



"GREEN" is the New

Tools for online marketing research

I am sorry to say doing more with less is back in fashion. It's amazing how things come and go and then come back around again — although for smart business owners, this one has been rule No. 1 for as long as I can remember.

Still, using the right technology means you don't need to go without. Let's take a look at four free online tools to polish your Web site and marketing efforts.

Increasing sales through your Web site relies on one key metric — Web traffic. Just as in traditional marketing venues, exposing more customers to the sales pitch online is directly related to more sales.

Boosting Web traffic can be broken down into two areas:

1. Inbound links to your Web site.
2. Content, such as text, pictures and video.

Growing the number of links and quality of your content are closely related.

Customizing content | <http://google.com/trends>
<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

As of now, Google is the only search engine that matters. It's the market leader. If you're not on the first page of its search results, then you're, for all practical purposes, invisible. The key is to get listed with the right search terms.

Google provides two great tools to help you understand which search terms are most popular and how they compare with one another in terms of search volume. Google Trends can help you com-

pare search topics to determine the most sought-after content, while the Google AdWords keyword tool makes it easier to narrow topics into the best search terms people are using.

Use these tools to find the topics to write about and the right words and phrases to describe your business, products and services. The right combination of words will work in your favor to ensure people find your company when they search. Better search results translate to increased traffic and inbound links from those visiting your Web site who find your new and interesting content.

Optimizing feedback | <http://www.google.com/alerts>
<http://search.twitter.com>

Hopefully, your customers are talking about you. Google Alerts is a great service that harnesses the power of Google's vast Internet indexing engine to notify you when it finds Web pages with your specific search terms. Try setting up alerts for your company, competitors and links to your Web site.

The smart business owner will use this service to find and reward positive comments — and also quickly reverse negative attitudes through special discounts and quality customer service. The key is to engage in the online discussions you find in a personal and authentic manner.

Twitter is going mainstream as an online form of conversation. Use its search feature to augment your Google alerts to ensure you're seeing as many conversations about your company as you can.

I also find Twitter to be a great source for human-recommended (vetted) links to quality content in the areas my company services. I use that content to help my customers find the information they're looking for through content and links from my own Web sites.

Whether your goal is to increase Web-site sales or better understand your customers, you can't beat these free tools. The secret is to jump right in and get started. A little research can pay huge dividends in the long run.

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