

Part 2: Third party websites (directories and pay-per-click)

Is the time and money you invest in developing and hosting a website paying off in new clients?

You are already doing all the “right” things – putting your web address on your business cards, brochures, letterhead and invoices but really, that’s just bringing people who already know about you to your site. You want new people to visit your site so that you can expand your clientele and grow your business.

You have investigated search engine optimization and discovered that it requires either a lot of time or a lot of money. You know you’d have to get right into the code of the pages and tweak both the content and the metadata, and keep revisiting it every two months to see how your changes are affecting your ranking.

Unless your business is online, you want to run your business, not your website.

Pay-per-click advertising

Pay-per-click advertising asks you to bid on a search term (or phrase) so that every time a user enters it into the search engine, your ad appears beside or above the regular results. Since you only pay when someone actually clicks your link, it can be a cost-effective avenue to building site traffic, depending on how competitive a term it is.

It works by setting a cap on how much you are willing to pay for a click-through. You can say, “I only want to pay 30 cents per click to a maximum of \$5 a day.” Assuming that you are the only person bidding for this word, at this rate, your ad will keep appearing until 17 people click through to your site. On the other hand, if your competitor is willing to pay \$5 each time someone clicks on his ad, your ad goes down in priority and his appears above it.

Advantages:

1. Targeted traffic. These are people who have a clear and identified need for your product and/or service. They’ve taken the time to go to the search engine and look it up; once you have them on your site, it’s up to you to make the sale.

Disadvantages:

1. Whether or not anyone buys anything when they come to your site, you still have to pay.
2. Unscrupulous competitors have been known to click their adversaries’ ads until their daily limit is reached, and their ad no longer appears. This means you are paying good money for no real visitors.

Directories

Undoubtedly you have seen this before: *“add your link today and increase your site’s popularity and Search Engines ranking!”* Maybe you have received email that says, *“I would like to exchange links with you so that we can both benefit in the search engines.”* You have probably wondered if this is true.

Not only can a link from another website bring you a certain amount of their visitors, but it has the added benefit of raising your site’s placement in search results. Search engines determine the relevance of your page to the searcher and assign it a position in the list of results based on this. For instance, if three sites have the exact search phrase “grapples and grommets” somewhere in the body copy, the one with the highest **relevance** will be listed first in the search results.

Many factors determine the relevance of a particular page. Among them: where the phrase appears on the page (the closer to the beginning, the better), the popularity of the site, and the overall content quality rating of the website. All other things being equal, the site with the highest quality rating (or “page rank”) will be placed first.

The value of a link

A quick search on “the basics of search engine optimization” or “how Google Page Rank works” will tell you that, yes, a link is valuable. Google started the trend in search engines to rate the value of the content on your page higher when there are more links to your site. The theory is that the more people who point to your page, the more useful it must be.

However, it soon became apparent that there was a phenomenon called “link spamming” - pages that had no content and just hundreds of links started appearing all over the Internet. This caused Google to change their algorithm slightly to distinguish

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between sites of just links (called “link farms”) and actual links that were in context and a site with actual content. The latter are considered much more valuable.

Link farms often require you to link back to their site in order to receive a link from them, but be careful – your link will benefit them far more than theirs will benefit you. In fact having too many reciprocal links with link farms will jeopardize your quality rating in the long run. It is far better to receive links from sites that the search engines have rated highly in terms of their popularity and quality.

When do you pay for a link?

There are thousands of directories on the Internet, some are part of sites with content, and others are strictly links with descriptions.

Many of them will list your site for free, which is an excellent option regardless of your other marketing strategies. Even if it only brings one person a month to your site, it still costs you nothing but your time.

Other directories require payment for inclusion, which is fine, provided they meet the following criteria:

1. **They have sufficient traffic to make it worth your money.** What is the point of outlaying money if you will see no benefits? Use third-party tools like metricsmarket.com to see how many visitors they received over the past month.
2. **Is it a targeted directory?** A directory that is targeted to people in your country is good; a directory that is specific to your industry or sector is even better. Of course, it is possible to get too specific, though – make sure to strike a balance between being too broad and not having enough visitors.
3. **Search engines can access the site – especially the page where your link will be.** Too often directory sites are built to be navigated by people, with no thought to automated processes (robots) being able to access them (see **Figure 1**).



Figure 1 - drop down form element

There must be a way to browse to the page using links, to get past the form element as pictured in **Figure 1**. This functionality might be in the site map, or in links embedded on other pages. Otherwise only people who have found the main pages of the directory website can find you, and odds are the search phrases you need are not on the front pages of the site.

