

Mainstream Traffic Lessons from an Adult Webmaster

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While in the process of doing research for my book “**TRAFFIC FROM SCRATCH: How a new website can build a massive traffic base starting with zero**”, I attended the InterNext trade show in Las Vegas to see if the techniques adult webmasters use to generate traffic will work for mainstream sites.

(Visit www.TrafficFromScratch.com for more about the book)

It's a dirty little secret that the adult internet business pioneered most of the advancements in the modern internet. The first affiliate program was created by an adult webmaster. Adult websites paid the way for video streaming. Many of the traffic generating and marketing techniques used by major mainstream websites were first developed on adult web sites.

Adult webmasters have always been ahead of the curve. Corporate America and mainstream webmasters are always months and many times years behind the adult internet industry.

It's easy to forget about the adult arena. When publications list the top 100 websites in terms of traffic, adult sites are omitted, even though they comprise over a third of the list in reality.

InterNext, the largest gathering of webmasters takes place every year in Las Vegas and it's for adult webmasters. Although it's geared towards the adult industry, I will occasionally go in order to attend the seminars. They have seminars on traffic building, marketing, search engine optimization, programming and even seminars on mainstream websites and traffic. The people running these programs really know their stuff. They seem to look at the internet through different eyes.

Every year I attend The Consumer Electronics Show and the InterNext convention always coincides with it for some strange reason, so it makes it really easy for me to justify going to an adult convention. I also get to spend some time with one of my oldest friends, Jerry, that I am sometimes embarrassed to say is an adult webmaster.

At the convention I sat down with Jerry to get his views on traffic and mainstream webmasters.

The Interview

Q . Jerry, Who are you and what do you do?

A . I'm an adult webmaster. I also have mainstream sites, but I made my bones in adult websites. I don't create content or have sites with picture or movie content; instead I create sites that I like to call "traffic magnets". Sites that simply attract and move around traffic. Sometimes I feel like a commodities broker. I'll figure out that I can trade 100,000 hits from a lesbian site for 75,000 hits from an Asian site to get 120,000 hits from a BBW site which is what I really wanted to begin with.

Q . Why are you considered a traffic expert?

A . Between 1996 and 1999 I created the 5th largest adult website. There was a company called "The Adult 1000" that tracked the top 1000 adult sites and ranked them by daily unique visitors. My site was ranked #5 for several years, right up there with the big guys. There was a lot of competition for traffic and I had to learn fast and I've spent the last 10 years still learning.

Q . Why do you think you were able to accomplish that?

A . I think my background helped a lot. While I had no formal education in marketing I was self-employed doing a lot of mail order direct response advertising, selling BBS subscriptions and online non-internet marketing. Marketing to web surfers was not a huge leap for me since I already know what online surfers wanted and how to attract them.

Q . Do you still have the 5th largest site?

A . I have more traffic than ever, just not at a single site anymore. I broke the site apart into separate niches since that made more sense. At the time everyone had huge egos and wanted one big site with mega traffic. It was smarter to have 5 niche sites doing 100,000 daily unique rather than one big site doing 500,000 daily.

Q . How did you get your start in the internet business?

A . As you know, I was into the whole BBS thing big-time. I had a dozen PCs running on 12 different telephone lines selling subscriptions into my systems. When the first web browser was developed I immediately began developing web sites. At the time I zeroed in on developing sites for strip clubs. I was dating a stripper so I had some access to the owners.

I had trouble selling my services so I offered free websites to strip clubs. I would then put affiliate banners at the bottom of every page. By doing this I wound up making 50 times more money from the banner ads than I would have if I had charged the client for the site as originally intended. Plus I owned the domain, I owned the content, it was a sweet deal. This was back in the day when surfers would click on anything.

Once I saw how much money I was making just off traffic from local strip clubs, I decided to create a national site. That site blew up into one of the largest adult websites and almost overnight my income was 20 times what it had been just a few months earlier.

Q . Do you think it was just starting a site at the right time?

A . At the time I thought, this is easy money. How come everyone isn't making money doing this? I began to network with other webmasters and started to realize that while some webmasters were getting rich, others were living hand to mouth. I just had a marketing background and worked smarter. The press liked to report on the guys making the big bucks yet they never mentioned the hundreds of thousands of webmasters that failed. Ten years later it's still the same. I still see smart guys entering the business and becoming almost overnight millionaires while others enter and can't even make enough to pay their water bill.

