



# THE INTERNET, WEBPAGES & SEARCH ENGINES

## BUSINESS WRITING SERVICES EU

Since the early 1990s Internet marketing has developed from simple text-based websites that offered product information into complete on-line businesses that promote and sell their services on the web.

In order to exploit the possibilities of Internet marketing you need some basic knowledge about how the Internet and webpages work, and how search engines are used.

The purpose of this mini-guide from **Business Writing Services EU** is to provide a brief, hopefully understandable, introduction to these topics at a very fundamental level and to deliver the background knowledge needed to use the Internet to advertise and sell goods and services. This mini-guide is divided into five sections:

- [1] How the Internet works
- [2] The structure of webpages
- [3] Using search engines
- [4] Internet marketing – overview
- [5] Search engine marketing – overview

This booklet was prepared by **Business Writing Services EU** as a public service. Comments are very welcome and should be addressed to [paul@writingservices.eu](mailto:paul@writingservices.eu).

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[www.writingservices.eu](http://www.writingservices.eu)

[paul@writingservices.eu](mailto:paul@writingservices.eu)



## [1] How the Internet works

Anyone reading this will know what a webpage looks like and how to use a browser.

Webpages reside on **Web servers** or hosts. These are special computers located around the world that are joined with the other computers that make up the Internet. Each server can host numerous webpages, the actual number depending on the size of the server and the number and sizes of the webpages it is hosting.

Each server or host has a unique global address, which is used to find it over the Internet, called an **IP address**. IP stands for **Internet protocol**, a set of rules governing communications between two computers on the Internet. A typical IP address consists of four numbers separated by dots.

A **website** is a collection of related webpages. Each website has a unique **domain name** by which it is identified on the Web, eg, [www.writingservices.eu](http://www.writingservices.eu). Because a website resides on a particular server, its domain name is linked to that server's IP address. For example, 81.17.248.40 is the IP address of the server to which the domain [writingservices.eu](http://writingservices.eu) is linked and on which it resides.

When a server receives requests for a webpage, it 'serves' it to the requester. A client program called a **user agent** is used to retrieve webpages from servers. The most common user agent is a **Web browser** such as *Internet Explorer*, *Mozilla Firefox*, *Netscape*, and *Opera*.

To find a particular website, all you have to do is enter its exact domain name into the address bar on your browser, and up pops the site's home page. But how does the browser find the server?

It's quite straightforward. Domain names are translated into IP addresses by the **domain name system (DNS)**, a giant repository of information relating to domain names. The most important function of the DNS is to act as a 'phone directory' for the Internet by translating human readable domain names into digital IP addresses.

So when you type the address [www.writingservices.eu](http://www.writingservices.eu) into your browser, the browser sends a request, called a **DNS Look-up**, and receives back the IP address of the server (81.17.248.40) where that website is hosted. The browser then connects to the server directly and asks for the home page of [Business Writing Services EU](http://www.writingservices.eu).

You don't have to go to the home page of a website you want to visit. You can go directly to an individual page in a website by typing that page's URL into your browser address bar. **URL** is an abbreviation for 'uniform resource locator', ie it is the address of an indi-



vidual webpage. Each page in your website will have an individual address that consists of the domain name and a unique extension to that name. For example, the URL for the page on which [Business Writing Services EU](#) promotes its style consulting service is [www.writingservices.eu/Style-Consulting-Business-Writing-Services.htm](http://www.writingservices.eu/Style-Consulting-Business-Writing-Services.htm).

To run an Internet business you need a dedicated website. First you buy a domain name from an organization accredited to sell domain names. You also have to buy hosting space on a server. Then you create your webpages and link them to each other to create the site. The URL for each page will consist of the domain name followed by a unique extension. Once the site is ready, you publish it, ie send the website to the host where it will reside. The host links the domain name to the IP address of the server and makes your website available on the Internet through the DNS system.

Now anyone who types the domain name into their browser will be connected via the DNS to the server and can view the home page of your website. If they type in the URL of a particular page, they will be taken directly to that page.

