

# **“Webifying” your Business for the Martial Arts Industry**

## **By Bob Hubbard**

Ok, so you have a website. It's live, it's open for business but, now what do you do? One of the hardest things about having a website, is always getting it noticed and used. You will hear people talking about “search engines” and “directories” and a ton of geeky jargon, but what can you do to make your site more visible and get more visitors? Several things in fact, that don't require a PHD in computers to understand or do.

One of the fallacies is that a search engine listing is all you need. Nothing could be further from the truth. According to GoDaddy (one of the leading domain name registrars) over a million new web sites are registered every day! Google, the leading Internet search site, currently indexes billions of web pages. Billions! Obviously, you are going to need more than just a search engine listing.

So, what do you do?

Simple. You do what has always worked. You tell everyone, and let word of mouth be your best salesman.

### **1: People need to know your site exists in order to go there.**

When was the last time you went someplace you didn't know about? Almost never, right? The web is the same way. People almost always go where they plan to go. Making people aware that you exist is a main part of getting noticed and visited.

So, how do you do this?

- Put your website on everything going out of your business. Put it on receipts, invoices, letterhead, business cards, boxes, class handouts, flyers, etc. If it leaves your business at any time, make sure there is a website address on it.
- Place it prominently in your windows. Remember, your window works 24/7/365 for you. Make sure that you have 3 key pieces of information on there: Your name, your phone number and your website.
- Have a custom bumper sticker made for your vehicle that lists your website. You can also have a local vinyl or sign company do some work for you that advertises your business on your vehicle. Be certain to include the web site! Your vehicle spends a lot of time in parking lots. Let it be a mobile billboard for your business and work for you.
- If you sell or give away “branded” merchandise (sports bottles or towels for example), have the website included.
- All advertisements that you run must include your website address.
- Make sure that all of your students, parents and instructors know about the site. Remind them regularly about it.

### **2: People need a Reason to go there.**

Knowing you have a site is not enough. People need to be told to go there, and they need to know why.

- When talking to a prospect on the phone, don't just tell them about the classes. Tell them that “and information can be found on our website xxx.com.” or “Our full class schedule is always available on our website, xxx.com”. If you have a web coupon, be sure to mention it as well. Everyone likes to save a buck, and pointing that out will almost guarantee that they will take a look at the site, and hopefully, also pass the address on to someone else.

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- When talking to your students, parents and instructors, be sure to mention that class schedules, upcoming events, school news, and whatever other areas of interest you have there exist, and encourage them to check regularly. Ask your students to link to the school site from their web pages. When doing “Tell a Friend” promotions, be sure to suggest that they also tell them about the website. Update your site regularly, and announce the updates at every class for a week after the updates are done. “Our class schedule on the website has been updated. You can print a copy for your own use right from there.”
- Update your site regularly, and let everyone know about it. Students, parents and instructors all should be checking the site out regularly. Encourage feedback on the site and ask your students and instructors for suggestions on improvements. This involves them in the process more, and makes them feel good. Updates are especially effective if done after an event, and photos and reviews are included. Most people love seeing themselves, and the “Hey everyone, I’m on my schools website working with Master Z” can get you great word of mouth promotion for your site.

### **3: You need to do some promotion of the site as well.**

When talking to a vendor, inquire if they do link exchanges. A link exchange is where you put their banner (a small image) and a link to them on their website, in exchange for them doing the same for you. These are good ways to help boost your visibility and rankings on the search engines.

- When you go to other events or seminars, ask if you can bring flyers or other handouts to help promote your school. Many will say yes. Even if they say no, be sure to bring several business cards with the address on them with you. This way, you can do some personal networking and exchange cards.
- When talking to key people in your art (your instructor, the guest instructor of the seminar, etc), find out if they have a website, and would be interested in a link exchange as well. Many people are very happy to do so.
- Make certain that all your newspaper, magazine, phonebook, radio and TV advertisements mention your website.
- When you do trade shows, you want your website address visible and prominent. Many people today will write a website down before they write the phone number.
- If you frequent web forums and mailing lists, most will allow you to include a small block of text, often called a “signature” in your postings. Do so, and make sure that, if allowed, you include your website.
- Most email programs also allow you to include a signature. Add one to all outgoing messages.

### **Conclusion**

Having a successful website is a lot of work. Gone are the days where you can just put it up, list it on a search engine, and watch traffic roll in. Each day, over a million new sites go up. That’s a big ocean in which to shine, but, with the proper promotion, you can start a motion that builds to a popular and successful web presence. All it takes is some old fashioned promotion.

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