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INTERNET | MARKETING

FREE Tools to Audit Your **Internet Marketing Fitness**

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This paper was written in June, 2006. Information on Internet marketing changes rapidly. If you find outdated content or links, please check www.savvyinternetmarketing.com for the latest version.

Do you know someone who could benefit from the tools discussed in this paper?

Please feel free to post this on your blog or email it.

Thank you.

[Ready or Not: *Web 2.0 has Arrived*]

Is Your Company Prepared for the Future of Internet Marketing?

If you are a bit overwhelmed by the speed at which Internet marketing has evolved, you are not alone. Marketers everywhere are scrambling to adjust to the opportunities and threats of the next generation of Internet marketing, where the only thing predictable seems to be change.

The widespread adoption of search as the primary method to locate goods and services has created new advertising channels, tools and models. Marketing accountability, once the domain of direct marketers, is now expected of all marketing departments. And, uncontrollable online conversations are forcing marketers to rethink communication strategies.

Evaluating how well your company is adapting to these changes can be complex and expensive. Professional services to monitor the blogosphere alone can easily run into the seven figures.

However, by taking a little time using the FREE help tools in this paper, you can get a pretty good idea of how your company measures up:

- » See which of your competitors attract the most traffic to their website.
- » Monitor what is said about your company within the blogosphere.
- » Automatically keep tabs on your competitor's latest news.
- » Discover who is linking to your competitor's website.
- » Determine who is advertising against your trademarked names.
- » Discover who in your industry uses an affiliate program to increase revenues.
- » Identify which competitors have optimized their websites to redirect traffic away from you.

Armed with insight into your Internet marketing fitness, you will be empowered to assess your online vulnerabilities, identify which competitor poses the greatest threat, and make informed decisions on how to allocate your marketing budget.

Measure your Website Traffic

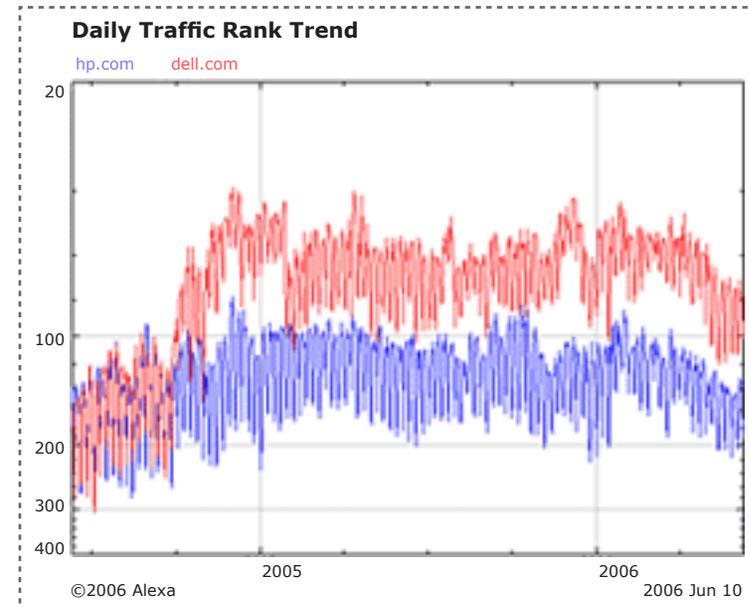
Compare Your Traffic with Your Competitors.

More consumers are online than ever before searching for products and services like yours. Data from the [Pew Internet Project](#) from June 2004 reveals that more than 60 million American adults use search engines on any given day.

If your competitor has maximized the number of searchers coming to their website, they may be taking business from you. Higher traffic increases selling opportunities.

Alexa makes it simple to measure traffic to your site, and monitor your competitor's site at the same time. With [Alexa's free site traffic measurement tool](#) you can easily compare the traffic rank trend, daily reach, and daily comparisons of pages viewed between your website and any competitor. You can even keep tabs on whether your traffic trend is increasing or decreasing.

This example of an Alexa chart shows the daily traffic rank trend between HP and Dell:



While many website features impact conversion rates, the more traffic a website has, the greater is the opportunity to turn visitors into customers.

Increasing traffic to your web site is a key factor in increasing sales: Traffic = opportunity = sales. One of the ways to increase traffic to your website is to rank first in search engine results with the keywords most frequently used to locate your products or services.

