How to Put Your Cleaning Business on the Internet and Make It Profitable

Carpet Cleaners and Damage Restoration Firms

Gary Arndts
MarketingZoo.com



Table of Contents

- Where Did Everyone Go? 3
- Why Do People Search Online? 7
- **Action Steps to Online Success 8**
 - What Prospects Want to See 9
 - **Use Websites to Save Time 11**
- **Don't Irritate Your Prospects 15**
 - **How To Gain Trusts 17**
- What I've Noticed About Websites 19
 - **Showcase Your Website 21**
- More Showcasing Ideas Than You Could Ever Use 22
 - **Increase Traffic with a Reason to Visit 27**
 - Use the Internet to Keep in Touch 28
 - **Tips for Creating a Powerful Newsletter 31**
 - **Tweak Your Website for Search Engines 41**
 - **Keywords 50**
 - **Cracking the Internet Marketing Code 57**
 - **Setting Up a Pay Per Click Campaign 69**
 - A Pay Per Click Shortcut 77
 - MarketingZoo.com

In the U.S. over 1,200,000 people search the Internet each month for a carpet cleaner. Over 154,000 search for a damage restoration service. They're looking for you!

They search by the tens of thousands every hour of the day. They search for "Carpet Cleaning", "Carpet Cleaning Service" and "Carpet Cleaner" and "House Cleaning."



They search for "Damage Restoration," "Water Damage," and "Mold Remediation." And this is just a drop in the bucket. There are thousands of similar keyword phrases that prospects are typing into search engines.

These Searchers Have the Same Desire. Clean Floors.

<u>Keyword</u>	Searches/Month
carpet cleaning	551,798
carpet cleaning los angeles	35,519
carpet cleaning dallas	21,626
carpet cleaning houston	18,103
carpet cleaning atlanta	16,804
carpet and upholstery cleaning	13,330
carpet cleaning chicago	11,252
carpet cleaning san diego	10,564
carpet cleaning service	10,549
carpet cleaning business	9,884
chem dry carpet cleaning	9,147
drapery carpet and upholstery cleaning	8,831
carpet cleaning in houston	8,603
cleaning carpet stain	8,482
carpet cleaning repair	8,432
carpet cleaning san jose	6,551
carpet steam cleaning	6,449

Monthly search volume for popular "Carpet Cleaning" phrases. There are thousands more related keywords.

These Searchers Have the Same Desire. A Clean House.

Keyword	Searches/Month
house cleaning	270,606
home cleaning	57,965
house cleaning services	16,864
los angeles house cleaning	9,557
house cleaning business	6,821
house cleaning checklist	5,966
home cleaning services	5,632
house cleaning chicago	4,389
house cleaning seattle	3,458
house cleaning schedule	3,226
home cleaning tip	2,595
house cleaning jobs	2,432
house cleaning washington dc	2,421
home cleaning remedy	2,394
bay area home carpet cleaning	2,371
house cleaning san francisco	2,310
starting a house cleaning business	2,238

Monthly search volume for popular "House or Home Cleaning" phrases. There are thousands more related keywords.

These Searchers Have the Same Problem. Damage.

<u>Keyword</u>	Searches/Month
water damage restoration	36,005
fire water damage restoration	24,404
fire damage restoration	6,756
water extraction and damage restoration	1,197
water damage and fire damage restoration	1,110
san diego fire damage restoration	802
san diego water damage restoration	749
smoke damage restoration	665
water extraction damage restoration	608
water damage restoration specialist	437
water damage restoration equipment	384
fire water damage cleaning restoration	357
flood damage restoration	266

Monthly search volume for popular "Damage Restoration" phrases. There are thousands more related keywords.

Why Do People Search Online?

Why do people search the Internet for local carpet cleaners, house cleaners and damage restoration firms?

The simplest reason is that it's so easy for them to do it. Most people now have Internet access. With a few clicks of the mouse, they can identify local services. They can compare firms without having to make phone calls. They can email for more information.

Searchers may also just be looking for information or "tips" to see if they can do it themselves or if they really need to hire a service. On the Internet they can do it all without exposing themselves as a prospect.

It's just so convenient. Some services even make it easy for customers to request quotes and set up appointments online. With people now using search engines 3 times more often than traditional yellow pages, how do you take advantage of this exploding marketing opportunity?

Action Steps to Online Success

Create a Web Site

Create the kind of web site prospects want. It's a different way to communicate than traditional advertising.

Showcase Your Website

Display your web site in as many places as possible.

Keep in Touch with Prospects

An e-newsletter is an excellent tool. Prospects can click to your site, request a quote or schedule an appointment. But there's another way, even simpler, that's also effective for some cleaning businesses.

Make Your Web Site Search Engine Friendly

Without hiring a search engine optimization (SEO) firm to help you appear naturally on search engines, there are still techniques to make your site more attractive.

Sponsor Pay Per Visit Ads

Sponsored listings are one way you can be confident of being *easy-to-find* by the people who search the Internet each day for a cleaning service.

What Prospects Want to See

What Prospects Want to See on Your Web Site...

A "You" Attitude

Visitors to your web site don't come just to read about you. They come to learn and explore. You may attract more visitors and get more customers if you provide helpful information and beneficial services.

You're OK Guys

People often visit your web site just to "check you out."

How long you've been around.
What services you offer.
What others think about you.

Include testimonials from satisfied customers.

Lots of them. Trust is the most important single ingredient in a person's decision to select you, even more important than price! Talk about your service, not just in the community, but to the community. If you clean commercial properties, include a list of satisfied customers. List your professional affiliations. Provide a satisfaction guarantee.

What Prospects Want to See

Give Tips

Provide useful tips and your prospects will like you before they even meet you. (By the way, each month over 150,000 people search for "cleaning tips" online.) Tell them how to clean up a minor stain themselves, or protect carpeting or furniture. Give them safety tips to follow until you arrive when they have had damage to their home. Your web site may be your first opportunity to show prospects you put them first.

Offers

People respond to offers. In fact, they search the Internet to find businesses offering good service and good deals. Use your web site to capture these hot prospects. I've noticed a marked jump in phone calls whenever I add an attractive offer to an Internet ad.

When you make an offer you must take visitors to a landing page where you confirm that offer, or your ad will be rejected by some search engines. The consistency in your message will also give your campaign increased persuasive momentum.