Q . What's the biggest misconception about the adult internet industry?

A . People think that getting adult traffic is easier than getting mainstream traffic. I have both adult and mainstream sites and I can tell you that traffic is traffic. I will tell you that adult webmasters in general are better at getting traffic. I think we network more, trade traffic more efficiently and smarter, and have a better grasp on what traffic is.

Q . So getting adult traffic is easier?

A . No. That's not what I said. I said that adult webmasters are better at getting it. And I'm including at getting mainstream traffic. I'll explain. Most top adult webmasters also have mainstream sites. We use the lessons learned in the adult biz and apply it to our mainstream sites. There are some differences in quantity since I specialize in adult traffic I have a lot more of that. But if I were to calculate how much money I make per hour working on adult sites versus mainstream sites is pretty much even. What I lose in quantity I make up for in quality. Mainstream pays better when broken down per click or visitor.

Q . Don't mainstream webmasters trade traffic?

A . Not to the extent that adult webmasters do. Mainstream webmasters like to trade links thinking that link trading will give them a higher Google Page Rank which will bring them more traffic. While Google traffic is great, it's under one-half of one percent of my traffic and I get a lot of search engine traffic. Link trading is not the same as traffic trading. Most webmasters like to bury their links so the search engines will see them and no one else. But if you make honest traffic trades it's a win-win situation. Here's why... If you get in 10,000 visitors to your site and can't sell them, then ship them off to a friend. Just because they didn't like what you had to offer doesn't mean they won't like what he is offering. Then in return he sends you 10,000 fresh visitors. So instead of having 10,000 visitors now you have 20,000.

Q . So what are you doing that the average mainstream webmaster isn't doing?

A . Getting rich. - - Seriously though, the other adult webmasters that I deal with have a better understanding about how to use their existing traffic. For example, I know a mainstream webmaster that has worked hard to get 100 visitors a day to his site. He forces those visitors to a squeeze page hoping to get them to join his email list. Look at your calendar, if it says 2001, that would be a great strategy.

Q . Okay, explain what has changed?

A . In the good old days, people would willingly give up their email address. Hell, in the 90's you would have damn near 100% of the surfers giving you their email address. Every year less and less people are willing to do that. Now email lists are still important, don't get me wrong, but using a squeeze page where you get an email address is becoming less and less effective.

Here is what someone should do with 100 visitors per day. Make sure that get something out of EVERY surfer that hits your site. I don't care if they hit the back button the second your site opens, get some use from them.

There is a business term called "The highest and best use", and basically it means that every visitor coming to your site should be used for the best use. In my mind the best use would be to trade it away for even more traffic.

People need to re-think the way they use their traffic. Most websites are designed to force the visitors to click on the links that go to affiliates or other things that will make them money. The link trade links are put there in case the surfer incidentally clicks on it.

The way I work my traffic is by forcing the visitors towards the traffic trading links and making the affiliate links the incidental links. In the long run it works better because you will have a lot more traffic and the traffic sent to the affiliate is higher quality and converts better because the surfer had to go out of their way to click that link which means they must really be interested. In my mind, this is the only way to build big traffic.

Q . Can you explain how to build traffic with trades?

A . The theory behind it is pretty easy to understand. Let's take the webmaster that has 100 visitors coming to his site every day. He sends them to his squeeze page and the next day 100 more come. It's a consistent 100 per day.

But if you have 100 visitors coming in per day and you send them off to a site that returns you an average of three visitors for every one, well now you have had 400 people coming to your site. That's a 400% increase in visitors. Then send those 300 off and get 900 back, send the 600 off and get 1200 back. This is an over-simplification of how traffic trading works but you get the picture.

Q . How can a site consistently return 3 hits for every one that you send?

A . Most can't but some can. That's why networking, research, and data tracking is so important. The sites that I send traffic to encourage their visitors to click on enticing links that open up into new windows. The average visitor to their site will click on 5 or so links. That's an average, some will click on none, while others will click on 10 links. So the website keeps two of the clicks for themselves and sends three of the hits off to their traffic trading partners.