Analyze your First Page Rankings

Top Rankings Deliver Qualified Visitors.

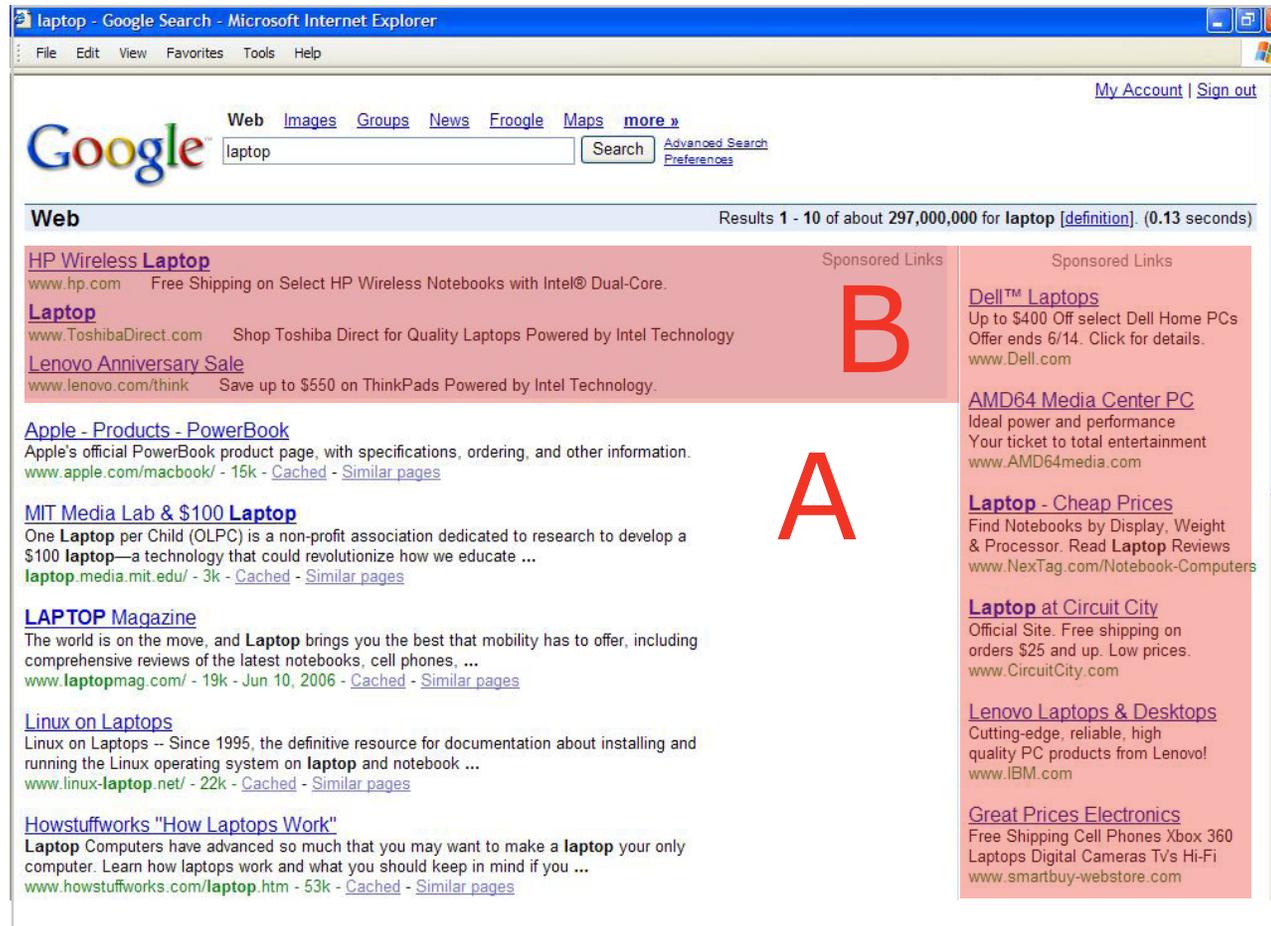
Appearing on the first page of search results on the major search engines is a key factor in attracting traffic to your site. The “big 3” are Google, Yahoo, and MSN.

