

27

ways to triple your traffic

By: **Kate Pritchard** Illustration: **Russell Cobb**

Build links. Tweet. Go viral. Plus 24 other tried-and-tested tips to get your traffic figures where you want them – through the roof.

1 Affiliate marketing

The best thing about affiliate marketing (using one website to drive traffic to another) is that you only pay for a successful online transaction, and usually only a percentage. Motor insurance company ALA generates about 25 per cent of its web sales this way.

www.myvouchercode.co.uk. These sites list money-saving promotional codes and discount vouchers on various brands. These codes are then tracked. For each successful sale, you pay commission. "If you do advertise this way, add 'voucher code' to your keywords to try and bring some of the searches direct to your website without having to pay commission to a third party," advises Guy Levine, who runs Manchester-based Return On Digital.

monitoring which combinations lead to the highest conversion rates. Revival Action, experts in stopping mortgage repossessions, used Google's Website Optimiser to reduce its cost per lead by 70 per cent. Best of all, it's free.

2 Advertise on Facebook

If you want to herd a specific demographic to your website, advertise on Facebook. Cosmetic dentist Ollie & Darsh uses the social networking site to advertise its half-price Whitening Wednesdays promotion to people in Liverpool, where its practice is based. And it's much cheaper than using Google AdWords. Bargain.

4 Boost your conversion rate

Okay, this isn't strictly a traffic-driving technique, but here's a tip to improve your site and boost conversions. Check out Google's Website Optimiser (www.google.com/websiteoptimizer). This tool allows you to test out alternative web designs (using different headlines, images, testimonials, product prices etc), all the while

5 Joint marketing

Find a partner who has a similar sized business to you. You advertise to their email database, they advertise to yours. It's simple – and no money swaps hands. "The best strategy for this is to advertise an online offer that's so compelling, people won't be able to refuse," says Return On Digital's Levine. "Once they've bought something, you can then work on their 'lifetime value'."

3 Sign up to a voucher code site

Sign your business up to a voucher code website, such as

6 Remarketing

Google released a service called Remarketing earlier this year, which allows you to show

“US bakery Sprinkles updates its Facebook page every day with details on what it’s baking”

specific ads to people who have visited your site before. Here’s how it works: you tag pages of your site that correspond to certain categories that you want to promote. For example, you could add a “TV” tag on all of the pages where you sell televisions. You can then create an AdWords campaign to show relevant messages (such as ads displaying a special offer on TVs) to people who have visited these pages before, while they’re surfing other sites within the Google network. The Coaching Academy says it has upped its conversion rate by two per cent since using Remarketing.

7 Keywords – choose them and use them

If you’re writing about a car, and you want to come up in car results in search engines, use the word “car” as much as you can. Don’t call it an “automobile” or a “motor vehicle” – you’ll only dilute your keyword density for all three words. Keyword density reflects the number of times you feature your keywords or key phrases in the text on your web page. Most agencies will tell you to optimise pages to a keyword density of between seven and ten per cent. For example, if there are 100 words on a page, then a keyword density of ten per cent will mean ten of them are keywords. It’s not quite that simple when you add in all the other factors on a web page, but that’s the basic principle of it.

8 But don’t overdo it

“Keyword stuffing will make your content read and look like spam, which is a major no-no for

any site,” warns Nicola Sampson, content writer at internet marketing agency Just Search. “Even if you do attract visitors, they’ll be leaving your site again within a matter of seconds, giving you an astronomically high bounce rate. Do include your keywords, but be sure you don’t go overboard. Leave the keyword stuffing to the spammers.”

9 Be helpful to your reader

Link to useful resources, with descriptive link text, and avoid using the words “click here” for your link. If you link to useful resources, the user will thank you – and so will the search engines.

10 On your headline be it

Put your keywords in the headline, title and URL of your page. This helps repetition of the keywords and also makes it very clear to search engines and to your users what your content is about. Avoid using ambiguous headlines, titles and URLs, and try to keep jokes and puns out.

11 Search engines read like you do, too

“Most search engines will read from left to right, so try to get your keywords in your headlines, page titles and URLs as soon as possible,” says Dean Faulkner, web development

manager at Caspian Publishing. Remember that lots of words that don’t clearly explain your content’s subject matter will only dilute your keyword density.