Use Your Website to Save Time

If your web site does nothing else, it can save time. Your time. Your customers' time. It can reduce your hassles and bolster your profits by getting the dreaded information monkey off your back. Try answering common questions on your web site in order to:

Reduce the number of phone calls
Reduce the duration of phone calls
Save employee time
Reduce information distribution time and costs (such as
brochures)
Reduce time spent with prospects & customers
Clear up confusing issues
Make your customer's information gathering and buying
experience more pleasant

These benefits alone are reason enough to have a web site!

An	swer Business Questions
	Products & Services offered
	Operating hours
	Days of the week open
	Holidays closed
	Payment methods accepted
	Routine service plans
	Scheduling of appointments
	Geographic market you cover
	Warranties or guarantees
	Phone, fax and email numbers
	Toll free numbers
	Phone numbers and links to web sites of manufacturers of
	products you sell

Pro	Product & Service Questions	
Wł	ny answer these questions? Let your web site do it	
	Detailed services / problems you solve	
	How to select appropriate products/services	
	Service agreement information	
	How to use products	
	Troubleshooting information	
	Types of people or businesses who benefit from particular	
	products or services	
	Testimonials (they don't always ask, but people want to know	
	what others think of you)	
	How your products or services differ from competitors'.	
	Current specials and coupon offers	
	How to keep updated about new offers	
	Products or services soon to be discontinued	
	How to order or contact you	
	Where to find related services	

I'll bet you can think of even more. An easy way to decide what to put on your web site is to ask your employees to keep track of often asked questions.

Add answers to FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS to your web site and you'll soon find yourself spending less time educating and more time making money.

Don't Irritate Your Prospects

Web Site Irritants to Avoid

Frames

Frames create a static navigation area while other page content changes. Search engines have trouble searching frames. Browsers have trouble printing them. Visitors don't like them. What else do you need to know?

Flash introductions

A Flash introduction is just another irritation to your visitor.

Pop Ups

Use pop up boxes carefully, if at all. They irritate visitors. They have to stop reading, view the pop up and close it before proceeding. (On the other hand, a pop up offer may help to encourage visitors to sign up for newsletters.)

The Third Degree

Don't irritate visitors by forcing them to share personal information before they can access useful content on your site. Don't make them request information by e-mail. Make content easily accessible by any visitor. Minimize questions.

Don't Irritate Your Prospects

Cluttered Formats

Avoid screened-back background photos behind your copy. It's needless clutter. Also avoid moving objects and sound effects. If a page is "under construction" just take it off. (PS. Be sure your links work.)

How to Gain Trust

Use Your Website to Gain Their Trust

An informative web site lets visitors know you appreciate their needs. So don't create a web site that just toots your own horn. But do provide enough information about yourself so that customers feel they can trust you.

Get Personal

Include an *About Us* page. Share just a bit about your background and family. If yours is a third generation business, let them know. Tell about local organizations you belong to and volunteer work you perform.

Testimonials

Nothing beats positive word-of-mouth. On a web site, testimonials are the next best thing. Ask satisfied customers to be specific about what they liked about your service. (An easy way to do this is to send customers an *After Service Questionnaire* and ask if you can share their comments.)

How to Gain Trust

Create Credibility

Briefly share your history. Include awards and recognitions you have received. List professional affiliations.

Commitment

Tell visitors what they can expect from you, and what you must expect from them in order to serve them to the best of your ability.

If prospects don't trust you, they won't use you, even if you're the cheapest cleaner in town.

What I've Noticed About Websites

What I've Noticed About Websites

I've run hundreds of pay per click campaigns for carpet cleaners, damage restoration firms and other cleaning businesses. With the excellent tracking tools we have at BlueRaptor, I've seen many highly profitable websites and many complete failures.

Here are a few things I've noticed:

Your Landing Page is Key

Try to have your visitors land on a page that relates specifically to the topic they have searched for. Give them enough information on that page so they can make a decision to call you even if they don't visit another page on your website.

What Information? Your services. Your service area.
Testimonials. Credit card accepted. Insurance information.
Professional Affiliations. Guarantees you promise. Special offers.
Make your phone number stand out!

What I've Noticed About Websites

Fancy Features Don't Help and May Hurt

The best performing websites are relatively plain and some are downright ugly. I've never noticed video or flash help a website convert visitors into callers.

Websites that have a "corporate" look may make the owners feel proud, but they're losers in terms of converting. They may intimidate visitors or make you look too expensive. I've never noticed music or speaking improve a website's conversion rate.

Cleaning websites with a personal touch seem to do well. Show them a photo of yourself and tell them you personally stand behind your work.

Showcase Your Website

It pays to display your website domain name (URL) every time you have the opportunity. The list below is what I think are the essentials. On following pages are even more possibilities to consider.

All of your ads
Business Cards (produce cards for your employees and add a
reason to visit your site – see page 24)
Fax cover sheets
Invoices Letterhead and envelopes (seems like a no-brainer
to me, but I still see them omitted)
Signature Files (it's the standard signature at the end of your
e-mail information - add a reason to visit your site)
Press releases (add a reason to visit)
Yellow page ads (add a reason to visit)

Showoff your URL anytime you are in contact with other human beings. [Gifts of doubtful quality can make a bad impression. Only put your web address on things you're proud to hand out.]

Ad specialties

Aprons

Associations - Directory ads, banners, meetings.

Awnings - Front of your business.

Balls - Giveaways.

Banners

Barricade tape

Beach towels

Bumper stickers

Bookmarks - (I print them by the thousands.)

Bottles

Bottle openers - Visit my website for something just as refreshing.

Bumper stickers - Get off my tail and onto my site.

Buttons

Calendars - Doesn't everyone want to know what day it is?

Can openers

Car shades - For a website as cool as my car, visit...

Chairs

Chamber of Commerce

Checks

Chocolate bars - Printed with your own wrapper.

Classified ads - Low cost ads can lead people right to your site.

Clothes - Giveaways, prizes or corporate ID for your people.

Drink Coasters

Coffee mugs

Coloring books - Have a coloring contest.

Compasses - Point them to your website.

Computer accessories - Tons of stuff available.

Contests - Sign up cards or online sign ups.

Coupons

Coolers - Give one away as a prize.

