

Using MySpace to Promote Your Website

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"Social networking" is the new buzzword in search engine optimization. Oftentimes, it doesn't even apply to standard websites, but rather to the large social portals that have fast become the popular sites to visit and join. MySpace is a prime example of such a social network. Perhaps you have listened to a radio show featuring a local band, inviting you to visit them on MySpace for their concert schedule. Television shows and movies, too, have launched official MySpace pages for their fans to leave messages. Not just for teenagers, MySpace gets noticed and helps people get noticed.

Here people can enlist and create weblogs and photo galleries, make unique designs to the MySpace template for a more personal look to their individual pages, and above all connect with other people. For the creative, the musicians, authors, and web designers, MySpace can serve as an effective promotional tool.

Using MySpace in conjunction with your existing website can serve to aid in your promotional efforts, whether you are selling your latest book or music CD, advertising web design services, or offering consulting on a variety of topics. There are quite a few advantages to using MySpace:

It's free! Despite what those oft-forwarded e-mails tell you, it costs nothing to join MySpace and set up a page. All you need is a bit of spare time and a valid e-mail address. Once you have signed up, you can start networking almost immediately!

It reinforces branding! MySpace allows you create a personalized URL. Say you have a book called "See Florida on a Dime". You can create a special MySpace for the book devoted to Florida and places in the book. You can also reserve the URL, www.myspace.com/floridaonadime (this is not a real profile at this writing), to let people know this is a page devoted to your book. This way, too, nobody else can claim the name, and you have reinforced your brand.

It broadens your reach! You will find, as you explore MySpace, that there are users who spend a large amount of their online time there, jumping from page to page to "meet" new people. It can be said that many people who frequent MySpace may not happen upon your regular website, yet the added insurance of having a MySpace allows those visitors to know that you're out there. Place visible links to your website and to any third-party retailer selling your items in your profile, and let visitors know you have something that might appeal to them.

Once you have figured out your MySpace identity, now comes the tasks of building content and networking to bring people to view your content. You might find that creating your own social niche is as enjoyable as creating a traditional website, though with sites like MySpace there are a few rules to observe with regards to design.

A Unique Space

Look around the website, and you will see many users have taken the time to "pimp" their own spaces. Elegant background images, fancy fonts, and large images lend an attractiveness to what was otherwise a standard template. In using MySpace to promote yourself, however, you want to be sure the design you choose is as professional as it is whimsical, and that it doesn't detract from your book, CD, or services. If you do not wish to use a picture of yourself for the default profile, choose your book or CD cover, or your business logo if you have one. If you don't have one, now may be a good time to create one, if only to further emphasize your brand.

MySpace relies upon CSS (cascading style sheet) code to change the color scheme and layout of your template. A quick Google search on "MySpace design tutorials" will yield a wealth of information for the CSS novice. Choose soft colors that don't distract from your content, lighter backgrounds instead of dark so most users will be able to read clearly. Fill out as much of the Interests and Information sections as you are comfortable doing. As people search through MySpace for like-minded users, the more information you provide increases your chances of being found. Let's go back to the Florida book: for attracting people who like to travel and like Florida, emphasize that on your profile page if that is your target audience.

And use the blog! Weblogs are just as important, if not more important, in SEO as traditional websites. Even if you have a regular weblog for your site, using the MySpace blog to supplement your information can increase your visibility and reach a new audience. Offer snippets of your work, short observations related to your content or interests, and valuable links to your products.

"Pimping" Your Space

Now comes the challenging part: how do you attract visitors to your MySpace without making it look like you are "spamming" the site? It is natural, of course, to want to let everybody know about your book, but some marketing tactics can be misconstrued as invasive, and therefore not work in your favor. The key to attracting a readership (and network) in MySpace is good research of the audience. A country music band promoting a CD on MySpace wouldn't actively seek out people who list only heavy metal in their profile, so it makes sense to study profiles carefully before inviting people to join your network.

As you research MySpace, you might find that like often links with like. Authors have other authors among their friends, and the same with bands and other groups. It is not uncommon, and shouldn't necessarily be viewed as counterproductive, particularly if some of the authors write in your genre. Those authors may have among their networks readers who may be interested in your work, too. By adding these people to your network, you can make use of the bulletin feature in MySpace to alert all users when you have a new blog entry, an upcoming public appearance, or other news to share.

Commenting on Other Spaces

One might consider it a competition to see which MySpace user can offer the most amusing, most interesting comment image. In browsing other MySpace profiles, you will find some people like to insert graphics, be they Photoshopped images or sparkling icons, along with their greetings. As a profile owner, you have the option of turning off HTML in your comments or approving all incoming comments. As a user, however, you would hope many of the profiles you frequent will allow you the opportunity to showcase your goods.

A tasteful calling card photo of your book or CD cover, logo or other identifying image, is a useful promotional tool in MySpace. Leaving such a comment as you browse the portal increases visibility of your brand and product, and may entice new visitors to your site. A word to the wise when commenting in other spaces: try not to make your greeting sound too much like an ad, and do visit friends regularly. The last thing you want is to gain a reputation for committing "drive-by promo," where you visit a friend once with your ad and never show again. Regular visits to some spaces, if only to say hello, keeps you visible without being too invasive.

MySpace is free, popular and flexible for the user on a promotional budget. With MySpace you can make new friends, find old ones, and create new opportunities for promoting your works. You also have the chance to make a new friend at The Write SEO, at <http://www.myspace.com/thewriteseo>, so don't forget to visit!

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