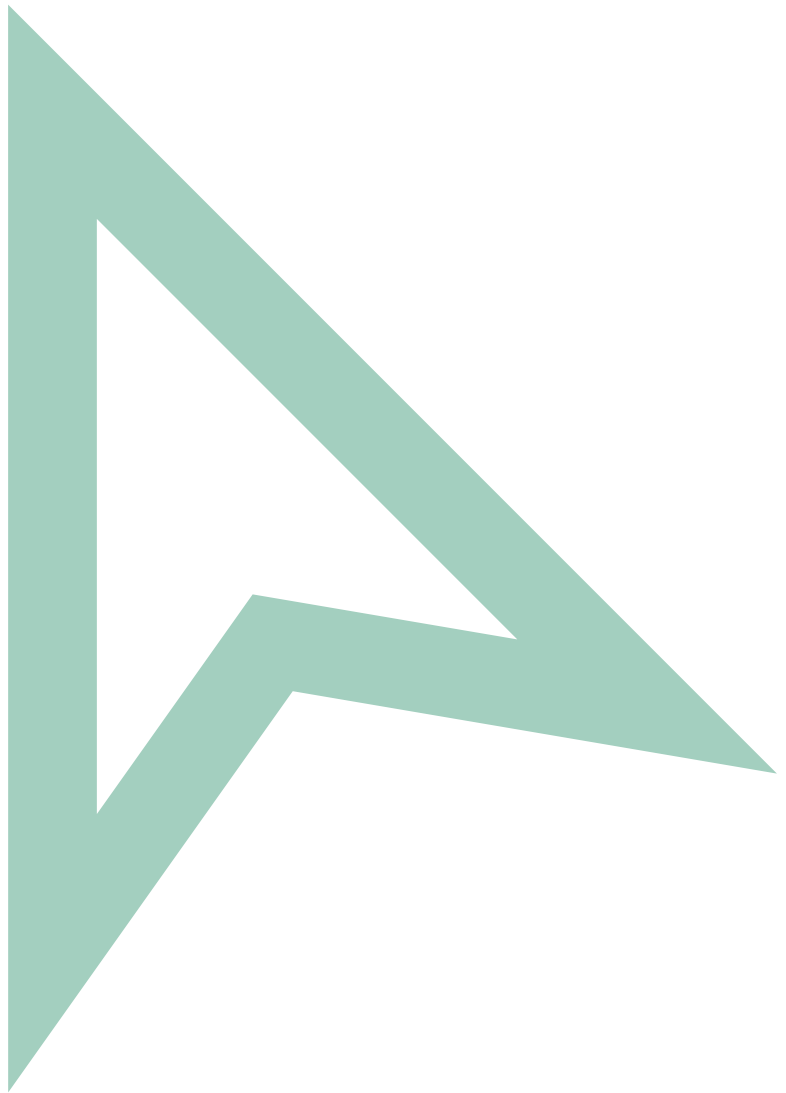


# Generating Qualified Industrial Traffic on the Web



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## Not All Web Traffic is Good Traffic

Where do your sales leads come from? Trade journal advertising? Tradeshows? Word of mouth, perhaps?

What about the Web?

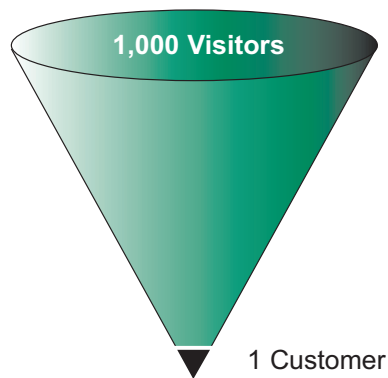
Many companies say their Websites receive hundreds of hits a day. But supplier beware: such numbers are not a measure of Internet marketing success.

From a business perspective, the only thing that matters is how many of your Website visitors become customers. Unless your Website moves them forward in the buying process and gets them to add to your bottom line results, thousands of visitors have the same impact as no visitors at all.

The best way to start converting your Website visitors into customers is to make sure your site is getting the *right traffic* to begin with.

## All Website Visitors are Not Created Equal

As anyone who has taken on even the most basic Website tracking will tell you, “one visitor” does not necessarily equal “one customer.” There is no guaranteed relationship between Website traffic and sales. If your Website traffic isn’t highly qualified, 1,000 visitors can mean as little as one customer, or even no customers.





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Focusing on solutions that help sift viable leads from the online masses can help deliver more qualified traffic to your Website.

What do these online masses look like? Well, there are basically three types of visitors who might come to your Website:

1. Buyers who know exactly what they want, and they're ready to buy it.
2. Buyers who know the general category they're searching in, but need to gather more information in that category.
3. Non-industrial buyers who are looking for the non-industrial equivalent of your products or services. For example, a user who is searching for high heel shoes types "pumps" into the search box, and clicks through to a site that sells industrial pumps.

We probably don't need to tell you that Type 1 is your ideal visitor. They know what they want and – if they find it on your site – they're ready to buy.

