



New Online Business Ad Solutions

Q: I have started an online web design school and I thought I had my market under control but I seem to be out in left field a bit and was wanting to get some more opinions.

The school teaches all of the skills needed to become a successful freelance web designer. My target audience is 18-30 year olds who have possibly been in their current job for awhile now and realize that it isn't what they dreamed of and are looking for a career change.

Can you give me some ideas on how to advertise to a group such as this?

A: Think about your current students. If they're working in a Web design environment, they probably have friends and co-workers in the same situation as they are. Offer your current and new students a chance to save money by a refer-a-friend program. Even 10 percent or \$10 dollars is an incentive for a student to mention your services to someone else. If you could give a kickback of \$20, that would be ideal! Once the new person signs up, you can pass the bonus on to the referrer.

Offer specials on your site as well. Maybe someone can get \$20 off or a free T-shirt if they sign up for your courses by the 20th.

Web sites such as cafepress.com offer you the chance to set your own prices, upload your logo and they'll make everything from a T-shirt to mouse pad. You could create a store for your site or simply purchase the T-shirt at cafepress' price. Then have it shipped directly to your new student.

I'm glad to see you have a newsletter on your site. Great!

Since it looks like you just began sending out an e-zine, I'd wait on displaying an archive. I'd suggest taking down the dates for now and just displaying your current issue. Otherwise, visitors to your site may think you just started your business and may not trust that you'll be around. People are reluctant to invest in anything new. They're too scared it's a "fly-by-night" venture. Removing your archive for the time being allows you to build a solid archive in a few months without any gaps or spaces.

Are you currently offering your freelance Web design services to others? Change your promotional materials and personal Web site to include your course duties. Also, advertise your services as a freelance Web designer (most are free) on Web sites like Ants.com, Guru.com, Monster.com, etc.

You can nab some freelance work but you'd also include a link to your Web design school in your bio and experience information. The purpose for this action is that many individuals take a look at a person's

experience because they're wanting to break away. Just like you did. They'll see that you teach an online Web design school and visit your site.

Search engine placement is an art in itself. But it doesn't hurt to submit your pages. Try a Web site like ineedhits.com. The company offers a free submission program but also has paid ones as well.

Make sure your META tags contain strong keywords. You'll be delightfully surprised when you type in a word and your site pops up in the top 10 of search engine results! It's a long, slow process, though, so don't expect immediate results.

A direct mail campaign is a low cost, highly effective advertising medium. There are plenty of targeted mailing lists you can purchase. Send out your info through the mail. You can get a lot in an envelope for just 34 cents.

Just send out some information about your Web design school. Most people think of direct mail as a fancy brochure and a slick-looking envelope. You can simply send out a sales letter and a response card. The response card would contain all of the info someone needs to request more information.