

# 16 Secret Sources for Interactive Content that Turn Your Health Site into a Traffic Magnet

By Kevin Richardson

16 Secret Sources for Interactive Content that Turn Your Health Site into a Traffic Magnet

Kevin Richardson  
krichardson@medrocket.com

MedRocket <http://www.medrocket.com>

If you're looking for new ways to increase traffic to your Web site, then adding some "sticky" interactive content might be just what the doctor ordered. Sticky content refers to Web site features that encourage visitors to stay longer on your site.

The bottom line is, adding interactive content to your Web site can have a powerful impact on the success of your site. It creates a much richer user experience and helps attract new visitors.

It's no secret that this type of content also creates a viral aspect to your Web site as visitors spread the word about the "cool tool" or feature.

Why is this a good thing? Because it multiplies your opportunities to build business relationships, increase your opt-in e-mail lists, and sell more products and services.

And isn't that what you're really looking for?

-----  
Content that's Easy-to-Use, Fun, and Free!  
-----

Even if you don't have a high-tech guru on your payroll who can whip-up these magnetic interactive masterpieces in-house, fear not. There are many sources for ready-made interactive content on the Web.

Some are hosted remotely, some you'll have to install yourself. Most are extremely easy to incorporate into the look and feel of your Web site. And, as always, the best part is that most are absolutely FREE.

Now let's look at 16 types of interactive content for your health site, complete with the how-to details for getting them and putting them to use.

1. News Headlines

Provide up to the minute news headlines on your Web page and never worry about updating the news. Moreover.com provides this free service to non-profit Web sites. Using the Moreover Wizard, it's a snap to pick the news you want, design the look of the headline box, and copy the code for your Web page.

For health news, select the Lifestyle category and the Consumer Health News subcategory. Under the Science category, you'll find a selection of medical news subcategories. See Moreover at <http://w.moreover.com/webmaster/> .

## 2. Interactive Health Tutorials

Animated graphics and audio built in to these interactive health tutorials explain dozens of treatment procedures or health conditions. These health education tutorials are featured on the MedlinePlus site, however they are licensed from the Patient Education Institute.

This means that you'll have to link to the content on MedlinePlus, and not directly to the resources on the Patient Education Institute site. You also cannot frame this content within your own site -- so open it in a new window. The tutorials require Flash, which nearly everyone already has installed it seems.

To use it, just link to the appropriate Medline Plus tutorial page and have it open in a new, properly-sized browser window. For example, the arrhythmias tutorial is at:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/arrhythmias.html>

See the full list of tutorials at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html>

## 3. Baby Due Date and Fetal Age Estimator

Incorporate MedRocket's free "Baby Due Date and Fetal Age Estimator" on your site. This Shockwave-based calculator allows Web site visitors to estimate both their birth due date and their baby's fetal age. All they have to do is use some simple arrow buttons interactively enter the start date of the last period prior to becoming pregnant. It's fun for patients to see how close this calculator comes to their doctor's assessment.

Get the complete installation instructions and try out the calculator at:

[http://www.medrocket.com/tools/duedate\\_calculator\\_install.html](http://www.medrocket.com/tools/duedate_calculator_install.html)

## 4. Web Form to eMail Scripts

The form-to-email script is the workhorse of CGI scripts on a Web site. They form the basis for limitless applications, from gathering contact information, to newsletter subscription, automated replies, to a simple form of autoresponder delivering health information. These scripts can accomplish a tremendous amount of work on your Web site, without any intervention on your part.

My favorite Web form to email gateway is called Alien Form 2. It uses simple templates to format all aspects of its output- you are in full control over everything it outputs. It can write directly to files, allowing you to log every time the form is submitted, or to store order details securely on the server. All this and more, and it's 100% free!

Get it at: <http://cgi.tj/scripts/alienform/>

Another very popular script is FormMail from Matt's Script Archive. FormMail is a generic Web form to e-mail gateway, which has many formatting and operational options, most of which can be specified through the form, meaning you don't need any programming knowledge or multiple scripts for multiple forms.

