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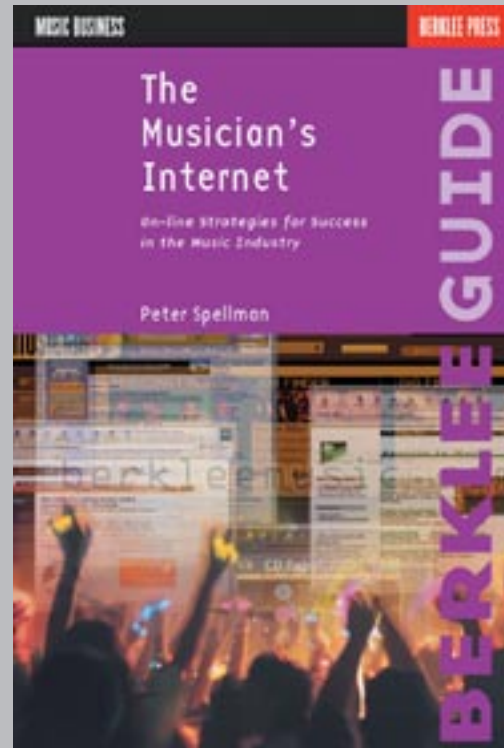
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Chapter 10

Tips for Expanding Your On-Line
Presence

Press ESC to cancel sound.

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CHAPTER 10. Tips for Expanding Your On-Line Presence

As the Web has evolved, so have the various tools and techniques for promoting and marketing Web sites. Here are several more ideas for enhancing your on-line presence.

1. Start a Band Newsletter

Starting an electronic newsletter for your band's site is a great way to create repeat visitors by keeping them up-to-date and coming back for more. How do you build a mailing list for your newsletter? Have your fans enter their e-mail addresses at your site to subscribe. This is called an "Opt In" subscriber list (i.e., the visitor "opts" to join). Over time, your list of subscribers will grow, and the time you spend on your newsletter will begin to pay off. The rewards that are possible with a successful newsletter far outweigh the initial time you will invest in producing it.

Make sure your newsletter contains useful information, updates regarding your site, editorial, book reviews, and so on, and not just a link to your site. Keep it informative, and don't clutter your recipients' inboxes with too many newsletters; they'll appreciate hearing from you more!

Eventually, your e-mailing list may grow too large for you to handle on your own. At this point, you may choose to have it managed and maintained for you by either of these two free services:

- Yahoo! Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>)
- Topica (<http://www.topica.com/>)

Other ideas for your Web site: Let people vote on various song clips you put up. Add new stuff regularly. Have a public comments page. In short, find ways to justify regular updates that keep people interested and coming back for more.

2. Join Banner and Link Exchanges

On a page full of links, an attractive banner or button will stand out and hopefully get more attention from visitors.

Of course, you will need to create a banner of your own to participate. Banners come in a variety of sizes, but you should create one that loads fast and follows general industry standards. The most common banner sizes are

- full banner: 468 x 60
- half banner: 234 x 60
- standard button: 120 x 60
- micro button: 88 x 31

There is plenty of help on-line for creating an attractive banner. Banner Tips (<http://bannertips.com>) will tell you more than you want to know about creating and implementing banners, and the Four Corners Banner Creation Tool (<http://quickbanner.com>) will help you develop and refine your banner, using over 100 categorized background templates and a ton of fonts to choose from.

A few more tips on banners: GIF is the most common banner format, and the words “click here” dramatically improve “click-through” (the act of someone actually clicking on the banner). Finally, studies have shown that a banner placed at the top of a page is less likely to be clicked than one placed in the lower right near the arrow scroll bar.

Banner exchange networks are groups of Web sites that trade links and banners with each other. It certainly doesn't hurt to try these services because they are typically free. The banner exchanges usually give banner impressions in return for impressions you produce for them. The ratios for the number of impressions you'll get for the number of impressions you generate will vary from service to service.

- Musician Banner Exchange (<http://www.musicbanner.com/>)
- Music HyperBanner (<http://music.hyperbanner.net/>)
- Exchange It! (<http://www.exchange-it.com/>)
- BPath (<http://hyperbanner.net/>)

Links to and from your site should always be on the same topic as your subject matter. I mean, you wouldn't link to a scientific glass blowing page from your mambo music site, would you? Some link exchanges are categorized, but they're very loose categories. So beware.

