

Traffic Laws

You've built the perfect website. Now you need to drive customers there.

When Johns Hopkins University needed a promotional products campaign to spur donations to its alumni association and keep graduates updated on sports results, AddVenture Products (*asi/31940*) created a T-shirt with a technological twist. Marketed to alumni, the shirt featured a Quick Response code that, when scanned by a smartphone, linked to the university's athletics Web page. The QR code – a unique barcode that can be scanned by smartphones and other devices – drove traffic to the website, which helped the university achieve its goals, says Angela Bankston, AddVenture's marketing manager.

The appeal of QR codes is simple: They're a fast and easy way for distributors and suppliers to drive potential customers to their websites or other online destinations. Business cards, advertisements and promotional materials are all places distributors can put QR codes, says Adrian Sasine, marketing director at The Icebox (*asi/229395*): "They scan the code with their phone and boom – they can find you online."

At a time when a strong Internet presence is more vital to success than ever before, distributors need to do more than build a website and expect a steady stream of visitors to flood in. QR codes are one tool to drive traffic. Distributors should also feature their site's address in e-mail signatures and on printed materials like business cards, catalogs, invoices, promotional flyers, brochures, letterhead, signs and advertisements. Distributors that have e-commerce capabilities on their sites can also encourage customers to order online instead of by phone or in person. And, if you want customers to take a survey or provide feedback, have them do so online. "If people get to know the site, they'll get in the habit of going there and using it," says Nick Seagers, an inventory and purchasing specialist with SwervePoint (*asi/340679*).

Perhaps the most important online ingredient to successfully driving Web traffic is search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is about maximizing the chances that your company will be noticed in online searches by ranking high in a list of search results.

A key factor in influencing your ranking on Google is getting links to your webpage featured on as many other sites as possible. An abundance of links indicates to search engines that your site must be good. "It's the



BUILD A BETTER WEBSITE

Getting potential customers to click on your website will be for naught if you have a shoddy site that fails to communicate reliability, expertise and trustworthiness, says Josh Summerhays, head of conversion optimization at SEO.com. He says effective sites:

1. Immediately convey a message that will be relevant to ideal customers
2. Establish credibility by, for example, emphasizing that the site is secure and that user information will be protected
3. Demonstrate by case studies, testimonials or other means that a company is unique and most capable of meeting an ideal client's needs.

equivalent of a verbal referral to a restaurant that a friend might give you," says Brenden Prazner, product strategist and evangelist for Wilcom International, a software developer for the embroidery and apparel markets. "The more friends that tell you a restaurant is good, the more likely you are to visit."

While you want to get links, don't go about it obnoxiously. "Don't simply spam your site URL to forums or blogs," Prazner says.

Additionally, companies will rank higher in searches if their websites feature unique, content-rich pages, says Boyd Norwood, SEO director at SEO.com, an internet marketing company. Having relevant text is particularly important; one way distributors can build quality site text is by adding frequently updated blogs and describing all products and services in written words, Prazner says.

Title tags are a highly important on-page factor in influencing search engine ranking. Pages should be peppered with keywords relevant to your ideal customers. Search engines pull words from a website's title tag and display them in the blue, underlined descriptions of sites that are shown in a list of Google search results.

Social media is a great way to drive traffic to a company's primary website, says business coach Maria Marsala. For example, distributors can include a link to their main site on their company's Facebook page, have employees include the distributorship's URL on their personal social media pages, or post to a relevant business group page.