

# Congratulations! You've Gotten Visitors to your Site! Now, can they find what they're looking for?

By Robin Nobles

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As search engine marketers, we spend an enormous amount of time trying to get targeted traffic to our site. But, once those visitors get to our site, can they find what they're looking for? If not, guess what? We've lost a customer.

Think about it this way. How many times have you found a site through a major search engine or directory, only to visit the site and not be able to find what you're looking for anywhere on the site? What do you do next? You go back to the search engine and click on the next site. That site has lost a customer: you.

Helping your visitors find what they're looking for on your site can cover a great many areas, such as navigation, user interface issues, and the lack of a clear "call to action."

But one way around many of those issues is to offer an onsite search engine, so that once visitors hit your site, they can easily find exactly what they're looking for.

The really neat thing about onsite search engines is that many of them are FREE. Yes, you read right: free. Of course, that also means that you may have ads in your search results, which may or may not present problems for you. However, even if you choose to purchase an onsite engine, the cost is generally not expensive.

What should you look for in an onsite search engine?

\* Good customer support. If you begin to have problems with the

engine, you want to be able to get help in fixing it.

\* Reports that let you know what people are searching for once they reach your site. Just think of the GOLD this will tell you! If you don't have a page that covers a particular topic, make one!

\* Ease in setting up the engine. This may or may not be an issue to you, but if you're like me, you want something that is simple to set up and maintain.

\* An extensive "help" section at the site that will walk you through setting up the engine and answer any questions you might have.

\* The ability to keep the engine out of certain areas of your site that you don't want spidered and available through the search, such as employee areas, password-protected member areas, etc.

\* The ability to spider password-protected areas so that your member areas can have their own onsite search.

\* The ability to customize search results pages.

\* The capability to request re-indexing whenever you update the site, or even to schedule re-indexing on a regular basis.

In my training material and resource library at the Academy, I had an onsite search engine for a long time. Then, the company folded. Until recently, I hadn't set up another onsite engine, because the one onsite engine that I really wanted to use didn't index password-protected areas. So, I "patiently" waited for the onsite engine, FreeFind, to add this to their list of features. When they recently did, I jumped on it, and now both of my online training programs have excellent onsite search engines through FreeFind (<http://www.freefind.com>).

But why did FreeFind stand out among the others, and why was it so important to me to wait until they could index password-protected areas? FreeFind offers some features that I couldn't find on other onsite search engines, features that would help me tremendously with my work.

For example:

\* FreeFind will automatically create a What's New page, after you've any changes to the site. Just think of how much help that will be for me with my training material? Between my two programs (beginning and advanced), I have over 1000 resource pages to update every single month, and I've been creating the "What's New" page by hand. Now, it's automatically created for me.

\* FreeFind is the only onsite search engine that enables your visitors to find the page they're looking for, then keeps an eye on it for any changes. Their ChangeDetection (tm) monitoring system lets your users monitor a page for content changes, then notifies them when the page is changed. If you set up this engine on your own site, it will build traffic by turning casual, one-time visitors into repeat and loyal visitors who return again and again to look at changes made to the page that are of particular interest to them.

\* FreeFind will automatically create a Site Map of your site. This Site Map is an alphabetical listing of the pages on your site. The Site Map will be even more valuable to you if you have a regular, non-password protected site, because it will give the Web search engines a page of links to spider.

\* FreeFind will search across several domains. So, if your company has numerous domains, your onsite search engine will cover each of those domains, without having to set up separate engines.

## In Conclusion

Look closely at your site. Is it time to add an onsite search engine? Is it time to make sure visitors can find exactly what they're looking for when they land on your site? Are you losing customers who get lost and can't find what they want?

FreeFind (<http://www.freefind.com>) is an excellent onsite search engine that met my exact needs. However, to be fair, and because this article isn't meant to be an advertisement for FreeFind, here are some other onsite engines that you may want to consider. Look closely at their features, and find the one that works best for you.

## Other Onsite Search Engines

Atomz: <http://www.atomz.com>

PicoSearch: <http://www.picosearch.com>

SiteLevel.com: <http://www.sitelevel.com/>

FusionBot.com: <http://www.fusionbot.com>

A listing of numerous onsite search tools:  
<http://www.searchtools.com/tools/tools.html>

Robin Nobles, Director of Training, Academy of Web Specialists, has trained several thousand people in her online search engine marketing (<http://www.academywebspecialists.com>) training programs. Visit the Academy's training site to learn more about

their online search engine marketing training (<http://www.onlinewebtraining.com>) and search engine optimization (<http://www.se-optimizer.com>) software. She also teaches 3-day hands-on search engine marketing workshops in locations across the globe with Search Engine Workshops (<http://www.searchengineworkshops.com>).

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