Get it at: <http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/formmail.shtml>

## 5. Polls and Surveys

Start tracking the opinions of your visitors by adding a custom Web poll to your site. Change the poll each week and invite people to come back. Use one of the form-to-email scripts to let them sign up for an e-mail alert each time you post a new poll!

These polling scripts are a powerful way to add interactivity to your site. What's more, there are many sources for these free and low-cost traffic drivers. Some services host the programming part of the poll on their server, so you just have to add a few lines of HTML code to your page.

Check out Sparklit Web Polls at <http://www.sparklit.com/> , FreePolls.com at <http://freepolls.com/index.html> , and Bravenet Minipoll at <http://www.bravenet.com/samples/minipoll.php> .

## 6. Discussion Forums

Bulletin Board Systems or Discussion Forums have been a popular way to create an online community way before the Web became so popular. People love to ask questions, share ideas, and comment on others' opinions.

Setting up a forum on your site can be a real traffic generator if you promote it well. There are many BBS packages out there. Two well-known ones are vBulletin <http://www.vbulletin.com/> and Discus <http://www.discusware.com/> .

Each has its strengths. MedRocket uses the Discus package on our forum at <http://www.medrocket.com/discus> . Visit the sites and see what you think. Some systems offer a scaled-down freeware version as well as reasonably priced pro versions.

If that's not enough choices, then check out nearly 100 others listed in The CGI Resource Index at <http://www.cgi-resources.com/> .

## 7. Javascript Health Calculators

If you don't want to deal with installing CGI scripts, then maybe some of these Javascript -driven health calculators will do the trick. You'll find them all at JavascriptSource <http://javascript.internet.com/calculators/> .

### Wind Chill Calculator

<http://javascript.internet.com/calculators/wind-chill.html>

Wind Chill is a mysterious and often misunderstood phenomenon. This script describes what the wind chill factor really is and offers a form to calculate the wind chill factor when given the air temperature and wind speed.

### Calorie Calculator

<http://javascript.internet.com/calculators/calories.html>

JavaScript can help you figure how many calories you have burned.

Body Mass Index

<http://javascript.internet.com/calculators/body-mass-index.html>

Just enter your height and your weight, and JavaScript will figure out your Body Mass Index. This index classifies you into one of several categories, from underweight to desirable to obese.

Blood Alcohol Calculator

<http://javascript.internet.com/calculators/bac.html>

Calculates an individual's blood alcohol content based on the quantity of beverages consumed, the alcohol percentage in each drink, the person's weight, and the time spent consuming the drink.

## 8. Drug Information

Give your visitors access to drug information for more than 9,000 prescription and over-the-counter medications provided by the United States Pharmacopeia (USP). Just link to the site at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html> and open it in a new browser window.

## 9. Remotely Hosted Health Calculators

The dozens of remotely hosted health calculators created by DrKoop.com are some of my all-time favorites. View the calculators in action on DrKoop.com at <http://www.drkoop.com/tools/calculator/index.asp> . Sadly, the information on how to implement these calculators has disappeared from Drkoop.com.

So, I'll have to share the secret with you on how you can still use these wonders on your own site. Just for you... I've put together directions, HTML code, and the DrKoop.com calculator button graphics into a package that you can download. Get it here:

[http://www.medrocket.com/tools/drkoop\\_calculators.zip](http://www.medrocket.com/tools/drkoop_calculators.zip) .

## 10. MedLine Plus Search

Offer your visitors the ability to search MEDLINEplus right from your Web site. It's a goldmine of good health information from the world's largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine. There is no advertising on this site, nor does MEDLINEplus endorse any company or product.

For complete instructions on how to place the search box on your site and open the results in a new window, get the code at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/linking.html>

You must clearly identify the search box as belonging to MEDLINEplus; display the search results in their own window, not in a frame; and link the word MEDLINEplus or the graphic to the MEDLINEplus home page, <http://medlineplus.gov> .