Q . What if you can't find sites like this?

A . Even bad trades won't hurt you. If you send out 100 visitors that didn't purchase your product, then you have lost nothing. If your trading partner only sends you half of that amount back then you still get 50 fresh visitors.

The 3-to-1 ratio is what I'm doing right now after lots of hard work. Someone just starting out, with some guidance, can easily get a 1-to-1 ratio which is more than enough to grow their site at an exponential rate if done correctly.

Q . Is there a way to improve your odds?

A . Site design plays a big part. There are a few tricks of the trade to get extra traffic back from your trades. I've developed a technique that gets my surfers to click on multiple links. So if a surfer clicks on 5 of my trade links then I have sent my trading partners effectively 5 visitors. I can potentially get back 15 fresh visitors from just that one surfer that visited my site.

Q . Can you elaborate on that technique?

A . It involves some scripts and page layout. It would be easier if I emailed you some page templates or directed you to one of my pages.

Q . Can I include them in my book?

A . Certainly, just put a link to one of my mainstream sites somewhere in your book and on your website.

Note: Jerry did send me his scripts and a lot more information on this technique that is included in the “Traffic From Scratch” package, along with other scripts and software developed by adult industry webmasters.

Q . Can you give us an example of the type of sites to send trade with?

A . Sure can. The first thing I do when I start up a site is start submitting to toplist. Now most toplist really suck because they use the old 468x60 graphic banners that shout “I’m a banner ad, ignore me”. Instead I like to submit to what’s called a “Friend’s List”. Basically, it’s a grid of 100x150 graphics [banners], but the graphics are really pictures that just scream “Click Me!”. In fact MySpace took the idea for friend’s pages from the adult world and incorporated them into their MySpace page layout and now they are one of the top 3 largest websites in the world based on traffic. So you can see how powerful these friend’s pages are. People just love to click on them.

So let’s say I have a website that features a cute blonde girl. I would want to trade traffic with some Friend’s style toplist that specialize in blonds. Now remember how I said that adult webmasters are more traffic savvy? Here’s how you can tell, there are dozens of great friend’s style sites that cater just to blonde traffic. Here are just a few:

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING SITES MAY CONTAINING ADULT IMAGES!

- www.pickablonde.com
- www.findablonde.com
- www.lotzablondes.com
- www.certifiedblondes.com
- www.kissablonde.com
- www.blonderegistry.com

I would start trading with one a day and just start building my trades. The great thing about these sites is that they rank where your image is displayed by the amount of traffic that you send them. So if you send them a lot you are at the top of page one and get a lot of traffic back. If you can only send them a little then you are farther down but still get traffic back, so it’s a very fair system that both large sites and small sites can use.

Note: You can find a friends style trade page for IM webmasters at Nest egg Books. Visit it at www.nesteggbooks.com/guides

Q . What is the biggest mistake you've made in this business?

A . That's a tough one because most mistakes I consider as a learning experience and just part of life. But I'll tell you something really, really, really stupid that I did once. There was a time that all my sites were rolling along really well. I would go for days, even weeks at a time without even turning my computer on. I had checks filling my mailbox everyday, so what did I care? I had just bought this huge house that needed a lot of work so I was spending all my time renovating the home. I should probably say that I was really burned out from spending months at the computer for 16 to 20 hours every day. So after six months of vacation I got back into work mode and went to check on my on-line business. I realized that the credit card I had on file to renew my domains had expired and I had lost a couple of really good domain names. Not only were they worth at least \$10,000 each, but the income associated with them.... Oh crap.... I almost cry every time I think about it. Even though I know it was 100% my fault, I was pissed off at the guy that bought them. I don't know who he was, but I hated him. For \$8 he got the deal of a lifetime. I'm over that now.... Almost.

Q . Do you swap traffic between your adult sites and your mainstream sites?

A . Never. I would never send mainstream traffic to an adult site. Other than the obvious reasons, mainstream traffic is more valuable. I'd rather send it out to mainstream affiliates.

Q . If mainstream traffic is more valuable, then why not send your adult surfers to mainstream sites?