Decals on equipment - Make them out of metal.

Designer postage stamps - Put one next to your regular postage stamp on the envelope.

Direct mailers

Duffel bags

Flashlights - Find our website at night.

Free samples - Your products

Frisbees

Gift Certificates - Preview our products online!

Giveaway awards

Give away freebies - Tips, free reviews, check-ups.

Golf shirts

Hats

Highlighters

Home-show booths - Add a reason to visit your site.

Instructions sheets - How to keep that carpet clean all year long.

Insulated drink containers

Invoices

Jackets

Key chains

Knives

Labels - Cheap to print up so put them everywhere.

Letter openers

Logo - Make your URL part of your logo.

License plate frames

Literature and flyers

Magnets

Magnetic door signs

Magnifying glasses

Membership cards

Mouse pads

New homeowners - Welcome gifts.

Newsletters

News releases

Newspaper ads

Outdoor - Billboards, park signs, bus signs.

Packaging - Put your URL on your packaging.

Parking permits - If you've got one, you look at it.

Pencils

Pen boxes

Pens

Postcards

Posters

Products - Some products can have your URL printed right on them. Example: cook books.

Report covers

Rulers - Inch your way onto our website.

Sacks - Your last customer has a good chance of becoming your future customer.

Scratch pads - Always useful.

Seminars - Pass out something free with your URL.

Signs

Sports uniforms - If you sponsor a ball team, let them return the favor.

Stadium cups

Static clings - Attach them to about anything from windows to refrigerators.

Stress balls

Stickers

Sticky notes - How many times a day do you use one?

Sweatshirts

Tape measures

Tote bags

Trade links - It's smart to have your web address on another non-competitor's website that is getting good traffic.

T-shirts - Turns the common man or woman into a dynamic advertising machine.

Warranty cards

Increase Traffic with a Reason to Visit

Boost your traffic with online offers of information and giveaways.

"October Carpet Cleaning Savings Coupons!" Visit www.your-web-address

"Free Community Map"
"Free Coupons Online!" (from marketing partners)
"More Information!"
"Schedule Appointments Online in Seconds!"
"Sign up for Free Newsletter!"
"Get Do-it-Yourself Stain Removal Tips Online!"
"See What Others Say About our Service!"
"Free Guide to Stain Removal"
"Download our How To Video!"
"Free 'How to Make Your Carpet Last Longer'"
"FREE Season Basketball Schedule!"

Offer something worthwhile. You'll get traffic.

Use the Internet to Keep in Touch

From a report by eMarketer,

"E-mail CMOs say email and regular mail offer the greatest ROI – better than events, PR, web site interactive programs and advertising both online and offline."

Quoted from SilverPOP Digital Marketer

Of course, many people may only have a damage restoration emergency once (or a very few times) in their lives. Building a database of such prospects may not be a practical strategy for damage restoration firms.

However for carpet cleaners, house cleaners and similar business it can pay off handsomely to create a continuous avenue of communication with prospects – especially past customers where most future business will originate, either directly or through referrals.

If you can find a way to keep in touch, you've uncovered the great shortcut to easy business. I have asked many carpet cleaners how they get business. The answer is almost always that they most get it from past customers returning for another cleaning, or from referrals from these same people. The benefits of staying in touch are enormous.

Use the Internet to Keep in Touch

Businesses use many ways to maintain contact. I get a calendar each year from a real estate agent I bought property from years ago. It's a smart move on his part, but today there are much stronger ways to keep in touch.

One way is to send prospects a newsletter. Tempt them to sign up by making it interesting and relevant.

Printed Newsletters: These are fine but can get costly if you have to print and mail a lot of them.

E-mail newsletters: A wonderful option. Basically, it costs the same to send out ten or 1000.

An e-mail newsletter can take many forms, but they all share the same advantageous:

Ц	Consistent contact with prospects
	No printing costs.
	No postage costs.
	Prospects can click directly to your web site.
	Instant access to online sales and coupons

Use the Internet to Keep in Touch

Your newsletter doesn't have to be about cleaning. What counts is that the content is useful, entertaining or interesting. Whatever your format or topic, you can remind readers that you offer cleaning services. Invite them to visit your site. It's just a click of the button for them.

An e-newsletter can offer a free cleaning estimate and prospects can click immediately to a page where they can complete preliminary information.

What to Avoid

Avoid producing a newsletter that talks just about you. Although a newsletter can include personal or professional information, keep in mind that your reader is mostly interested in his or her own wants and needs.

What to Include

Lots of tips. Use your own expertise as a basis for useful and educational information.

Ask your clients what would interest them. Look through
industry publications for ideas.
Give case studies and actual examples.
Invite others to contribute. Interview someone with
expertise and use it create an article.
Review and/or recommend helpful books.
Link to other web sites or to articles of interest to your
readers.
Invite readers to ask questions.
Offer free things. Introduce new services and discount offers.

FREE ARTICLES are available from many web sites. You simply agree to include the authors' contact information.

One example is goarticles.com/. It includes dozens of articles on home improvement and related subjects.

General Interest.

Don't want to focus just on cleaning? A newsletter that is fun or filled with general tidbits that would interest most people is a fine approach. You're still making your reader comfortable and familiar with you without any hint of sales pressure. But you're also making an impact and you'll be there in front of them when a need arises.

Niches

Focusing on a specific topic can also be smart. If you targeting commercial business, a newsletter showcasing floor care and building maintenance would be welcomed. If you target upscale residential, a newsletter on maintaining vacation homes might be appropriate.

Build A Red Hot Subscriber List

As the years roll on, your subscriber list will become your most valuable marketing asset. You will be in contact with hundreds or thousands of people who know and trust you. You can dangle offers in front of them whenever you like at virtually no cost to you!

Building your list is easier than you might think. It doesn't take much money or work, but it does take a little time:

Put a Subscription Box on every page of your web site
Offer a freebie on your web site to anyone who signs up
(example: a tips book)
Send out postcards to past customers and prospects asking
them to subscribe to your e-newsletter.
Advertise your newsletter on community websites (Chamber
of Commerce, Community Portals)
Advertise your newsletter or exchange links with other, non-
competing, advertisers in your market.

