chirp

Promoting your website

There are three main ways to bring people to your website:

1) print advertising and stationery

Your website address should appear on ALL of your business cards, stationery and other print/audio/video advertising.   This is more important than displaying your email address, as that can usually be found on the site itself. You should also make sure that the address appears in your outgoing email signature and (if allowed) in posts you make to mailing lists, online discussions, guest books, etc.

Most of the domains hosted with Chirp can be accessed with or without 'www' at the start of the domain name. So, if you're short on space, you can shorten the address to just 'yourdomain.com.au' or similar. You should test that this works for your site before advertising this format.

Keep in mind that the complete URL (including the 'www') is more recognisable as a website address and some people will be confused if the 'www' is missing. Most forums and email programs will also convert a URL starting with 'www' into an active link.

2) links (free/paid/reciprocal)

Your prominence in search engines and the amount of traffic to your site are directly related to the number of in-bound links (links from other websites to your site).

You should make a point of asking as many people as possible to link to your site. The text for the link should include your organisation name as well as any keywords you want to be associated with.

In some cases, links will be free (eg. links from the Chirp site, other sites you control, people you know, online directories, forums, blogs, etc.). In other cases, you can offer 'reciprocal' linking. This means an agreement whereby you link to another site in exchange for a link to yours (see **search engine optimisation** below).

There are also any number of sites where you can pay to have your link included. You should be wary of any that approach you unsolicited however as their sites may contain very little actual content/traffic and a link to/from them can be of limited value.

3) search engine optimisation (SEO)

The single most important factor is the text content of your site. This includes the page titles, META information and, of course, the actual content. This DOES NOT include graphics or multimedia objects (Flash, Java, ...) as they are generally inaccessible to search engines.

Beyond content, the next most important aspect of SEO is the underlying structure of your site. This includes the HTML/CSS/JavaScript code, internal links and the format of web page URLs. Chirp specialises in building sites that are accessible to search engine robots (spiders) as well as all other browsers. We monitor search engine visits to your site and your standing in search results and take action when we think it will improve your ranking.

Linking to 'prominent' or 'authoritative' sites can boost your site in search engines, especially when the same sites link back to you (see **links** above). Linking to low-value sites will only increase your ranking by small amounts. This is important to consider when offering a 'reciprocal' link - you should have some sense of the relative value of the sites and the benefit for each organisation.

The prominence of a site will vary for different 'keywords'. You should be clear which keywords you are targeting (eg. 'swimming pools', 'kids toys', 'jewellery', ...) and which sites appear above/below you in search results. Your keywords should appear in page titles, META tags and within your content, but not more than a few times per page.

At the moment, the most popular search engine is Google so you need to focus first on your results there.

4) using Google

Most of you are probably aware of the Google search engine, but probably not of all the search options available. Some of the most useful are described here:

A search for "pet food" will find that entire phrase rather than all pages mentioning 'pet' and 'food'

"pet food" +cat will find 'pet food' sites including the word 'cat'

"pet food" -dog will find 'pet food' sites that don't include the word 'dog'

site:yourdomain.com.au will list all pages that Google has indexed on your site

inurl:keyword will list all pages with 'keyword' in the URL

link:www.yourdomain.com.au will list pages that link to your site

define:word will display a list of definitions for 'word' from various sources

5 miles in km will return "5 miles = 8.04672 kilometers"

40 celcius in farenheit will return "40 degrees Celcius = 104 degrees Fahrenheit"

Similar options are available for other search engines.