## 11. Recommend-it Scripts

Don't you want visitors to tell all their friends and family about your great health site? Then give them an easy way to do it using a "recommend it" CGI script. Once it's installed, a visitor can click on the link to open a special form. They'll enter their name, email and the information for their

friends. The script will send an email to their friend with the Web address for your site and any other descriptive information you desire.

Two free "recommend it" scripts are: BirdCast at <http://www.bignosebird.com/> , and the Master Recommend script at <http://willmaster.com/master/recommend/index.shtml> .

## 12. Digital Postcards or Greeting Cards

You've sent or received a digital postcard before, right? C'mon. They're fun to use. You can have your own digital postcard system on your Web site that features cards of your own design in addition to others. Most of the greeting card systems require that the recipient visit your Web site to retrieve the cards. So it's a traffic magnet.

There are two ways to do this: use a service that hosts the system on their server, or install a postcard script on your own server and customize it to your heart's content.

For a free, remotely hosted service, look at All Yours <http://www.all-yours.net/> . They also have a free CGI script you can install on your site. Another free script is the Virtual Greeting Card Server Script at bignosebird.com <http://www.bignosebird.com/> . Read about others at The CGI Resource Index at <http://www.cgi-resources.com/> .

## 13. Allergy Alert

Allergies got you down? Increase traffic to your Web site by adding a free Allergy Alert from Pollen.com <http://pollen.com/Pollen.com.asp> . The little search box that you add to your site allows visitors to enter any ZIP code in the continental US and see the current allergy report for the day. Click on the Allergy Alert graphic in the left column.

## 14. Clinical Trials Search

Provide patients, family members, and others with easy and free access to information on clinical studies for a wide range of diseases and conditions. You'll be linking directly to the ClinicalTrials.gov site <http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov> . Open the results in a new browser window so they're not transported away from your site.

You can also formulate specific search requests, such as <http://clinicaltrials.gov/search/condition=diabetes> for information on diabetes studies. Detailed instructions on creating link search requests can be found at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/services/ctlink.html> .

## 15. Baby Name Generator

A very cool Baby Name Generator CGI script is available for free from OnlineArts. The script provides site visitors to immediate access to more than 16,000 baby names. They can search these names by meaning, origin, sex, beginning letters or ending letters. The baby names database includes a subset of the Dogwood Compendium of Names -- the largest baby name database in the world.

Try it out and download it at: <http://www.onlinearts.net/showroom/babynames/> . You'll also find

several dozen other extremely useful scripts for adding interactivity to your site. And they're all free. Quiz-makers, pregnancy planner, postcard script, news scripts, and more. Be sure to check this one out.

## 16. Make Your Own Quizzes

Create and deliver your own quizzes and assessments by installing a quiz CGI script. Many are available. See the Quiz Mill script at Online Arts <http://www.onlinearts.net/showroom/quizmill/> . It allows you to easily create online quizzes and tests that use any combination of multiple choice, multiple select, and short answer questions.

Several dozen others are available at The CGI Resource Index <http://cgi.resourceindex.com/> .

-----  
Bonus Resources:  
-----

When you want to design your own interactive creations, or modify some of the ready-made versions already mentioned, you can find an awesome array of supplemental health information at healthfinder.gov and other Federal Gov't sources <http://www.healthfinder.gov/> . Visit the online checkups area in the Health Library for ideas on quizzes and online risk assessments.

Also worth a look is the NIH Health Information Index at <http://www.nih.gov/health/InformationIndex/HealthIndex/Pubincov.htm> .

Click on the link next to the health topic to go to the Home page of the Institute that researches it.

Need images of viruses or whatever for your Web site? Search for public domain photos from PHIL -- the Public Health Image Library, hosted by the Centers for Disease Control <http://phil.cdc.gov/Phil/default.asp> . You'll find some fascinating and obscure photos in this collection.

Copyright © 2002, MedRocket, Inc.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kevin Richardson is a healthcare marketing consultant, executive coach, and writer who provides fresh perspectives and expertise about online healthcare marketing.

Sign up for his FREE "MedRocket Ezine" newsletter and discover how to profitably attract and serve healthcare consumers online. Subscribe at: <http://www.medrocket.com/>

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)