Put an ad on the back of your business card .
Invite people to subscribe at events .
Ask subscribers to forward a copy of your newsletter to
friends. Have a sign up link on the newsletter itself.
Tell friends , clients and associates about your newsletter.
Invite them to sign up.
E-mail a sample copy to people you know. Invite them to
subscribe.
Offer your free e-newsletter on stationary , correspondence
in print ads and in the yellow pages.
Write an article for local publication. Mention your free e-
newsletter at the end.
Send out announcements to local organizations and
associations to which you belong.
Assure subscribers that you value their privacy .

Don't make subscribers fill out personal information to subscribe. Just ask for a first name (so that you can personalize e-mail if you decide to later) and email address.
 Keep selling copy to a minimum. Offer a fun newsletter with valuable information.
 Ask people you talk to on the phone if they would like a free subscription. If they say yes, send them an e-mail to confirm.
 Leave sign up cards at retail locations.

Of course, never send out your newsletter to anyone who has not subscribed (except, perhaps, a few samples to friends). That's spamming.

CARPET CLEANERS

Invite people who choose not to use your service this time to sign up for your Carpet Cleaning Coupons.

Most marketers give up on prospects way too soon. Carpets get dirty again and they will be back. Odds are your competitor (who won the job last time) won't stay in touch with them.

A Simple, Powerful Stay-in-Touch Solution for Carpet Cleaners

For those who don't want the job of creating a newsletter, here's a simple 3-step way to handle the whole process:

Always have an attractive offer on your web site.

Change it every month, even if only slightly. The offer should expire at the end of each month to creates a sense of urgency. Give prospects a reason to act immediately. If they don't "act now" you may lose them to a competitor's seductive offer.

After you are done with a job, ask customers if they "like to save money".

In fact, ask everyone and anyone if they "like to save money". Whey they say yes (and they will), hand them a little sign up card.

Put them on your Carpet Cleaning Coupon Alert and e-mail them a monthly coupon, so they will never miss a moneysaving opportunity again.

Something as simple as the card below will work.

SAVE ON CARPET CLEANING

YES, I NEVER WANT TO MISS A SALE. EMAIL ADDRESS

WE NEVER EVER SHARE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS.

E-mail them a coupon each month.

Or send them a simple text (words only) e-mail with a link back to a landing page on your site that offers the coupon. Your web site developer can help you. A text e-mail might read as follows:

Subject Line: Carpet Cleaning Coupon Alert!

Message:

Dear Valued Customers,

As we promised, you'll never miss a chance to save with [YOUR NAME] CARPET CLEANING. In October we have a wonderful pre-holiday offer. Click to our web site at www.mycarpetcleaningservice.com for details.

Thanks! Signed - Your Name

PS: As a valued customer, we invite you to share this message with any friend or relative who you feel might benefit from our special offers.

Eventually you will build up a list of hundreds, or even thousands, of subscribers to your Carpet Cleaning Coupon Alert. Imagine, being able to communicate with all these prospects for just pennies each month.

Invite your readers to print out extra copies for their friends and relatives.

Train your prospects to keep an eye out for your messages. When you have a special offer, make it a good one.

Be Seasonally Savvy

Give your coupons more power by identifying your customers' changing needs and habits at each time of the year.

WINTER: January. February. March.

You prospects aren't thinking much about carpet cleaning this dreary time of year, however you can make offers to clean furnishings. It may also be a good time to reward early birds with some really exceptional deals. If they are just not ready, invite them to pre-book for spring cleaning, so you can serve them promptly when the time comes.

SPRING: April. May. June.

You are naturally more busy during this time, so your offers might focus on increasing the value of each sale. Example: discounts on furniture cleaning when customers get their carpets cleaned. Remind readers that a good carpet cleaning can be an excellent Mother's or Father's day gift.

SUMMER: July. August. September.

Summer offers excellent message potential, too! A cleaning right before your prospects leave for vacation will give the carpet plenty of time to dry. A special offer for those willing to beat the fall rush will also bring out some savers.

FALL: October. November. December. With people getting ready for holiday traffic, early fall will lend itself to about any good offer you dream up.

You'll Have Control

It's a challenge to get service staff to consistently pass out coupons or mention special offers. With a hot list of prospects in your Carpet Cleaning Coupon Alert database, you can relax. You'll have control over your communication with customers and many prospects.

It's easy and cheap to consistently communicate with prospects when you create an e-mail list.

A little work now to build an e-mail list of customers and prospects will put you on easy street in the years to come.

DEFINITION: OPTIMIZATION

Organizing the content of your web site and incoming links so that your site will get good ranking for certain keywords and come up "naturally" when they are searched.

Search engines are more changeable than a baby's diaper. You can't optimize your web site, then relax. However, there are four things you can do improve your chances of appearing early on natural listings.

1. Build Your Page Rank with Links

Page rank is a measure of your popularity, or in other words, how many other web sites link to your web site.

2. Keep Content Fresh

Search engines such as Google monitor how often your web site is updated.

3. Increase the Physical Size of Your Site

All things being equal, a 100-page web site is going to get preference over a one-page site.

4. Make Your Content Sizzle

On the Internet "quality" means content that is relevant, or of interest, to your visitors. Some search engines, such as Google, always defer to whoever offers the best content. If your web site has the keywords that are specified by the searcher, you will gain favor with search engines.

Links Increase the Popularity of Your Web Site

It's called Link Popularity. It is a measure of how many other web sites link to your site. Search engines factor in link popularity when they select web sites to appear as natural listings. Here are several ways to get links:

Directories: List your web site in directories. Start with local directories, such as your Chamber of Commerce and city directory. Some charge for listings, and some offer free listings. Also target city directories, yellow pages and community/state business directories.

Find Link Partners: Offer to trade links with other web sites. Some to consider: banks, insurance firms, real estate firms, landscapers, furniture stores, pest control firms, home inspectors, appraisers, moving companies, carpet sellers, contractors, painters and remodeling businesses. (Note: reciprocal or traded links are weaker than one-way links.)

Articles & Publicity: Write articles or send out publicity announcements to online sources. Include your link at the end. If they run your story, you've got a link

The more sites that point people directly to your web site the better. However, the quality of those sites also counts. The better they rank, and the more relevant they are, the more they will benefit your ranking.