To see where your company ranks in search results using critical keywords for your product, type each keyword or keyword phrase into [Google's](#) search bar and scan the results for your company's name, and the names of primary competitors. For example, if you work for Dell Computers, some of the keywords searchers might use include:

- » laptop
- » laptop computer
- » buy a laptop
- » dell laptop
- » cheap laptop
- » portable computer
- » dell
- » notebook computer
- » dell latitude
- » latitude laptop
- » Inspiron B130



Closely review the results in the center of the page (A). These represent organic or natural search results, and are highly valuable for driving lead traffic. In fact, more than 60% of the time searchers click on these results.



Ranking well in the organic results isn't about luck. It requires an ongoing investment in search engine optimization in order to stay on top.

Next examine the sponsored listings that are shaded at the top and to the right of the page (B). These are pay-per-click advertisements, available through Google's AdSense program.

Continue doing searches for your keyword list, and note which competitors consistently appear on the first page of search results. Carefully examine any ads displayed when you do a search for your company or product names. Crafty competitors may advertise against your trademarked names in order to capture traffic that might otherwise go to your site.

Now do the same search on Yahoo. You will discover a different set of advertisers and different organic results. If you have regional businesses, do audit searches on local search engines such as [Google Local](#) or www.yellowpages.com.

Few searchers look beyond the first page of results. If your competition shows up in both the organic results and the paid results you can be sure that search engine marketing is a strategic component in their marketing mix. And, it is likely they are taking business away from you.

[*Count your Links*]

Quality Incoming Links are Critical to Ranking Well.

If your competitor's website ranks above yours in organic search results, quality incoming links may be the reason. Search engines value links from respected sites. These link "votes" can push a website to the top of the organic search results list.

Fortunately it is easy to obtain an estimate of your competitor's link popularity. Yahoo provides the information needed to analyze your own links, as well as incoming links of competitors.

To find out what other websites are linking to your website, go to Yahoo and type the following into the search box:

linkdomain:www.yourcompany.com -site:www.yourcompany.com

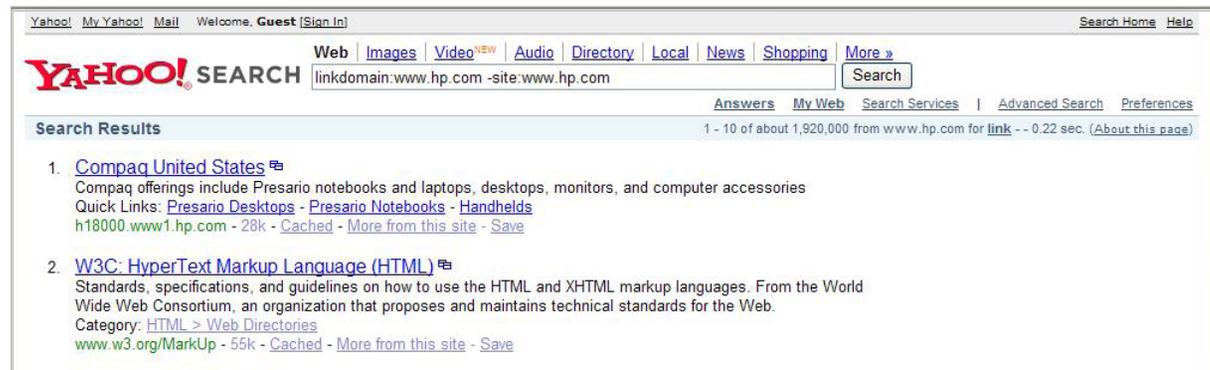
(Note: There is a space before the minus sign.)



Make a note of the total number of links (A) as well as the names and URL addresses of sites linked to you (B).

Then perform the same type of link search for your competitor's websites. While the number of links reported can vary from day-to-day, this type of link search will provide a comparison between your own incoming links, and those of your competitor.

linkdomain:www.yourcompetitor.com -site:www.yourcompetitor.com



If you find that your company's website is not positioned well in the organic search results, it could be because you don't have as many quality incoming links as your competitor. Applying search engine optimization tactics and instituting an aggressive link-building campaign will raise your rankings.

Being found on search engines is critical to building site traffic. But WHAT is being said across the Web is becoming a top concern of many marketers. Like it or not, your customers are talking about you, which shapes the perception of your brand online.

Monitor your Online Reputation

Online Conversations Shape Your Brand.