### How Industrial Buyers Search

To get Type 1 buyers to your site, you need to understand how industrial buyers search. One of your key challenges, is to ensure that industrial buyers can find your site when they need your products.

According to Forrester Research, 70% of all online purchases start with a search. When industrial buyers search, they typically aren't searching for your company. Rather, they're searching for specific products or services that they need right now.

Industrial buyers tend to be very specific in their search criteria, using 3-7 word phrases that describe particular products or services. For example, buyers who need a centrifugal pump probably won't enter "centrifugal pump" into a search field. More likely, they'll enter "12v centrifugal submersible water pump" or "pumps submersible 1-inch centrifugal groundwater" or "centrifugal pump for high viscosity fluids" – esoteric terms that describe the exact product they need.

The uniqueness and specificity of these search strings clearly shows that the searchers are qualified industrial buyers. Industrial suppliers, therefore, are wise to make sure their Websites are built with industrial buyers in mind.

## Getting Found by Industrial Buyers

To improve their chances of being found by industrial buyers, many suppliers are now investing in search engine optimization (SEO). SEO applies specific methods of modifying and enhancing a Website with the goal of improving its ranking in search engine results.

Some companies hire SEO vendors to help them improve their search engine rankings; others endeavor to optimize their sites on their own.

What can your company do on its own to increase its visibility in search engine results?

### ➤ **Improve Your Website Content**

When you include detailed product information on your Website, you feed the search engine spiders exactly what they crave. This can increase your chances of appearing in the results when specifiers and buyers are searching for your products and services.

### ➤ **Increase Your Link Popularity**

For many search engines – Google being the foremost example – link popularity is another key determinant of a site's ranking. Search engine spiders follow links from site to site throughout the Web. If your site has a large number of links coming into it, the search engines are more likely to find it and include it in their search indexes. The only way to improve your link popularity is by fostering partnerships and reciprocal linking with other Websites related to your business.

If you opt to tackle SEO on your own, you should be aware that there are a host of factors beyond content and link popularity that search engines consider when ranking the results of a user's search. These include:

- Title tags
- Header tags
- Keyword density
- Directory structure
- Bold text
- URLs
- Meta data
- Google PageRank
- "Off Page Criteria"
- Link relevance

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Even if you or your SEO vendor fully understands all of these factors, you have little control over your actual ranking in search engine results. Search engines constantly change their ranking rules without advance notice, making SEO a risky proposition.

So what's an industrial supplier to do?

For starters, remind yourself of the distinction between generating "traffic" and generating "qualified traffic." Then make sure your Website is accessible from the places that qualified industrial buyers are most likely to search.

### Where Qualified Industrial Buyers Naturally Go

Search engines are ideal for Web users researching general topics, and they very effectively return relevant results for general queries.

But business-to-business users – industrial buyers and specifiers, for example – are generally looking for the most relevant result for a specific industrial query.

Because of the specificity of their needs and of their search queries, industrial specifiers and buyers often skip the search engines in favor of "destination sites" – specific supplier Websites or industrial search sites such as ThomasNet.com.

The very act of coming to an industrial search site such as ThomasNet.com qualifies Web users as part of the industrial audience, which makes them more valuable to an industrial supplier than Web users who use general search engines. Over 48% of Thomas sites' usage comes directly to Thomas URLs – bypassing the general search engines.<sup>1</sup>

As such, suppliers interested in driving qualified traffic to their sites should secure listings on the most respected industrial directories.

Even then, caution is called for. Some online industrial directories perform very well on generic search terms (much as search engines do), but fail to deliver on the highly specific search terms engineers and other technically inclined industrial specifiers like to use.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on *Internet Traffic Reports for ThomasRegister.com/ThomasRegional.com*, 2003

This is where ThomasNet.com sets itself apart. The site is a hybrid of a search engine and an online directory built based on extensive research and testing of industrial buyer behavior.

Users can search ThomasNet.com by typing their detailed search strings into a prominent search box on the home page. Users also have the option of searching geographically. They can search nationally or by state/areas of Canada, and can further narrow their search according to a certain number of miles from a zip code. According to SearchEngineWatch.com, 44% of Web users are performing more local searches than they were a year ago.<sup>2</sup>

The following comments were made about ThomasNet.com in a February 2004 user study conducted by Experient, a Web strategy consulting firm:

- “Great site for getting industrial product information.”
- “I found this site much better than Google at finding specific industrial companies.”
- “It was easy to find what I wanted fast.”
- “It gave me all the information I was looking for and more.”
- “It gave precise results from the region I specified.”

If you're serious about generating qualified sales traffic for your company, ThomasNet.com has the industrial traffic you need to grow your business.

For more information on how ThomasNet.com can help you generate qualified traffic on the Web, go to [www.ThomasNet.com](http://www.ThomasNet.com) or call 1-800-TR-WORKS

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<sup>2</sup>SearchEngineWatch.com, February 2004