More Ideas than You Could Ever Use to Encourage Others to Link to Your Web Site

Linking is when someone recommends you by putting a link on their web site that leads visitors to your web site. It's not only a great way to get traffic, the cost is zero. In fact, it's just about the perfect way to get traffic. And of course, linking helps with your search engine ranking.

So how do you get others to want to link to you? It's simple. Create something of value for them or their customers. Here are a few ideas to add content to your web site so others will want to direct traffic your way. (Note that all of these need not be strictly about your subject. That's okay. Traffic is traffic.)

Scratch an Itch in Your Niche: If you sell sporting goods, your best customers and prospects have one thing in common. They love sports! They would be itching to read about sports, learn new things and talk about sports. You could make your web site a valuable piece of real estate by making it a really good scratch for their itches.

The more sites that point people directly to your web site the better. However, the quality of those sites also counts. The better they rank, and the more relevant they are, the more they will benefit your ranking.

More Ideas than You Could Ever Use to Encourage Others to Link to Your Web Site

Linking is when someone recommends you by putting a link on their web site that leads visitors to your web site. It's not only a great way to get traffic, the cost is zero. In fact, it's just about the perfect way to get traffic. And of course, linking helps with your search engine ranking.

So how do you get others to want to link to you? It's simple. Create something of value for them or their customers. Here are a few ideas to add content to your web site so others will want to direct traffic your way. (Note that all of these need not be strictly about your subject. That's okay. Traffic is traffic.)

Scratch an Itch in Your Niche: If you sell sporting goods, your best customers and prospects have one thing in common. They love sports! They would be itching to read about sports, learn new things and talk about sports. You could make your web site a valuable piece of real estate by making it a really good scratch for their itches.

No doubt about it. Word of mouth is the best advertising. On the Internet word-of-mouth is called Linking. When someone else puts a link from their web site to your web site, they recommend you.

If you focus on commercial carpet cleaning, your best visitors would love to learn more about keeping their cleaning and maintenance costs low. So give them tips. Tell them about helpful resources. Get the idea? Become a valuable resource in your niche.

Would any of the ideas below work on your web site? The rule is simple. Create good content. Let others know about it. The link requests will come. Also, if you go out to solicit link trading partners, you will have a much stronger web site to dangle in front of them:

A Link Library: Display links that take visitors to other sites of interest in your niche.

How-to-Articles & Books: Gather useful articles on your niche. How to clean stairs. How to protect furniture. How to make carpets last longer. Ten tips for picking a carpet cleaner you'll love. Early steps to minimize water damage.

Help Each Other

Offer coupons of businesses that don't compete with your and they may return the favor by linking to your web site.

Coupons: If you offer free coupons for non-competing businesses in a special section of your web site, wouldn't those business want to link back to you?

Online Seminars: Sponsor free online chat sessions on your topic. Invite an expert to participate. Announce the seminar to the local press.

Biographies: Would newcomers to your community like to read a little history about the founders or significant benefactors to their new community?

Community Information: As a local marketer, one of your niches is your community. What might you add that would make other sites want to link to your site? Maps. Points of interest. Fun activities. Out of the way places. Where to find things.

Facts: List the birth and death dates of your mayors. List demographic information about your community. Lists are easy to make and interesting to read.

Glossary: What do cleaning terms mean? Explain industry expressions to your web site visitors in layman's terms. Explain the different types of cleaning products.

Related Products and Services: If the local carpet sellers aren't completing with your business, list or link to them.

News & Announcements: Announce new products or services you offer; changes in ownership or management; new offices or locations long term contracts you acquire; retirements or promotions of key employees. Look for opportunities to get publicity. For example: if there is a flood or fire in your community, offer tips on cleaning up after such disasters. Local newspapers may run the article on their web site and include a link back to your site.

There's no shortage of ways to scratch an itch in your niche. When you add useful and interesting content, others will be more included to link to your web site.

Keep Content Fresh (Visit: www.MarkertingZoo.com)

Search engines such as Google monitor how much content is on your web site and how often it's updated. Fresher content will be more favorably ranked.

Update a list of tips
Archive newsletters
Add articles or reprints of others' work (with permission
Announce changes in your business (add press
releases)
Add editorial (your views or recommendations)
Invite customers to share tips (subject to your review)

Some businesses add blogs to their web sites. These are an online diary or log that you post to periodically. When you do, you're also adding fresh content to your web site.

RULE OF THUMB - Update the equivalent of about one paragraph per page per month. An easy strategy is to create an e-newsletter and archive it on your web site. Every e-newsletter issue you add helps keeps your site fresh.

Your prospects and the search engines agree on one thing. Stale content is like dead fish. After a while, it's not very desirable.

Quality Content Means "Keywords" to Search Engines

As you get your web site more search engine friendly, your main focus will be on keywords.

A Simple Process:

Discover which keywords are popular.
Select the keywords which best reflect your niche.
Enrich your web site content with these keywords.

Which Keywords are Important to You? If you are a typical cleaning service, you are a local or regional business. A heavily searched term such as "Carpet Cleaning" is not going to be of much value to you by itself. Even though many thousands of people search for "carpet cleaning" each month, you are interested only in those who are searching for carpet cleaning in your area.

Keep this in mind as you move on to your keyword research.

Research the Most Popular Keywords in Your Industry

There are a number of free keyword research tools, or that offer free trial versions in addition to paid plans. Two are:

http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html https://www.wordtracker.com

Go to these sites and investigate some keyword possibilities. It won't take your long to discover that very popular keywords in the cleaning industry include:

```
"carpet cleaning"

"water damage"

"damage restoration"

"house cleaning"

"janitorial service"
```

These are phrases that you will want to work into your web site content, modified with geo-targeting terms. For example:

```
"Chicago carpet cleaning"

"St. Louis water damage"

"New York City damage restoration"

"Philadelphia house cleaning"

"Los Angeles janitorial service"
```

Working Popular Keyword Phrases into Your Copy

Work with your web site designer on this. When someone in Chicago (or anywhere else) types "Carpet Cleaning Chicago" into a search engine, (like they did 1,930 times on Yahoo in September '06), the search engines will look for web sites that have that phrase in the content. In other words, if you want to work towards getting your site optimized for that phrase, instead of:

"We do carpet cleaning"

You would say:

"We do carpet cleaning for people living in the Chicago area"

And you would try to work that phrase in several times. You might use "Chicago Carpet Cleaning" as a caption under a photograph.