A . I have tried in the past, but people surfing adult sites are not interested in buying a book from Amazon.com, at least at the time. Some webmasters claim to have success with this type of cross-conversion, but I think that their definition of success and mine are different. I have had marginal success with cross-converting adult surfers into gambling surfers, but then I consider a gambling site to be an adult site.

Q . Let's get back to Search Engines, why don't you go after search engine traffic?

A . I didn't say that, I said that it's a small percentage of my traffic. I love my search engine traffic, it's gold. There is nothing better than a pre-filtered search engine driven visitor. The reason it's a small percentage is because surfers generally start surfing either by typing in a website name, using a bookmark, or using a search engine. For ease of calculation let's say those three things are evenly divided. That means that only 33% of surfers start out on search engines. After that most of their surfing is done by clicking on links on existing websites. The surfer will click 100 links before going back to a search engine. That means that over 99% of their surfing is not Search Engine driven. Only the original click is search engine traffic. So if a site has a high percentage of search engine traffic that means they are not getting enough non-search engine traffic.

Q . Do you search engine optimize your pages?

A . Of course. However I don't spend a massive amount of time doing it. Frankly, I don't see a big difference between my search engine traffic on sites that I've done moderate seo work on and one's that I've out-sourced to seo professionals.

Here is a simple trick. Think of a search engine as a blind man surfing the web with software that converts the text on a web page to speech. What would his impression be of your site? He can't see pictures, he can't see your layout, and tables and frames just make things confusing. This is how an ex-employee of a major search engine told me to visualize my sites.

So if you want to get a better feel for what a search engine sees, go to your browsers advanced options page and disable show pictures and javascript, then view your page. To sum up the way I do search engine optimization, design your page like it's going to be read by a blind man.

Q . Are there tools that you use to generate traffic?

A . Lots of them. There was a period time a few years ago when a batch of new sites popped up and they began doing mega quantities of traffic. They started with nothing and then out of nowhere had over a million unique visitors a day.

I realized that once again that the art of traffic generation is constantly evolving and smart people are coming up with new ways to get it.

I started doing my homework and realized that 95% of these sites were using traffic trading software. Software that analyzed their incoming traffic, decided the best use for it, and made even more traffic as a result. That's when I realized that to stay in the game I needed to start using more tools.

Q . Can you tell me what tools you use?

A . Many of them are custom scripts that I've written myself. They are simple and get the job done.

Q . Do you sell them?

A . Send me some more traffic to my mainstream sites and I'll give them to you. Here's what most people don't understand... the more traffic we trade the more traffic we have. It seems counter-intuitive that to get traffic you have to give it away, but I promise you it works if you are smart about it. That's why I have no problem giving my scripts away because I know it will bring more traffic back.

Q . Could you build a traffic empire from scratch in today's world?

A . In a heartbeat. In fact one thing I like to do just to keep on my toes is to buy a domain and see how much traffic I can generate without using my other traffic or sites to jump-start it. With the right tools and knowledge it's not that hard.

Q . Could you tell me how you build traffic from scratch?

A . Yes but that will take a while. There are a few steps and some pitfalls to avoid. Let me finish enjoying Vegas and call me when I get home.

Note: Jerry did in fact send me his various systems for creating traffic from scratch and it is solid, logical, and impressive. It is all covered in my book "Traffic From Scratch: How a new website can build a massive traffic base starting with zero".

If you would like to generate massive traffic to your site using methods and techniques developed by adult internet webmasters just visit www.TrafficFromScratch.com

Now you can get massive amounts of traffic for your mainstream site just like an adult website.

More Details:

- **Works on any website.** Even if your site is not even close to an adult niche site you can get a remarkable amount of traffic. For instance, it will work on site's selling children's products, a site selling digital downloads, or a membership site.
- **Works Fast.** Increase traffic so rapidly your competition will take notice but are powerless to stop you.
- **Does not use black-hat techniques.** This is an honest traffic building system. No cloaking pages, using fake keywords, or anything else unethical or immoral.
- **Provides you with TARGETED TRAFFIC.** This system will supply you with a never ending stream of traffic specific to your niche. It's no secret that the more targeted traffic you get, the more sales and money you make!

The **TRAFFIC FROM SCRATCH** system includes an easy to follow step-by-step book and companion scripts. It is a must have package for any website owner that is not getting his or her share of quality targeted traffic.



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