You can also exchange links with other sites without joining a service. Link to some of the top sites in your category, and ask them if they'll link to you.

3. Join Web Rings

Web rings allow you to join groups of Web sites with similar interest areas, link together to trade visitors, and drive new traffic to your site, thus allowing visitors already interested in your site's subject matter to find your site easily.

- Yahoo! WebRing (<http://dir.webring.yahoo.com/rw>)
- Yahoo's list of Web Rings
(http://www.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Searching_the_Web/Indices_to_Web_Documents/Rings/)

4. Join an Affiliate Program

Affiliate programs—also called *associate* or *partner* programs—are ways of making money on the Web without ever creating or selling a product. Hundreds of sites offer various types of affiliate programs, but most work like this: you link to an e-commerce site, and when someone buys a product after following that link, you earn a commission.

Here are some tips for getting started:

- Evaluate your Web site to determine what kinds of products your users will buy most often (music comes to mind).
- Choose an affiliate program that matches your site's topic or theme, is easy to implement, and offers high commissions (Amazon.com is a prize winner here).
- Add links to products that you can personally vouch for or feel strongly about.

- Monitor your commissions and reevaluate your affiliate program every three to six months.

Some popular affiliate programs are

- Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com>). Books, music, home electronics, toys, etc.
- Beyond.com (<http://www.beyond.com>). Software.
- KBKids/E-Toys (<http://www.kbkids.com>). Children's toys.
- CDUniverse.com (<http://www.cduniverse.com>). Music, movies, games.

5. Building Joint Ventures with On-Line Partners

A joint venture is when two or more businesses come together to work on a project for a set period of time. Doing on-line joint ventures can increase your chances of increasing your sales and profits, saving time and money, getting valuable referrals, and increasing your market visibility. There's strength in numbers, and the Net is the great enabler of these creative partnerships.

Possible Joint Ventures

On-line joint ventures manifest in myriad ways. Here are several possibilities to help get your creative juices flowing:

- The simplest joint venture would be exchanging text links or banners with other related Web sites.
- Share a Web site with another business with the same target market. You both will be marketing and advertising the same Web site, which means double the traffic. For example, a jazz guitarist can share a Web site with a T-shirt company specializing in "jazzy" designs.
- Combine your products or services together with another business into one big package. You could split the profits. For example, a general business band can team up with a catering company to offer a package of services for corporate party and event planners.

- Do you have a product or service that that you can offer as a free bonus for another business's product or service? For example, a new age artist can offer her CD as a premium to a company that sells aroma therapy products. In exchange, ask for a small portion of the profits and/or some advertising space on the company's Web site.

A note on offering "freebies" off your Web site. Some bands have offered free items, such as demo tapes, off their Web sites. Sue Lange, of New Jersey band Ce Lange, relates her experience with this.

All of a sudden we were getting fifty requests a day. I was thrilled at first and figured some link I had hit on finally was getting us some high traffic. It turns out that there are several pages that list free stuff you can get over the Internet. That, in itself, would not be bad, because I wanted to introduce our music to a wider audience. Unfortunately, the surfers were not even visiting our page, so they had no idea what type of music they were going to be getting or who the band even was. They just clicked and asked for free music. I know that more than half the people would not even be receptive. Also I ran out of demos immediately because I wasn't prepared for the high volume.

- Offer to insert a promotional ad for another business into your Web site. Pick a business with an affinity to your style of music. For example, if you're a country band, you can advertise a country music magazine or radio show. Just ask them in return to do the same for your business.
- Host a webcast show with another band. Include each other's promotional material on the Web site. Or, you can do like the band Everything (see chapter 6), and partner with an ISP or multimedia startup.
- If you publish a band newsletter, consider trading some ad space with another non-competing company newsletter. Again, be sure the ally has some relationship to your music style. In this way, you add extra value to your newsletter and so do they.

6. Use Web Stickers

Web Stickers (<http://www.websticker.com>) are custom stickers, decals and bumper stickers for the purpose of advertising your Web site. They are great promo tools for announcing the launch of your Web site and also as free “giveaways” to fans and customers.

7. Develop a Response Template

Design and save an e-mail message that you can send back to any unsolicited e-mail or to anyone requesting information. This response template should be headlined by a key benefit of your product or service, describe your product or service, offer one or two testimonials, make an offer they can't refuse, and make it easy for them to respond back. Also include your e-mail address and Web site URL. Now, instead of trashing unsolicited e-mail, send them your marketing message.