Set your web site apart by adding location information to popular keyword phrases. This will help search engines find you when you want to be found - when local people are searching! Instead of "water damage" use "Cleveland water damage."

Working Popular Keyword Phrases into Your Copy

Work with your web site designer on this. When someone in Chicago (or anywhere else) types "Carpet Cleaning Chicago" into a search engine, (like they did 1,930 times on Yahoo in September '06), the search engines will look for web sites that have that phrase in the content. In other words, if you want to work towards getting your site optimized for that phrase, instead of:

"We do carpet cleaning"

You would say:

"We do carpet cleaning for people living in the Chicago area"

And you would try to work that phrase in several times. You might use "Chicago Carpet Cleaning" as a caption under a photograph.

Set your web site apart by adding location information to popular keyword phrases. This will help search engines find you when you want to be found - when local people are searching! Instead of "water damage" use "Cleveland water damage."

If you're marketing in Plano, TX (which is next to Dallas) it may be more advantageous for you to focus on Plano phrases than Dallas phrases. There's more competition for Dallas and you're less likely to get and keep a good ranking.

Title Tags

Each page of your web site has code for something called a Title Tag. It describes the contents of that page. Search engines use it to gather information about your site. The title tag is also the description of your site a searcher sees.

Ask your web designer to include location information in the Title Tags for each page of your web site.

Example:

Instead of: <TITLE>Acme Carpet Cleaner</Title>

Use: <TITLE>Acme Carpet Cleaner - Plano, TX</TITLE>

Title tags should be different for each page and reflect the content of that page.

Title Tags are usually limited to 80 to 90 characters.

Use Keyword Phrases in Headlines & Subheads

When writing web site copy, you are writing for two audiences: your **prospects** and the **search engines**.

Break your web site copy up into nice little paragraphs with subheads. This helps readers quickly scan your messages. It also helps search engine spiders uncover the content. Put keyword phrases in headlines and subheads as well as in the body copy.

For example for a headline or subhead:

Instead of: "Carpet Cleaning Tips"

Use: "Carpet Cleaning Tips for Chicago Homeowners"

Break up copy into short, easy-to-scan paragraphs.

Most visitors won't read everything. They will scan subheads and read further when they encounter useful or interesting information.

ALT TAGS

ALT Tags are text descriptions of photographs or other graphics. People who like to search the Internet with their graphics function turned off can read the ALT tags and will know what the unseen graphics are all about.

Search engine spiders will also note the content of ALT Tags as being representative of the content of the site. In other words, include key phrases in your ALT tags.

The secret to success is simple: you must be "Easy to Find" on the Internet. There are 4 ways you can be found on the Internet: Be Visible: Display your web site domain name. Be seen everywhere you can be seen.

Be Remembered: Cross your fingers all your advertising pays off and prospects think of you when they start searching. A catchy, easily remembered URL (domain name) helps your chances.

Stay in Touch: When most of us think about Internet marketing we think "web site". However, e-mail is the more powerful marketing tool. Find a way to capture your visitors' email address and get permission to keep in touch. Send out updates, announcements or an interesting little online newsletter. Your chances of being remembered will increase astronomically.

Be Easy-to-Find on Search Engines: Your prospects are searching by the thousands. If they don't find you, you've lost your chance. Since many people will stay with a cleaning service they're happy with, your future business with them is also at stake.

You could cross your fingers...and hope prospects remember you when they search on the Internet for a cleaning service. But why leave it to chance?

Are You Invisible?

You may be visible in the physical world. You may even enjoy excellent brand awareness in your community.

Unfortunately, none of that may count for much at the **moment** of truth. The moment of truth is when thousands upon thousands of people sit at home or at work and type "find a carpet cleaner" or "water damage" into Google or Yahoo or MSN and you don't show up. You're not on the screen right in front of them when they're looking. Each searcher has a finger on the trigger (mouse). He or she may be looking for a way to save a few bucks on a quality cleaning job:

Seattle Carpet Cleaning

Internet Special - 15% Discount Fast drying cleaning method www.YourCarpetCleaningBusiness.com

Do you really want to bet the farm that prospects will think, "Wait a minute, I'll call Fred Carpet Cleaner instead of clicking on that ad right in front of me?"

Being easy-to-find is more than being visible, remembered and respected. It's being convenient at the **moment of truth** when your prospects are actually online searching for a carpet cleaning service. You're either there. Or you're not.

About this time I hear you saying... "What's this guy talking about? Of course I'm easy to find! I've been cleaning carpets for 25 years. Everyone knows me. I advertise on billboards! I'm in the newspaper. I send out calendars!"

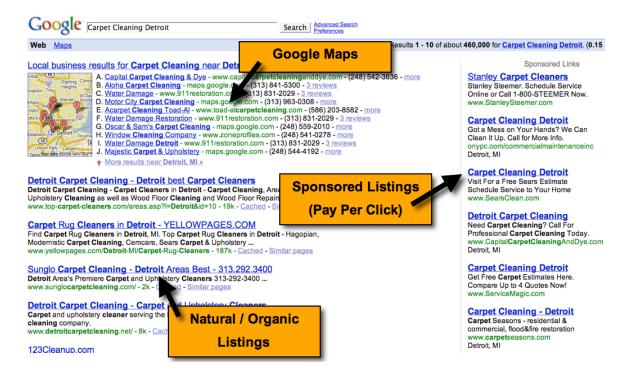
How to Be Easy-to-Find

Search engines are wonderful. You don't have to search for buyers and sellers; they search for you. Remember all those tens of thousands of folks who searched for a carpet cleaner? Here is what they saw come up (example: Keyword: Carpet Cleaning Detroit: Google).

Google Maps (or Places or Plus or Whatever It Is Next Week)
Local advertisers can list their businesses by visiting Google and signing up. You may or may not be on the first page. Also keep in mind that your customers can rate your business and report their comments right next to your listing.

Sponsored Listings

These ads come up because an advertiser bids on that keyword. In this case "carpet cleaning Detroit."



Natural Listings

This is where the search engines reveal those web sites that they feel best represent what the searcher is seeking.

Black Holes

These may be "natural" or Sponsored Listings by middlemen marketers (lead aggregators) who gobble up leads and resell them to businesses for a profit. Online directories, yellow pages and firms such as *Service Magic* might fall into this category. We'll discuss them further in a moment.