They can then follow hyperlinks from whatever page they are on to other pages within your website, or indeed to other pages in other websites on the Internet to which your pages are linked because the location (including domain names) of these webpages is embedded in the hyperlinks. The act of following hyperlinks from one webpage to another is called **browsing** or **surfing the Web**.

## [2]            **The structure of webpages**

Webpages are hypertext documents, ie documents that are linked to other documents. You click on a word or symbol or image in a hypertext document to be taken to another document with further (normally related) information.

When you open a webpage you see headlines, images, and text, which are generally called the **content**. In a commercial website, it is content that sells. To do so, the content must have clarity, impact and persuasiveness and must be focused on the needs of customers or clients. Creating such content is the primary challenge of Internet marketing.

You will also find links that you can click on to be taken to another page. These are of two kinds: **internal links** which take you to another page within the website (eg, from a product page to an order page or 'shopping cart'); and **external links** to other websites on the Internet.

In addition, at the top of the screen you will see a horizontal title bar. The **title bar** shows the name of the webpage you are viewing, eg, [Newsletter Creation and Editing at Business Writing Services EU](#). The title bar is important for Internet marketing.

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A webpage also contains a variety of things you cannot see in a browser. The most important of these from the point of view of Internet marketing are the HTML code and the metadata.

**HTML** or **hypertext mark-up language** is the programming language used to create webpages. HTML defines the appearance of a webpage by controlling the layout (the placement of graphics and text) and look (fonts, paragraphs and image styles). It also controls webpage functions such as hyperlinks and multi-media.

HTML documents can be coded by hand. However most people who create a webpage will use a HTML editor (such as MS FrontPage), which is a program that allows you to type text into and add images and hyperlinks to a webpage without having to understand the underlying code.

If you are curious, you can see the HTML code for any webpage you find on the Web by clicking on View in the menu bar and then choosing Page Source in the drop-down list. The HTML code for the page will open in a separate window. It looks very confusing at first glance but if you learn just a little about HTML you'll soon be able to recognize what the different lines of code mean – to some extent anyway.

If you want to learn a bit about how HTML, a good place to start is to read Dave Raggett's *Getting started with HTML* at [www.w3.org/MarkUp/Guide/](http://www.w3.org/MarkUp/Guide/).

Other things you cannot see when you look at a webpage in a browser are **metadata**, which is information about a document other than the content which you can see on your screen. Meta means 'beyond' or 'after', and metadata is 'data about data', which in this case is data about a webpage.

When you look at a photograph, you see an image. The metadata for the photograph would include the camera settings (lens, focal length, aperture, shutter timing, etc) used to capture the image. For a webpage, the metadata would include the page title, the language (eg, English), a description of the page, and the key words contained in the text. HTML lets webpage creators specify metadata for webpages in a variety of ways.

A **meta description** is a brief summary of what a webpage contains. It is important in Internet marketing because it is used by some search engines in deciding whether a particular webpage is relevant to a searcher's criteria and is often shown as the description of a site in those results. You can see meta descriptions towards the top of the HTML code of a webpage.

**Meta keywords** are the words contained in a webpage that search engines consider when deciding whether that page is relevant to the search terms input for a query. Meta keywords are also shown towards the top of the HTML code of a webpage.



Along with the title bar, the meta description and meta keywords are very important in Internet marketing.

### [3] Using search engines

To find a particular website you must normally type its exact address (eg, [www.writingservices.eu](http://www.writingservices.eu)) into the address field of your browser.

But what if you don't know the address? Suppose you are looking for a product or service but are not too concerned as to whom you buy from? Or suppose you are just looking for some information on a particular topic but don't know where to look?

In these cases, you use an Internet directory or an Internet search engine to find the actual site you are looking for or the kind of site you are interested in.

To use an online directory, you go to the directory by typing in its domain name in the normal way, find the category and sub-category of the product or service you want and click through until you find a list of suppliers. Usually there is a brief description of the business and its products or services under each name on the list. You make your choice from the list and click on it. You are then taken to the website of the company providing that product or service.

To use an Internet search engine, such as Google, Yahoo! or MSN, you type a search word or phrase, eg 'business writing services', into the search field. When you 'search' you will receive pages of 'results', ie a list of websites that are relevant (according to the search engine's algorithms) to your search term.

