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Friday, August 21, 2009

Optimizing Web traffic takes initiative and know-how

Dayton Business Journal - by [Joe Cogliano](#) DBJ Staff Reporter

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So you've built the perfect Web site to showcase your company while captivating users.

Doesn't do much good if you're not driving traffic to it.

Once a hot topic, search engine optimization, also known as SEO, typically involved tricks to beat search engine algorithms. But most major search engines have found ways to combat those, said Chris Wire, president and creative director of Dayton-based **Real**

Art Design Group.

So today's best practices include linking back and forth with other sites, working with others to find and exchange relevant content and reaching out to your desired audience to drive them to your site. The latter could involve anything from e-mail campaigns to traditional direct marketing.

Companies can also get a lot of mileage from social media if used properly, Wire said.

It's better to use tools such as **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** to find audiences — which come together in topic-based groups — that would be interested in what you have to say. Talking with group members about industry topics, and offering them relevant information, can boost your stock as an expert in the field.

"Get involved in the conversation at a non-selling level and when the time is appropriate, tell them how you might be able to help them," he said.

However, experts warn social media can have a backlash. For example, Wire advises not to open a Twitter account in your business name to push your site. The move is akin to going to a party or networking event and introducing yourself to each guest by touting your company.

"The conversation is going to end quickly and they're not going to walk away with the feeling that you wanted them to," Wire said.

Chris James, owner of Beaver Creek-based **WEBSOURCE LLC**, said businesses are benefiting from the explosion of social media use and there's still plenty of room for growth. James also tells companies to make sure their site is in **Bing** — the increasingly popular search engine from **Microsoft**. To get listed on Bing, companies need to open an account and submit their domain name.

James also advises firms to sign up for the major search engine local directories, including **Google**.

His other tips include:

- Start a mailing list made up of your customers, but don't risk being blacklisted by purchasing mailing lists and sending e-mails en mass;
- Consider pay-per-click advertising, especially in places such as **Facebook** where audiences can be targeted geographically;
- Never use "black hat" SEO techniques, which include keyword stuffing, since you risk being penalized by search engine providers.



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Company Watch

• Tying your site into traditional marketing efforts is a must.

"This may seem obvious, but if you have a Web site, your URL (Web site address) should appear anywhere you instinctively put your phone number," James said. "From business cards to brochures to offline advertising to vehicle decals."

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