The Truth About Natural Listings

When someone searches a keyword, the search engine sends out little programs called spiders that search millions of web sites in just a fraction of a second. Spiders make a "judgment" about which sites are most relevant to the searcher's inquiry. These sites are displays as natural listings (organic listings). They are displayed in the order that search engine spiders deem them to be most relevant to the searcher's inquiry.

A searcher would get completely different results typing in "Carpet Cleaning Service Dayton Ohio" than if he or she just typed in "Carpet Cleaning". The search engine would look at all the words and determine that a result in Texas is not going to be of interest to a Dayton Ohio searcher.

Of course you want to pop up naturally when someone types in a keyword relating to your service. There is an entire industry of search engine optimization specialists (SEOs) who will help you be one of the lucky winners. The only problem is that the search engines often change how they pick the winners. Also, SEO can be costly. Staying on top of your natural position on search engines can become an expensive horse race to win with any consistency. SEOs (search engine optimizers) must constantly work on your site to keep you ahead of the pack.

Beware of Black Holes!

Ever heard the old adage, "Never send someone to your yellow page ad because they will see your competitors' ads and might call one of them instead of you?" The same logic applies to Black Holes. Black Holes are professional Internet marketers. They don't clean carpets. They don't do damage restoration or clean houses. They are resellers. They solicit prospects and then sell them to you.



Black Holes try to convince you that they are your friend. Yet, Black Holes suck up leads and then make you compete to get business. As you can see in the example above, they even encourage your prospects to get competitive quotes.

Once a lead goes into a Black Hole it may never come back out. Oh...you may still have a shot at it if you pay the Black Hole marketer to be listed in the directory, but your chances may be appreciably diminished.

BLACK HOLES These marketers suck leads into directories where you're listed along with your competitors.

Unfortunately, Google has allowed these BLACK HOLES (directories) to virtually dominate the first page of natural searches. Instead of the actual supplier of services they are seeking, searches now find Yelp, Yellow Pages, Better Business Bureau and other ads of such organizations. For most true businesses it has in reality spelled the demise of organic promotion as a viable marketing tool.

How to Escape Black Holes

Your best strategic move is to be listed right there beside the Black Holes. (Or hopefully, in front of them!) Your goal is to capture prospects' attention before they get sucked in.



Maps Results 1 - 10 of about 224,000 for MAID SERVICE MILW

Milwaukee Maid Service

Sponsored Links

Spor

www.ServiceMagic.com Estimates Here. Compare Up to 4

Gat Free Cleaning LEAD RESELLER Trusted Ma uality **Maid S**

The Cleaning Authority

TheCleaningAuthority.com Reliable Bonded Insured Guaranteed Get Your Free Estimate Today!

Merry**Maid**s.co

ilwaukee- Fi

HAVE YOUR OWN AD!

Local business results for MAID SERVICE near Milwaukee, WI



A. Maid Brigade www.maidbrigade.com -/414) 204 4620 4 routour

Maid Brigad

Serving the Mi Green Clean C milwaukee.ma Milwaukee, W

Molly **Maid**

Don't be scare Get help from www.Mollv**Ma**i

Search "Find a Carpet Cleaner" in Google or one of the other popular search engines. Odds are you'll find that many of the sponsored listings are not carpet cleaning businesses. They are marketers siphoning off leads. YOUR LEADS!

These searchers were looking for you. Instead many of them fell into a Black Hole. Prospects will appreciate it if you have your own ad. They can find you immediately without have to search through an additional directory.

Your prospects would rather find you than slip into yet another directory or they wouldn't be searching on the major search engines in the first place.

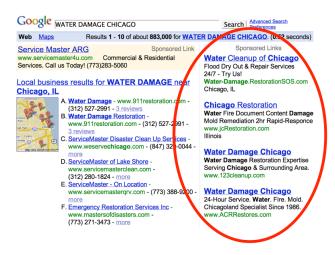
They would go directly to the yellow pages or some other directory. But they don't - 98% of them use the major search engines.

Your Secret Weapon – Sponsored Listings

Searchers on the Internet are part of a vast, moving parade. The tens of thousands who searched last month have been for the most part replaced by a different group of searchers this month.

That's why it is so important that you are not just easy-to-find, but "consistently easy-to-find" on the search engines.

If you are serious about growing your Internet traffic, natural listings, even if you do well with them, are not reliable enough. Instead of counting on natural listings, you can solve the whole issue by using pay-per-visit sponsored listings



Sponsored Listings (pay per click ads) are the great equalizer. You can be assured of being easy-to-find. Internet searchers are clicking on someone's web site. If you're not there, you've lost your chance.

Advantages of Sponsored Listings

Pay per click ads offer several unique advantages:

- You are easy-to-find for the important keywords
 You are also visible for the hundreds of less popular keywords. (Many of these may actually be more profitable since you don't need to bid as much for them.)
 You save the expense of hiring and maintaining a contract with a search engine optimization firm.
- You don't need to worry about how the search engines are selecting the natural listings. You're not dependent upon organic results.
- ☐ The cost of sponsored listings is low enough that you can enjoy a **sizable return** on your investment.

What You Can Expect

The advertisers below (BlueRaptor clients) all used pay-per-click, sponsored listings on search engines. These results are from approximately one month of online advertising:

☐ Damage Restoration – MI Budget: \$500 Phone Calls 20

☐ Carpet Cleaner – VA Budget: 700 Phone Calls: 36

☐ Maid Service – PA Budget: \$400 Phone Calls: 42

Cleaning prospect tend to calls instead of e-mailing, which is fine – especially when they're calling to schedule a service. Of course, your results will vary, but you can see the potential for new business creation.

Steps to Set Up a Pay Per Click Campaign

Unless you take the shortcut, there's some work involved to set up a pay per click campaign:

Step 1.

Make certain your web site is ready

Step 2.

Determine your demographics and geographic market
 Are you a general residential carpet cleaning service?
 Do you offer both water and fire damage restoration? Do you wish to pursue mold remediation?

☐ Do you specialize in upscale homes, commercial or investment properties? What services do you offer? (This will help you to select appropriate keywords.)

■ What is your geographic market? Some search engines offer geographic targeting. (BlueRaptor offers radius targeting from 10 to 100 miles in increments of 5 miles from any location.)