Verify that the page can be found in Google.ca – by searching the website name without the “http://”, and without the “www.” – for instance if you want to check for a page on NaturalHealthcare.ca, you would type **naturalhealthcare.ca** or for one on Cottagemania.ca type **cottagemania.ca**. This will tell you the total number of the pages on the website that Google can access, plus all the sites which make reference to it. Compare it to competitors to find which is likely to bring you the most traffic.

[Find Canadian Nutrition Practitioners in Langley, British Columbia ...](#)
... Nutrition Practitioners in **Langley**, British Columbia (BC) 2 matching result(s).
Dr Brenna Jacks Willowgate Wellness Centre Types: **Acupuncture**, Chinese Medicine ...
[naturalhealthcare.ca/practitioners.phtml?st=52&find=Search+Types&prov=BC&city=Langley - 11k - Supplemental Result - Cached - Similar pages](#)

Figure 2 - Google results for directory items

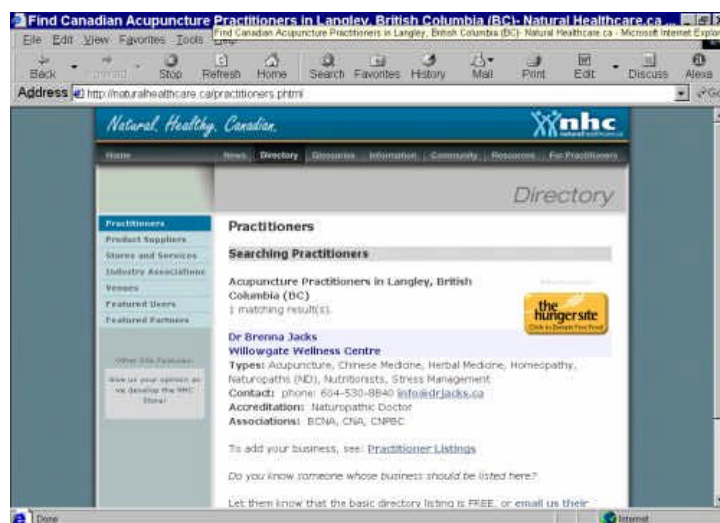
4. **The page that displays the directory listing results should be useful to you, the paying client, and not just to the company running the directory.** To understand what they are let us examine the key elements of a web page, and see how these should work toward presenting your listing in the best possible manner.
 - a. First, the **page title**. This is the bar that sits at the very top of the browser window, where it says which browser you are using, plus some information about the web page. This same text will appear in the bookmarks or favourites list should a visitor choose to make a note of the site to return again. In **Figure 3** this is the dark blue bar at the top of the image. In **Figure 2** you see that the first line of the result is the same as the title, and part of the appeal for visitors to click through that result.

Figure 3 is a screen capture from NaturalHealthcare.ca and it reads: **Find Canadian Acupuncture Practitioners in Langley, British Columbia (BC)**. Since this is what searchers would be looking for (acupuncture, Langley, BC) these

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items all help a searcher find practitioners who would be relevant to their quest, and would be useful to the practitioners advertising on that page. However, if the page only said “NaturalHealthcare.ca Directory” this vital element would be lost.

- b. The body of the page repeats these keywords ensuring that the search engine knows that this page is about Acupuncturists in Langley, British Columbia. The relevance of this page to a person searching these terms is very high.
- c. If we view the source code for the page, we see that the terms appear again in the metadata reinforcing the relevance.
- d. There are never more than 15 practitioners listed on the page, so that no “link dilution” takes place.



- 5. **The listing page has a good page rank.** It is fine to advertise that the front page of the site has a page rank of four, five, or even ten (which not even Google itself has attained), but if the page that will hold your link only has a page rank of 1, you aren't benefiting from it.

Use a third party page rank checker to see the directory results page. One such tool can be found at: http://www.freeweb-hosting.com/google_pagerank_pr_checker/ - be sure to enter the URL (address) of the page that displays the directory search results, not the page with the form or the front page of the site.

Last thoughts

These tips will help bring visitors to your site, but once there are they inclined to buy from you? What is your conversion rate? All the traffic in the world is doing nothing for your business if none of the visitors become clients, or pass along your information to people who will.

The focus of this document is strictly third-party sites and the ways you can use them to drive traffic to yours. It outlines ideas that work in conjunction with strategies for your own website. You should be have a strategy which keeps you abreast of how effective your site is; from exactly how many visitors you have on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, to how people are using your site, and ways it can help support your business by answering questions your existing clients have, and keeping them in touch with the goings on at your company. Part of this is accomplished by the statistics analysis packages that your web host should be providing, and part of it is knowing what to look for within these reports.

Other articles provided by **pixcode Inc** cover some of these additional topics and can be found at our website <http://pixcode.com>.

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