

Support sites



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*"First say to yourself what you would be;
and then do what you have to do."*

Epictetus

Satellite sites

So we know that links pointing to your site don't just benefit you when somebody clicks on them. They also benefit your sites status or page rank. When a search engine indexes a site that links to you. Provided it is not a disapproved site like a link farm then it benefits your site. If the site has content that is highly relevant to your site and is ranked well itself then it will benefit your store even more.

The problem of course is finding such a site and getting them to link to you!? So why don't you make some yourself? You already know how to do it.

- Buy a domain name.
- Choose a template.
- Create some content. (3-4 pages)
- Make a folder in your web space and upload new site.
- Point new domain name at new folder.
- Register new site with the search engines.
- Repeat the process as many times as you like.

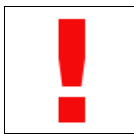
Quote from SEO guru Alan Bleiweiss
www.heydudewheresmysite.com

"I'm happy to say that as a result of my multi-site strategy, within just a short order, my clients were showing up on the first page of Google for a few of their most valued phrases. In fact, to this day, we still own the #1 and #2 positions for those same exact phrases. Even though all the while, the competition has not let up on their efforts.

Since then, we've also gotten up there for several other important phrases. And a number of other clients in different industries and markets have come along where I've been able to apply and build on those same key concepts."

A country specific domain name is typically under £2 a year! Why not splash out on 4 or 5 domains. You can experiment with different templates and content. Remember some guidelines when creating your satellite sites.

- Make the content on each completely different (don't just copy and paste content).
- Make a couple of quality links from each page to appropriate pages on your store.
- Make the links from good keyword phrases and refer back to the chapter on optimising your content for humans and search engines.
- Choose keyword rich domain names(don't worry about brand)Key word is king here.



I have read on a reputable SEO site that Google frowns, even punishes this practice. So why am I suggesting it? I have been doing this for a few years now and can notice only benefits. As an example for one particular search I appeared 4 times (1 store and 3 satellite sites) on page 1 of Google. Just make sure that the content on the satellite sites is genuinely unique and I think it will be of benefit. If you read what Google themselves say, they simply point out that if you have similar or identical content across multiple sites, it is OK but they will decide which content is ranked and where. Seems fair? You decide.

How To Start a forum

A forum in case you have not come across one before is a web site (or part of one) where you, as the owner can create topics of conversation and invite people to join in and comment.

Think about your business, it's products and customers and try to come up with the topics of conversation that your customers would benefit from. How to use your products, what's new in your industry. Having a vibrant community linked to your store can reap huge rewards. You can obviously advertise and link to your store from your forum. You can showcase products and offers as well as getting invaluable feedback on your service.

If you have any doubts about how a forum can benefit your store then have a look at this forum that serves the audio visual enthusiast.

<http://www.avforums.com/forums/index.php>

Did you see the statistics at the bottom of the page? Users currently on line, current members etc.?

Now it's probably obvious that the avforums owners have spent a lot of time and effort building such a remarkable community. However the installation and set up of a high quality forum (not dissimilar) from the example takes around 30 minutes and is free! Here is how to do it.

Visit www.businessdreams.net. Click on **Resources** then **Carts & CMS**. Download PHP Bulletin Board. Unzip it and then read on.

Upload the folder phpBB3 from the download to your 1&1 web space via ftp. Put it in the main top level folder.

To start the installation type in:-

<http://www.yourdomain.whatever/phpBB3>.

This will begin the installation. Read the introduction and click **install**.

You will now see a list of fairly technical requirements. Don't worry about this if you got the 1&1 hosting package I recommended then you have everything you need.

Log in to your 1&1 control panel and click on **mysql administration**. You can now see all the name, user name and password you need to copy and paste into the phpBB3 installation program. Do so and make sure that in the '*Prefix for tables in database*' it reads, 'phpbb_'. When this is done click **proceed to next step**.

Fill out the administrator details (that's you). Now all the fields are pretty straight forward but it is worth pointing out that your user name will be an actual member of the forum. So firstly you might want to consider something you are comfortable with being public and secondly it is even more important than normal to make the password super secure because anyone trying to hack or disrupt your forum will of course already know the user name.

Don't worry about the advanced settings right now continue to finish the installation. That's it you have done it. You can visit your new forum by typing <http://www.example.com/phpBB3> and you can log in to your administrator control panel and begin to set up the topics of conversation for your forum. Don't forget to link to the forum from your main site and perhaps your satellite sites as well.

Visit <http://www.phpbb.com/support/tutorials/3.0/> for some really video tutorials.

Blogging

You will certainly have heard about blogs and probably have read some as well. Here are the basics in case you are unaware of them. Simply put a blog is a web site or part of a web site. The word blog comes from two words web and log. A blog therefore is a chronological account of events or opinions published on the web.

So how could a blog benefit you? You can start a blog, write to it on a regular basis about, you, your, shop, your business, your industry or anything related to any or all of those things. You could

do this on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

This would attract the search engines and hopefully anybody interested in such things. They could then be informed or perhaps entertained by your blog. Your blog could then refer your readership to specific products, or satellite sites or just your store in general.

1&1 offer a blog as part of your business package. Why not experiment with it and see what you think? What I am going to recommend you do first however is start a free blog, with a free domain name with Google. Here is how to do it.

Go to www.blogspot.com. Click on **Create blog now** and fill out the form. Once you have finished you will receive an email asking you to verify your email address. Do so and then read on for how to get your blog started.

Log into your blogger account if you haven't already. Click on **create a blog**. Choose a title and an URL. Notice that your URL will be appended by [.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com) to make your domain name. Use the same rules as before for choosing a domain name. Enter the word verification and click **continue**.

You can now select from a range of template styles. Do so and click **continue** again. Now as suggested Start Blogging!

You don't actually have to do anything accept type your log entries. Choose a title, type your entry and click **publish post**. Use the buttons above where you type to add pictures or format your text, including links to your store etc. I would suggest doing a few posts before moving on to customise your blog. How easy was that?

Now Blogger has tonnes of features, some of them quite technical and advanced. It would be possible to write a guide bigger than this one just about Blogger. Here is an introduction to some of the most common features you might want to use. I suggest you experiment with these and other features.



1) Layout

Here you can 'drag and drop' page elements (bits of the blog) around the layout. You can also click on 'add page element' and choose from a raft of possible features to add to your blog. Including Reader Poll, link lists, advertising, picture slide show, news ,video and MUCH more. There are loads of possibilities and you can try most of them out with a few clicks. I recommend that you do to create a great blog for your store.

2) Moderate Comments

Visit this link quite soon after setting up your blog to create the rules you are comfortable with for allowing (or not) people to comment on your blog. You also use this link to review, remove or approve any comments people make.

3) Edit Posts

See a list of all your posts and make changes, add to or delete them.

Blogger Summary

I cannot stress enough how basic my introduction has been. Partly because of space constraints in the guide and partly because Blogger is so well documented anyway. It really is possible to create a stunning, informative and popular blog without any technical knowledge. If you take the time to explore the benefits and features of Blogger you can reap the reward of extra exposure and custom for your store.