Google - 68%

Yahoo/Bing - 29%

Ask/AOL - 4% to 5%

Step 3.

Select search engines. There are seven main places people go on the Internet.

A good strategy is to start with either Google, Yahoo and Bing since they offer the bulk of online traffic. If your budget is small, it may be best to focus on a single search engine. Here are contact URLs for the main search engines:

☐ Google http://www.google.com/ads
 ☐ Yahoo: http://searchmarketing.yahoo.cm
 ☐ MSN (Bing): http://advertising.msn.com/
 ☐ AOL: (Accessed through Google)
 ☐ Ask: http://sponsoredlistings.ask.com

Online tutorials will guide you through the process of getting your ad program up and going.

Step 4.

Building your keyword list. Selecting the right keywords is perhaps your most important job in search engine marketing. An excellent place to start is with a Keyword Suggestion Tool. (See below)

If you are running a local campaign, the keyword "carpet cleaner" may not be a good choice for you. Phrases like "Dayton, OH carpet cleaner" or "Chicago water damage" may be better. The more detailed keyword phrases should cost you less and may be more productive, since the searcher is being very specific about what is wanted. Also you are not competing so directly with national marketers. These online resources will help you create a list of keywords for your campaign.

Wordtracker—Free and Paid www.wordtracker.com
Keyword Discovery-www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
Wordpot—https://www.wordpot.com/
Thesaurus.com—Free http://thesaurus.reference.com
Lexical Freenet Thesaurus—Free http://www.lexfn.com

Many campaigns suffer from too few keywords. It can take time to develop a sizable list of attractive keywords, but it's an important step.

Step 5.

Writing your ad.

Sponsored ads are typically text ads. They consist of words only. There are restrictions on the number of words you can use. You are also limited to the number of lines you can use. For example with Google you are allowed 4 lines — a headline, two lines of copy and a line for your URL.

Carpet & Furniture Cleaning

Now 15% Internet Discount Fast Service. Fast drying process. www.YourDenverCarpetCleaner.com

Focus on benefits for the reader. If you want to target those people who are going online to find someone to clean their carpet a variation of the ad above might be appropriate.

The headline identifies your services; the second line makes an offer; the third line adds benefits, and finally there is your URL. You don't have to send searchers directly to the home page of your web site. Instead you can send them to a "landing page" that presents the offer you made in your ad.

With Google Adwords, the headline is limited to 25 characters. Descriptive lines are limited to 35 characters each.

ep 6. Iding on keywords. Consider these tips:
Bid on a large number of good keywords , including less popular choices. You may get good results for less money from less competitive keywords.
It's much simpler to bid the same amount for each of your keywords . However, more popular keywords may be worth a higher bid for the additional traffic.
Bid on commonly misspelled words. (On Yahoo during July, 2005, 104 people searched for "reel estate".) Sometimes no one else is bidding on these words! (There are low cost software packages available online that will help you generate a list of misspelled words. Simply type "misspelled keywords" into a search engine to find them.)
What is a "click" worth to you? If you sell directly online (such as books or CDs), you can track visits and conversion-to-sale rates to determine your return. With a cleaning service it's not so easy since a visitor may explore your site, but not come back for severa days to express interest, email you or call to schedule a service

converting clicks to calls is worth a lot.
. 73

In today's market a visit to a web site that does a good job of

Step 7.

Track results and improve your campaign.

You can't improve what you can't measure. Tracking results on search engine marketing campaigns involves measuring:

Click Through Rate (CTR): the number of people who click on your ad divided by the number of people who were exposed to your ad.

Conversion Rate (CR): Number of people who click to your site and take the action you would like them to take (Such as requesting a quote by e-mail or telephone, calling you to schedule an appointment, or simply signing up for your newsletter or coupon alerts.)

Compare your CTR and CR by various search engines and keywords. You can learn a lot by looking at the keywords people use to arrive at your web site. If ten times as many people arrive at your site by searching the keyword "Find a cheap carpet cleaner" as do from searching the keyword "Carpet cleaner", then you know why most people are coming to your web site.

Your best place to start for help with tracking results is your web site developer or your web site host. They may have a statistical package for you. Some hosts offer this as part of their hosting fee.

Google Analytics can also offer information about your website. Access it by setting up a free Google account and clicking on Analytics from the services menu.

If you don't want bargain hunters, you might avoid bidding on a keyword like, "Find a cheap house cleaner". However, keep in mind, everyone likes a bargain. Up-scale consumers who are perfectly willing to pay for high quality cleaning also enjoy saving a buck.

Your best place to start for help with tracking results is your web site developer or your web site host. They may have a statistical package for you. Some hosts offer this as part of their hosting fee.

Google Analytics can also offer information about your website. Access it by setting up a free Google account and clicking on Analytics from the services menu.

A Pay Per Click Shortcut

A Pay Per Click Shortcut

You can avoid all the headaches of setting up a campaign with BlueRaptor Pay Per Click. BlueRaptor is my co-branded version of the ReachLocal platform. As a ReachLocal marketing partner we offer all the advantage of ReachLocal technology, but without any set up charges, or high management fees. BlueRaptor advantages include:

Professional Campaign Set Up at No Charge
98% Coverage of the Search Engines
Comprehensive Lead Tracking, Including Phone Calls
Names, Phone Numbers & Addresses of Most Leads
Recording of Phone Calls
Campaign Performance Diagnostics (helps us evaluate your online
ad and your web site)
Unlimited Support & Consultation
Free Web Page if You Need It
Low Monthly Management Fee, Affordable for Any Advertiser.
Free Campaign Budget Estimator:
http://www.blueraptor.us/pay_per_click_estimator.php

MarketingZoo.com

Content Resource for Carpet Cleaners and Damage Restoration Businesses
Articles • Infographics • Videos

FREE Distribution to Your Social Pages If You Want It

Twitter • Facebook • Linkedin • Google+ Brand • Tumblr • Delicious • More





Gary R. Arndts is a 25-year veteran marketing consultant who specializes in Internet marketing for carpet cleaners and damage restoration businesses. Recently he has partnered with Jeff Cross, senior editor of Cleanfax magazine, to provide fresh content for carpet cleaners and damage restoration firms. Learn more at www.MarketingZoo.com