12 No-one ever got famous by keeping quiet

Once you’ve written your amazing articles, remember to shout about it everywhere. Post it on Twitter and Facebook (see tips 13, 18 and 27), Digg it, and big it up in any related forums. Search engines love pages that have lots of reciprocal links from other related, respected and high-traffic websites, so build those networks and links.

13 Set up a Facebook page

If your business isn’t on Facebook, you’re missing out on a big chunk of web traffic. US bakery Sprinkles updates its Facebook page every day with details on what it’s baking. It also includes a special password. If you “whisper” it in one of the stores, you get a free cupcake. Genius. It now has more than 130,000 fans on Facebook and credits it as the single most important reason why the business is growing.

14 Give stuff away

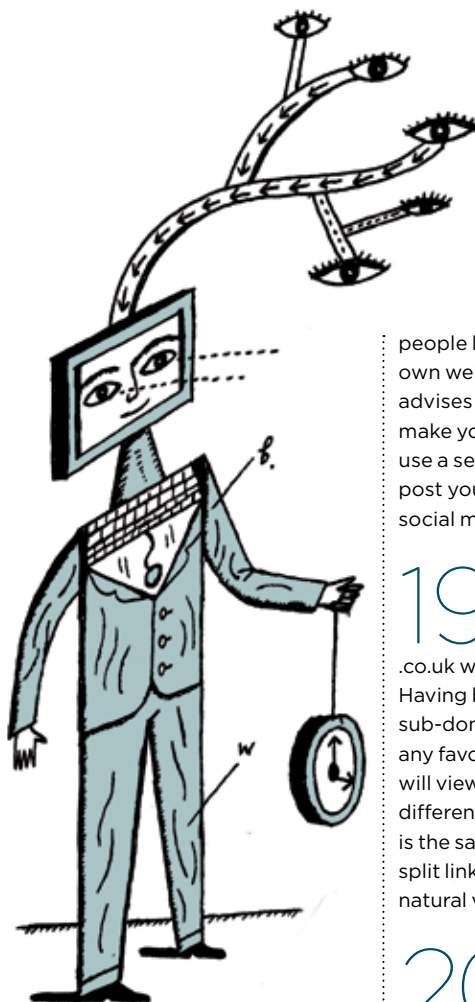
Dominic Monkhouse, UK managing director of server-hosting firm PEER 1, set up 48-hour Twitter promotions where he



gives away free stuff like Playstations, Nintendo DS consoles and the odd server package every Wednesday. "It's a really easy way to reach our online audience and bring more eyeballs to our page – and it doesn't make our followers feel like they're being advertised to," he says. "We sell around £5,000 worth of kit each time and followers are up 400 per cent in six months." Neil Phillips, director of cosmetics firm Dtribeauty (which trades as www.eyeslipsface.co.uk), tells us he ran a special "free shipping" day last November to celebrate the company's second birthday. "We cross-promoted the deal on Facebook and in email alerts," he says. "Our web traffic rose from an average 6,500 views a day to 17,000. And the total number of orders jumped from an average 300 per day to 2,358 – so sales were up 450 per cent."

15 Grow a long tail Google says that more than 60 per cent of searches made each day are new, so make sure you include narrow, specific terms (known as long-tail keywords) in your AdWords campaigns. There is less competition for long-tail keywords, so you're more likely to rank on the first page of Google. "If you have a website selling 'Ibiza holidays' but can't pull any search engine traffic, try refining it to 'Ibiza holidays July 2010'," advises Nigel Muir, managing director of search-engine marketing specialist DBD Media.

16 Register spelling mistakes Here's a clever trick: optimise your keywords for misspellings, too. Common mistakes – for example, verruca being Googled as verucca – can generate great traffic opportunities.



17 Be aware of the peaks and troughs Use Google Insights to find out when the peaks and troughs of search volume happen, then plan your AdWords campaigns around these times. DBD Media's Muir, gives us a few useful nuggets:

- In consumer sectors, search volumes increase at the end of the month, around about pay day
- During the week, Monday is usually the strongest day
- During the day, lunchtime generally has high search volume, but the peak sales period is early evening

18 Start a blog Search engines like lots of content and websites that are frequently updated. A blog is a great way of doing this. "Host the blog on your own website using software such as Wordpress (www.wordpress.com), so when

people link to your articles, your own website builds credibility," advises digital guru Guy Levine. To make your blog even more effective, use a service like www.ping.fm to post your blog updates to over 35 social media sites.