The control that organizations maintain over what is being said about them is slowly eroding. Social communities, employee blogs, corporate blogs, user groups, and forums all enable two-way conversations. These conversations shape the perception of your brand online.

While you cannot control everything that is said, listening to the millions of voices can provide you with insight to improve customer relationships, build better products, and anticipate negative PR.

Listed below are free tools that will help you to monitor your online reputation: Technorati, Google Alerts, and a simple Google search.

Does your Company “Suck?”

To see what people are saying about your company on the Web, begin with a simple search on Google. Do a search using “your company name” and the word “sucks.”

These type of searches are ones you do not want to rank first place in. If your company does show up, start monitoring the sites. Do a little research to see who might be responsible for them.

Who’s Talking About Your Company, Right Now?

The [Pew Internet study](#) estimates that about 11%, about 50 million, Internet users are regular blog readers. [Technorati](#) provides a live view of the global conversation of bloggers.

While much of what is said is simply “noise,” the key is to identify the influential bloggers and build relationships with them.

Monitoring online conversations can provide you with valuable insight into your company’s fluctuating reputation. It can also expose competitive threats, reveal opportunities, improve your products, and help you foresee trends.

Don't Miss the Latest News

And last of all, sign up for [Google Alerts](#) and stay on top of the latest news events and trends.

Google Alerts are email updates, containing the latest relevant Google search results based on your specific query or topic. Whenever Google locates a new page, whether during a news related or regular search, Google automatically sends you notice by email, with a link to that new page.

Handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- » monitoring competitor announcements
- » keeping current on your industry
- » following company coverage



[Look for *Affiliate Relationships*]

Affiliate Marketing Programs are Big Business

Managing Internet marketing gets harder with each passing day. Searchers have multiple resources at their disposal: Google, MSN, Yahoo, local and vertical search engines, portals, social communities, blogs and shopping directories. And there are more avenues to reach searchers: banners, email, blogs, PPC ads, CPM ads, pop-ups, podcasts, and more.

No one marketer can possibly maximize their ROI. But an army of thousands of online marketing professionals can. That, and the fact you only have to pay when a sale is realized, is the driving force behind the phenomenal growth in affiliate marketing.

Affiliate marketing works like this: affiliates who are experts on Internet marketing, who want to earn revenue from their traffic, will promote another merchant's product or service in exchange for a commission on leads or sales – to be paid by the merchant.

Among the thousands of companies that use affiliate programs are mass retailers like WalMart, Target and Home Depot; travel service providers like Expedia.com, Best Western and Marriot, and thousands of niche marketers like Vermont Teddy Bear, Omaha Steaks, and Golfballs.com.

To see whether your direct competitors use affiliates to market their products, look for an affiliate link on their website. You can often locate this at the bottom of the home page. Even if you do not find a link, they may still have an affiliate program, one which you in all likelihood will be able to find on Refer-it.com.

Refer-it.com is the leading search engine for revenue-sharing programs. The company's database includes descriptions, payouts and ratings of more than 12,000 affiliate programs.

Merchants that use affiliate programs benefit from an army of affiliate marketers, which helps increase revenues, build brand awareness, reach new markets and significantly expand online visibility.

[Get Ready to *Win*]

Get Ready to Win the Internet Marketing Challenge

We hope these free tools have provided insight into your Internet marketing fitness. Knowing where you stand is the first step in crafting a healthy Internet strategy, one that puts you at the top.

Once you discover what works for your competitors, you can invest the thousands of dollars saved using these free tools in online marketing programs that will deliver exceptional ROI. And that is a race you can win!



[About the *Author*]



Internet marketing expert, Pamela Swingley, has more than 20 years of marketing experience working with both start-up and Fortune 1000 companies.

As the founder of [Savvy Internet Marketing, LLC.](#), (Savvy) she provides strategic consulting services to help companies of all sizes

implement Internet marketing programs that build their brand, generate leads, and increase profitability.

Prior to founding Savvy, Pamela held senior management positions with Siebel Systems, OnLink Technologies, Varsity Logistics, and ADP.

Pamela also oversees a network of niche websites that help consumers make better buying decisions and create demand for Savvy's merchant partner products.

To learn more about Pamela and Savvy Internet Marketing please visit:

Site: www.savvyinternetmarketing.com

Blog: <http://savvy.typepad.com/>

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