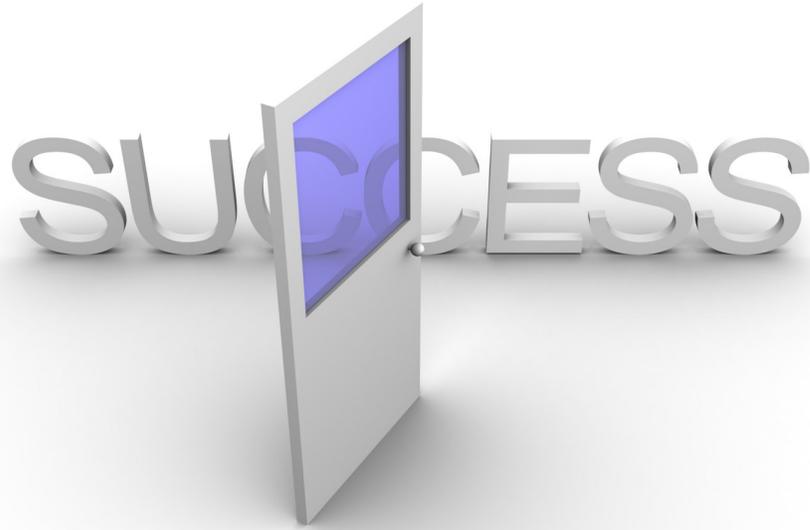


Promoting Your Website for



By Dwayne L. Goerges
ADAC Programming.com

Dwayne@ADACProgramming.com

Last revision 6/20/05

Preface

This E-book was primarily written to help clients using the Auto Mall application (www.ADACProgramming.com/AutoMall.aspx) developed by Affordable Database and Computer Programming (ADAC Programming) (www.ADACProgramming.com) to get the most out of their new web site. However the principals discussed will help will help any new web site owner get the most out of their investment.

In writing this E-book I have tried to focus on what you can do to promote your site locally, there are many good books, sites and programs that specialize in Search Engine optimization and as I touch on these subjects I will try to provide links to some of these resources. No single book could ever be considered all-inclusive on this subject and this E-book is no different. My hope is by the time you have completed reading this E-book you will have a number of good ideas on how to get the best from your new web site.

With some patience and perseverance anyone can use the points discussed on their own web site. If you plan on having a company like ADAC Programming perform most of your online promotion (SEO), this will help you to understand what is involved and what you can do to help.

Table of contents

Preface.....	2
Table of contents.....	3
Promoting your Website	4
Let the search engines know you exist.	4
Let your potential customer know you exist.....	5
Expanding your sales area.	6
Promote your business.....	6
Be easy to find.	6
Pull in the distant sales.....	6
Search Engine Submission and Optimization.....	7
Keep your inventory current.	7
How elaborate of a site do I need?.....	7
Hang in there.....	8

Promoting your Website

Now that you've built it you can sit back and let it do all the work, right? Well no. Unlike in "Field of Dreams" if you build it, they won't necessarily come, at least not until you ask them to! That's where web site promotion comes in.

Promoting your website can come in a number of ways depending on your end goal and what you are trying to achieve. In any case, you can expect to spend a good deal of time and possibly some money promoting your site so that it becomes profitable to you. You can do much of this work yourself or you can have the experts at ADAC Programming help you.

In either case, you first need to decide what your end goal is, who you are trying to entice to visit your site, and in the long run buy from your business. That may depend to a large degree on the type of inventory you stock. If your inventory consists of "Vintage Harleys", "Classic Cars", or other unique inventory then your client base that you are trying to attract could likely be anywhere in the country. On the other hand if your inventory consists of "Quality Used Cars" then your client base will most likely consist of people within 100 miles of you. Each of these requires a different promotion strategy.

Let the search engines know you exist.

Regardless of your client base you will want people who already know the name of your business and the city you are located in to be able to find your website. This requires that your new website be submitted to all the major search engines and likely a number of the lesser search engines. This will prompt the engines to come to your site and add it to their database. It may take a number of times of your site being submitted, for this to be accomplished and many months may pass before you are listed at all.

Two items will require some diligent thought on your part to get the most from your site. Meta Keywords and Meta Description. Search engines like Google and Yahoo use these to help people find the sites they are looking for on the Internet.

When choosing your keywords you need to try to think like your potential clients. Choose the words they will likely use to try and locate your site. Likely when they type in "Used Car" the search engine will display hundreds possibly thousands of sites. While your site may be in there somewhere it is unlikely that they will ever find you.

Next they will likely try to filter the sites to display closer to what they are looking for. If they are looking for a local dealer they will likely add a city and possibly the state. You will want to include neighboring cities that your client is likely to enter including your own.

Other key words you will want to consider are Make and Model names that you have in your inventory. The words that will come first will be determined by whether you are looking mostly for local business, or you are focusing more on state or countrywide.

When a search engine displays your site your first contact with the client will be your meta description. Most search engines display all or part of your meta description to the searcher. You have approximately 60 characters to use to get the client to click on and enter your site. Choose them wisely! If you don't capture the interest of your prospective client here they will pass you by, and no matter how good your product is you've lost the sale.

Choose your Description carefully though, many search engines do not like wording like "We are the best" which also provides no usable information for the client.

