

Head On: Web Presence for Writers

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Head On: The newsletter

Make your Web site a full-time marketing partner with tools that are inexpensive-or-free and easy-to-use. Avoid some common costly errors.

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On January 8, 2008 I gave a presentation on the topic of “Web Presence for Writers” to the **Society for Technical Communication’s** (STC) Houston chapter monthly meeting. I focused on how writers can establish or enhance their presence on the Web. Topics covered included the importance of beginning with the end in mind, metaphors, accessibility issues, and Google Analytics. To view the presentation, see http://hemmi.us/authors/presence_files/fullscreen.htm.

Please note that this is a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, and is best viewed with Internet Explorer. I use Firefox more often, but when you are dealing with a Microsoft product, IE usually works better.

Writers today have an arsenal of free and easy-to-use tools that can enable more effective marketing. A Web presence is a good thing! If you accept that premise, then read on. Each month, I’ll be covering some fundamentals including the use of tools such as Google Analytics, and look at some emerging trends. ❖

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4 Domain name and Web host tips

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- 1) Easy** – keep your domain name short and don’t use symbols if you can avoid them (e.g. “~_”). The sight-impaired hate these. An extension like “.com” is preferable to .ws, .na, .biz, etc. If your preferred name isn’t available (usually the case), try starting or ending it with a regional identifier. For example, BookClub.com may be taken, but one like “KatyBookClub.com” may be available. Be creative!
- 2) Don’t** even think of using a ‘free’ Web hosting package. It’ll tarnish your image and nobody likes their ads. Your pages will load slowly. You can still spend less than \$100 per year, have gigabytes of Web space, and no ads.
- 3) Verify** that your potential Web host will satisfy your email, scripting, FTP, etc. requirements. **Try them for a month before committing to a contract. *Web hosts will not teach you how to program, so don’t expect them to.*** Sometimes they allocate very little disk space for each email box. Decide whether you need many small email boxes or few large ones, and they will generally accommodate you.
- 4) Do not** choose a Web host on price alone. During your trial period, avail yourself of their customer support. If it’s not good enough, move on.

Don’t settle for shoddy service, as there’s a lot of competition for your bucks! ❖

Web Analytics

This term describes the process of analyzing the **behavior of visitors** to a Web site. See www.WebAnalyticsAssociation.org for definitions. The three most important metrics relate to “Unique Visitors,” “Visits/Sessions” & “Page Views.” Standardization across the industry is important so advertisers (you) know what they are paying for and increase the effectiveness of their web sites, raising revenues and cutting marketing costs. ❖

Google Analytics™

(ongoing monthly topic)

For the last few years, I've been dissatisfied with my various Web hosts' reporting confusing and inconsistent measurements of my websites' activity and popularity. I have embraced Google Analytics (“GA”) which offers a plenitude of statistics and rich reporting. Old terms such as “hits” (file requests) and “pages” (responses) have been replaced by of more-meaningful measures of activity and effectiveness.

You can enjoy most of the benefits of GA without cost.

The user interface is much better as evidenced by the Google Analytics (“GA”) dashboard. Clearly, Google understands the importance of sleek uncluttered screens.

Getting started with Google Analytics

- Log in and establish a free account. No credit card needed unless you want to put a campaign together at this point.
- Generate your site-unique JavaScript code snippet, and paste it into each Web page you want to track above the “</body>” tag. It takes about a minute.

Once these tasks are done, Google can collect the statistics needed for analysis and reporting.

The top three metrics “Unique Visitors,” “Visits/Sessions” & “Page Views” are clearly reported.

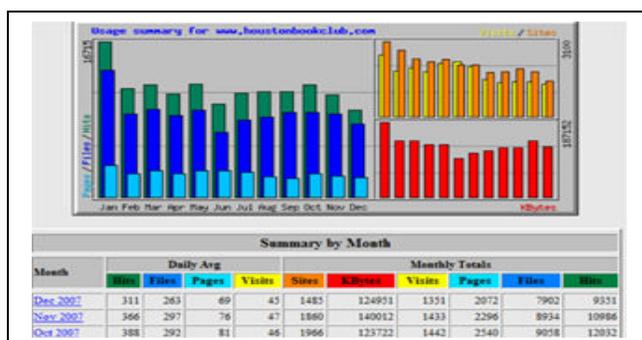
A basic **campaign** consists of your maximum budget, keywords on which you will bid, and negative keywords.

Keywords are terms that visitors enter into a search engine (not just Google) to reach your site. You don't want anyone to click on your ad that isn't a likely prospect

Negative keywords help save your ad dollars. For example, if you sell cruises to Alaska, you don't want people who are searching for Tom Cruise. “Tom” could be a negative keyword so that if someone entered “Tom,” they would not see your ad, and thus can't cost you money.

You can also restrict your ads from running on certain days of the week, or hours of the day. Regions can be excluded as well.

I've gone from this style of reporting on a Website's activity



to the Google Analytics dashboard.



With old-style reporting, my Web host did not allow me to generate any reports easily. Copying the data into Excel was cumbersome and the numbers were of limited value. In contrast, GA empowers me to isolate, analyze and report on those visitor behaviors. Now, I can fine tune my Web sites and spend my ad dollars well. ❖

UPCOMING TOPICS

- Google Analytics (ongoing) detailed reporting options. There are 37 core reports; with drilldowns, your reporting options are too numerous for any single article.
- Organic results
- Viral marketing
- How to design and implement an ad campaign.
- Keyword ranking
- How much should you pay for clicks? Target who you want to reach, and exclude those you don't.
- Alternatives and complements to Google Analytics. Yahoo, other Google tools, and others.
- Writers' resources for publishing and marketing.
- **Content Management Systems (CMS)**. Provide fast and easy updating so you can keep your Web pages updated as often as you want with free and near-free applications. The principal advantage is that to update your content, you don't need much technical expertise since the formatting is predefined. You can focus on the content rather than the mechanics. I especially like this for my clients who have little technical expertise and don't want to have to pay a consultant when they have minor updates to make. The difficulty and expense of updating is the main reason pages get so stale.
- New tools and trends in the world of writing. What's "Glassbook?"
- Heard on the Web

LINKS OF INTEREST

<https://www.google.com/analytics/home>

www.stc.org – Society for Technical Communication

www.HoustonBookClub.com

www.sacredcodes.com/cz.htm – Chinese Zodiac calculator

www.Hemmi.us

Japanese writers thumb their way to fame and fortune! Banzai!

Andy X. Nguyen

Web Language Translation Specialist

Five of the top 10 best-selling novels in Japan last year began as novels written on cellular phones, mostly composed on keypads by young women and read by others on their cell phones, the New York Times reported.

Long commutes give many people a lot of time when they can use a cell phone instead of a personal computer. This led to a rise in text messaging and these messages evolved into short stories that turned into books. The most popular genre is the love story, usually with a diary-like feel since they are usually from the first person POV. They feature streamlined plots and character development, much like the popular Manga comic stories.

Would-be novelists are paid only if their novels are published and sold as traditional books, not when readers access their works online, the newspaper said. One such novel, "If You," was the No. 5 best-selling novel last year with 400,000 copies, the Times said, citing book distributor Tohan of Tokyo.

Wikipedia reports the average chapter is only 70 words long.

It takes some getting used to. Only a few lines pop up at a time because the phone screen is about half the size of a business card.

Improvements in the quality of liquid-crystal displays and features such as automatic page-flipping, or scrolling, make the endeavor far more enjoyable than you might think. For the writers, predictive text eliminates much of the tedium.

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