**Algorithms** are complex formulae used by the search engines to determine how relevant a particular webpage is to a searcher's query phrase. The more relevant a webpage is viewed by the search engine for a particular query term, the higher up that webpage will appear on the list of results returned to the enquirer. This is known as **ranking**, ie the higher up a webpage is on the list of results, the higher its rank for that search term.

The lists returned by search engines for particular search terms are usually extensive. For commonly used search terms they can run to millions of webpages and, with just ten entries per page on your monitor, the lists can cover hundreds of pages. Obviously you will only look at the first page or so before you either click on an entry (hoping to have found what you want) or input another search term (to narrow your search).

Suppose, for instance, you want to buy a bicycle. You type 'bicycle' into the search box on a search engine. If you use Google, you will be returned a list of 1,150,000 webpages relating to bicycles. If you use Yahoo! you will get about 67,600,000 pages. These are



actual figures found in May 2008! Nobody has time to wade through all these pages. So, instead, you refine your search and type 'racing bicycle' into the search box.

The number of pages on Google will now be reduced to 313,000, and on Yahoo! to 41,600,000. You can continue refining or narrowing your search term (eg, by searching on 'second-hand racing bicycle', then on 'second-hand racing bicycle costing less than 100 bucks', and so on) until you find what you want. You start clicking on results and are taken to various webpages about cheap second-hand racing bicycles. But, no matter how refined you have made your search term, you will still be returned hundreds, if not thousands, of webpages, and it is unlikely that you will look much beyond the first page or two of the search engine results. This point is very important for marketing successfully on the Internet.

When you look at the pages returned for your search terms you will notice **sponsored links** or **sponsored results** down the right hand side of the screen and also a few across the top. These are paid for advertisements relating to the search term you entered.

## [4] Internet marketing – overview

Marketing in cyberspace is basically the same as marketing in *terra firma*. First you have to find customers who have money and who are interested in buying your product or service. Then you have to convince them to buy from you and not from your competitors. In both spheres, selling successfully requires advertising and promotion.

If you have a website from which you are selling products or services, you can promote it in two ways: (a) using traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, and (b) using the Internet itself.

There are several ways in which you can promote your marketing website on the Internet. A few of the main ways of doing so are:

- Advertising;
- Email marketing;
- Newsletter marketing;
- Article marketing;
- Affiliate marketing;
- Getting listed in web-directories; and
- Getting high rankings in the search results returned by search engines for the products or services you sell.

**Advertising** on the Internet essentially means putting a text-based ad or a banner advertisement on other websites. A surfer who sees the ad may, if he or she finds it sufficiently



interesting, click on it and be directed to your website.

**Email marketing** is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic mail to communicate commercial messages to an audience. Its effectiveness depends on having a reliable list of potential customers and their email addresses.

**Newsletter marketing** is the use of electronic mail to send subscribers a regular periodical containing interesting and relevant articles that promote your products or services. Its effectiveness depends on how well subscribers fit the profile of typical buyers of your products or services.

**Article marketing** is a form of indirect marketing in which the promoter writes articles of interest and has them posted on 'informational' websites. The article will contain a link to the promoter's website. Articles that are relevant to the product or service on offer can be very effective in getting targeted traffic because surfers who open them are usually already interested in the subject matter.

**Affiliate marketing** is a form of marketing sub-contracting in which third parties, called affiliates, sell products or services on behalf of a principal. The principal rewards an affiliate on the basis of the number of visitors or customers generated by the affiliate's efforts or on the value of the sales made by the affiliate, ie affiliates earn a commission. Their effectiveness depends wholly on the extent of their ability to sell on the Internet.

**Web-directories** are an effective marketing medium for obtaining targeted prospects because surfers who go to a commercial directory are usually actively looking for a particular product or service. For this reason, getting listed in some directories costs quite a lot of money.

**Getting high rankings in search engine results** is also effective. Most people looking for a product or service will use a search engine, perhaps because this gives them a wider choice than they get from using directories. Getting a high ranking, however, is not easy.