Unfortunately even when you're listed, that doesn't mean your prospective clients will find you easily. At this point if all goes well, when your client types in your business name and maybe your city you will now be listed fairly high in the search results. Much more will be required if you are wanting to be in the top ten results when they type in "Ford". How ever that may not be necessary.

Let your potential customer know you exist.

This will be one of the most important steps for small car dealers and others that will be selling to mostly local clients. Most businesses already have some form of advertisement that they do on a regular basis. Now that you have a web site, you will want to maximize the exposure you get with your advertisement. You will want to include your web site address and your email address on any correspondence that you have with your existing or potential clients. Make your site known; clients expect established businesses to have email and a web site, make sure they know yours.



Be sure your business cards have your new information, and be liberal in distributing them to your past and future clients (friends, relatives, neighbors, anyone that passes you on the street).

Add a "signature" to your emails. Many email programs like Outlook, Outlook express, AOL, and others will allow you to make a signature that is added to every email that you send out. Be sure that it includes your vital contact information including your email and web site address.

Don't forget your Yellow Page ad. Someone who may not want to drive the extra distance to visit your lot may be very willing to look at your inventory on the Internet, make sure they can find it.

Expanding your sales area.

For a smaller dealer one of the greatest benefits of having a website comes from expanding the area that their clients travel. Often people will only go to the businesses that are in their local town, or only to the nearest larger town in the area. If they don't work, play, or live near enough to your business that they pass it on a regular basis then they likely don't know you exist and won't even know to look for you. Give them a reason to find you!

Try putting small inexpensive ads in the newspapers of some of the neighboring towns featuring some of your more popular models of cars. Include your website encouraging them to be able to look at your car. As they come to your site they will see not only the one car featured in your ad but also your entire inventory. Now that they've seen what they are looking for, they have incentive to drive the extra miles to reach your lot.

Make it as easy for them to view your inventory as it is for them to pick up the paper. No need for the expensive picture ads in the papers that are only viewed once. Once your inventory is added to your site it stays there until it is sold, you don't keep paying to have it seen.

Promote your business.

How often will a potential client allow you to tell them how much you value their business, how long you've been in business, or your company motto? Web sites give you the ability to brag about your business and to tell them why they should buy from you. Add a web page to your site telling the history of your business, the quality of your service department, and how thoroughly you inspect the cars before you add them to your lot. Also consider adding customer comments to your site emphasizing past customer satisfaction.

Be easy to find.

All the information to contact you will be at their fingertips. Your new 5-page web site includes a page with a map to your business on it. A click of a button and they have a map to your lot. Another click and they have your phone number, email address, business hours, and other vital information for them to be able to contact you.



Pull in the distant sales.

Spanning the country with your site will take a little different approach. Dealers with unique vehicles or that want to pull in clients from a greater distance will need to work a little harder on the search engines. Optimizing your website so that clients can find you

using specific search words takes a little more patience. Key words will need to be incorporated into the text of your site. Greater emphasis needs to be put on finding and using the keywords your clients will use to find you. Links will need to be established to raise your positions in the search engines. Needless to say, this all takes time and effort but the result is expanding your sales territory over the multiple states (or countries) with the corresponding increase in sales.

Search Engine Submission and Optimization.

Once you have chosen your meta keywords and meta description, your site will need to be submitted to at the least all of the major search engines. Even if you are only looking to draw clients locally (within 100 miles), your site will still need to be registered with the engines when your clients try to find you and they do not have your exact web site address. This is something you can do yourself or you can have done for you, ADAC Programming (www.ADACProgramming.com) would be happy to perform this service for you.

If you choose to submit your site yourself, you will need to go to each of the major search engines and follow their instructions on adding a URL. There are a number of sites that will automatically add your site to a list of smaller search engines. While it's unlikely these will provide many local hits to your site, it doesn't hurt to add them. Two of the sites I use are Addme.com and SubmitExpress.com. However plan on submitting to the major search engines manually.

Tracking the progress of your search engine ranking and your links can easily be accomplished through a free program from Web CEO. Even if you never plan on buying the paid versions of this program, the free version is well worth the download. In the past, I have tried personally going to each search engine and entering in my keywords to see how my sites ranked. This program does the entire process for you saving a large amount of time.

Keep your inventory current.

You never know which car will be the one that brings the client into your site. Keep your inventory up to date and give your new site the best possible chance of helping you make that sale. Leave a few sold ones on the site marked as sold, to help them see how fast your inventory moves (and to show them what they missed for not checking earlier).

How elaborate of a site do I need?

This is a tough question. To a large degree this will depend on your market. If your main goal is to sell locally (within about 100 miles) you likely don't need a large, elaborate, expensive web site. A small site that displays your inventory well and presents a good image of your company is likely all you need.

Local businesses generally are not trying to compete with the Major Dealers statewide. In this case the template based web sites that come standard with the Auto Mall application

works well for smaller businesses and is far more cost affective than the large custom sites. If you desire your web site to have additional pages or a more custom appearance this can be added to your site.

If you are wanting to compete with other dealers statewide or countrywide then a more elaborate custom website will probably be needed. In that case the Auto Mall application can be added as a back end to the larger website, providing the ability to dynamically display your inventory to one page of your site.

Hang in there.

Although this may all seem a little daunting at first, with time and persistence your new website will pay off. As it becomes more established in the community and on the Internet, sales based from your site will continue to increase as will your satisfaction in your new investment.