19 Get rid of duplicate domains Having both a .com and a .co.uk website is a big mistake. Having both www. and non-www. sub-domains active won't do you any favours, either. Search engines will view these as completely different websites and, if the content is the same on each, this can cause split link strength and damage your natural visibility. Get merging.

20 Be a know-it-all Post useful, authoritative articles on your website, such as "Top ten tips" and "How-to guides" (often referred to as "link bait"), which can be shared around the internet. Lonely Planet, for instance, lists the top ten countries to travel to in 2010. This article alone has more than 200 links to it and has generated nearly 100 user comments. Simon Piper, head of business development at www.consumerchoices.co.uk, tells us adding expert guides and an "Ask our Expert" tool to his website has helped push traffic past 750,000 unique visitors a month.

21 Be topical During the recent ash-cloud fiasco, cheap-flights search engine Skyscanner launched a dedicated section on its website providing up-to-date information on flights and airport closures. "Our site received ten times the number of hits it had done in previous weeks," says founder Barry Smith.

22 Get your landing pages right

Lots of entrepreneurs splurge on pay-per-click (PPC) ads to push traffic to their sites – but this is a waste of time if the design of your landing pages isn't up to scratch. Trenton Moss, director of Webcredible, gives us the three most common mistakes:

- Showing a PPC ad for a specific product that leads people to a category page or to the site homepage, instead of the specific product page. Why should customers have to search again in your site to find the product they want?
- Failing to include, in every landing page, content that makes your site look trustworthy to potential clients, such as contact, customer support and returns information
- Pages lacking clear calls to action, encouraging customers to purchase or continue their journey on your site

23 Make sure your web pages load quickly

If your site has pages with lots of images and animations that take a while to load, be warned:



“Videos are 50 times more likely to appear on the front page of Google than a website”

Google recently announced that it will take page-load time into account when it ranks websites. Use Firebug to check how long it takes each element of a page to load: getfirebug.com

24 Consider browsers

“Make sure your web content can be viewed on all browsers,” advises Peter Millichap, marketing manager of £17m-turnover vehicle-tracking device firm Navman Wireless. “Approximately 40 per cent of business website visitors use alternative browsers to Internet Explorer. And most web developers completely ignore IE6, even though seven per cent of online users still use this platform. If your website is IE6 friendly, it opens your site up to more than three million users.”

25 Tweet

Twitter etiquette dictates that you don't plug your own website too often – but people will visit out of curiosity if they enjoy your posts. Buying agent Tracy Kellett of BDI Home Finders (@

buyingagent) has nearly 1,000 followers and a Twitter influence score (measured at klout.com) to equal Stephen Fry. Since she started Tweeting in November 2009, visits to her website www.bdihomefinders.co.uk have more than doubled.

26 Launch a viral video

YouTube is believed to be the second largest search engine in the world and has an estimated 24 hours of video uploaded every minute. This makes it a prime candidate for generating traffic. “Social medialite” Guy Levine tells us that videos are 50 times more likely to appear on the front page of Google than a website. Colchester-based Armadillo Scooterwear created a viral video last autumn called *Tough Enough* to show off its garments. The “hero” of the clip puts the his Armadillo jacket to the test by biking through fireballs and explosions and defying pie-throwing clowns. Michael Bonvillain, famed for TV series *Lost*, *Cloverfield* and most recently *Zombieland*, was director of photography. Brand awareness has sky-rocketed – the viral has been viewed 22,000 times.

27 Build an iPhone app

It's hard to walk more than a few metres without seeing someone on their iPhone. You've probably lost count of the times you've heard the catchphrase “there's an app for that” being shouted across a pub. For business, an iPhone app is a great opportunity to put your message or service directly in the hands of your customers – negating any firewalls or spam filters. An app can be like Amazon, allowing you to buy online, or simply show updates from your blog (see tip 18).