The objective of all these Internet promotion methods is to bring targeted traffic to your website in order to induce them to buy your product or service. The key term is 'targeted traffic'. Bringing people who have no interest in your products or services to your website is a waste of time and effort. So your Internet marketing efforts must be focused.

Advertising costs money but many, perhaps the majority, of surfers who click through to your website will do so because they are curious rather than having any intention of buying. Email marketing and newsletter marketing can be very effective – provided you have substantial lists of email addresses of relevant potential customers, which are difficult to obtain.

Article marketing will bring targeted traffic but only from a narrow segment of your po-



tential customers – those who are seeking information and not those who already know about your type of product or service and are actively looking for a purchase opportunity. Affiliate marketing can be effective but is usually expensive in terms of the commissions that must be paid – often as high as 50%.

Getting listed in web-directories and getting high rankings in search engine results for the correct search terms for your products or services are probably the most effective general means of marketing on the Internet, especially if you don't have the substantial lists that are required for successful email and newsletter marketing.

Getting listed on web-directories takes time because most reliable directories, unlike search engines, are edited by human beings. Some charge a one-off fee for registration, while others charge recurring monthly, quarterly or annual fees. Some are free. Some are more popular than others with searchers. Being listed on directories is very important for Internet marketing because the traffic they generate is nearly always well targeted.

However most people looking for a product or service on the Internet use search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, or MSN. Because those who use search engines are looking for specific information, products or services, search engines are an excellent source of targeted traffic.

Getting your website found on a search engine depends on your site's **search engine visibility** – the rank it attains in the search engine results for particular search terms. If your site is not within the top 10 or top 20 positions (or at most top 30), ie in the first or second page or so of the search engine results for whatever you are selling, you will not obtain any traffic through the search engines. The techniques for obtaining that desired visibility are known as search engine marketing.

## [5] **Search-engine marketing – overview**

**Search engine marketing** is an Internet marketing effort that aims to increase the number of visitors to a website from the search engines for specific search terms. It also addresses conversions, the percentage of visitors who become buyers. There are two ways to carry out search engine marketing:

- Obtaining high organic rankings through search engine optimization techniques; and
- Using paid inclusion.

**Organic ranking** refers to the position in the results your website gets naturally when a searcher types a particular term into a search box. Under **paid inclusion**, you pay a search engine to include your website in the results returned for a particular search term



and these are shown under sponsored results.

Of course it's not the overall traffic that counts, but how targeted and convertible it is. One of the purposes of search engine marketing is to achieve a balance between organic and paid listings that maximizes the conversion of visitors into customers or clients.

Indeed conversion matters more than ranking – though you may rank lower than a competitor, so that you have fewer visitors, if your conversion rate is better then you may outperform your competitor in sales, which is what marketing is all about.

The three main methods for achieving the goals of search engine marketing are:

- Search engine optimization – for organic listings;
- Bid management – for paid inclusion; and
- Web analytics – for analyzing the effects of your efforts.

**Search engine optimization** is about changing the HTML code of your pages and the structure of your site in such a way that when the search engine reads your site it decides that your webpages have valuable content relating to particular search terms and so ranks them highly for those terms. You'll be heartened to know that to optimize your site for the search engines you do not need to know anything much at all about HTML.

**Bid management** is concerned with controlling the amount of money you spend on paid inclusion, ie maintaining your visibility in sponsored listings.

**Web Analytics** refers to obtaining, analyzing and using information about your visitors, their behaviour on your site, the pages they visit, the ways they find your site, conversion rates, and so on, in order to improve the performance of your site.

These three activities — search engine optimization, bid management and web analytics — are outside the scope of this mini-guide. However, it may be noted that obtaining high rankings in Internet search engine results takes knowledge, time and perseverance.

For information on how to achieve targeted traffic through search engine optimization and bid management techniques, please contact [Business Writing Services EU](#).

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Hopefully you found this brief guide on the Internet, webpages and search engines interesting and informative.

I would appreciate your comments at: [paul@writingservices.eu](mailto:paul@writingservices.eu).

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[www.writingservices.eu](http://www.writingservices.eu)