

How Productive is Your Website?

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In 1990, with lightning speed, the means for finding information for the general public went from the library to the internet. The internet started by linking universities and quickly spread to its use by the public. Hence came the vernacular “Google it”. So when someone wants information about alpacas they will “google it”. The words they choose to seek information will depend on many variables; however the results you want is for that person to link to your website. The only way to do that is either pay a significant amount of money each year to a web optimization service or to do it yourself.

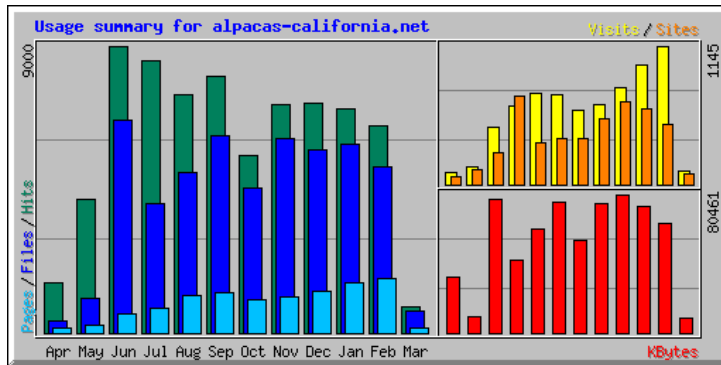
Most alpaca literature indicates the most common means of generating sales for an alpaca business today is through web searches. A majority of alpaca are purchased over the internet, sight unseen. If you are not using the web for generating sales you will be missing out on the most important aspect of the business, generating revenue. Yet many owners’ websites are years out of date or have little information that reflects current prices and current herd information.

I think it is safe to say that if you are looking to buy an alpaca and you have a certain criteria for the purchase, such as histogram results, you will choose the website that lists those criteria. If you’re a customer and you link to two different sites, one is outdated with limited information and the other site is aesthetic, current and informative, it doesn’t take a genius to figure out which one the customer will choose to do business. I have even seen websites that advertise their alpacas and have no pictures of the animals. Think of your website like a store, when the customer enters what do they see and how hard are it to find what they are seeking.

We are lucky to have so many public sites where we can list our alpacas. The down side is we can spend hundreds of hours keeping the many websites updated, not to mention spending significant amounts of money paying for these web site providers. With this in mind your business may be better served in applying your money and time on your own website.

But back to our initial topic, and that is how to get people to your website without having to pay for it. First and foremost get your website current. Provide enough web links on your site and any free optimization tools to get traffic to the site. Some very useful free services are provided by Google Webmaster Tools website. Other ways to get the name of your business out into the internet is through Google Places, web Superyellowpages, Yelp.com, and many more advertising sites that are free.

Internet browser companies such as Yahoo have web crawlers that pick up data from millions of websites to gather information for their search engines. The more crawlers you have viewing your site, the more likely your website will come up in a general search. All you need to do is google “google search engine submission” and it will ask for your URL and when provided will



building companies also offer optimizing services. But if you don't optimize your website it will never come up in a search unless the internet user types in your exact email address.

begin to crawl your site on a regular basis. Submissions can be given to all the better known search engines.

If this is too much computer knowledge for you to handle, there are untold numbers of internet companies that can do it for you for a fee. Most website hosting companies and web

It's not enough to just have your website come up in a google search, but you will need to track how much traffic your site is generating. The above graph is from Colusa Riverside Alpacas website hosting statistics, which are generated daily. Our site has gone from less than 100 visits a month to over 1000 a month in one year. Site "visits" is by far the most important measure of website visibility, "visits" represent people finding and looking at your website. Google will also provide monthly statistics for your site when you use Google's free web optimizing tools. You should at some point evaluate the statistics to determine if your site is growing in site visits. If this is not happening more optimization may be needed. If you add a Blog on your website you can use Google and Amazon to advertise on your Blog page which further increases the web exposure to your site.

The personal website is a necessary evil for the alpaca owner, and I believe you would agree it should not be the only means by which we generate internet interest in our business. Public sites are great as additional internet business sites, but I do not believe they should be your only website. When looking for an animal I use public sites to find what I want, then link to the listed personal website for more information. I don't believe today I would buy from a business that does not have a website. You may need to be selective in the number of public sites you list your animals. It is better to have two complete up to date listing on public websites than 5 listings that are all incomplete and or out of date. It is impractical to keep up all those sites if you have a large herd of animals. I would suggest ARI's new ARIlister only because it will enable publishing of certificates, histograms and EPDs without having to upload multiple files which are some of the more tedious web upkeep.

Business websites reflect the health and well being of our industry. It is the most powerful source for dissemination of information on our alpacas from which public interest can be generated. Someone seeing an interesting website today may be your customer tomorrow, if not your customer, someone's customer. As alpaca business owners and breeders we all have a responsibility to promote the industry in a professional manner. Anything less will harm the industry. We all benefit when the industry has a quality web presence.