

Can FFAs help you grow your business?

By Steve Humphrey

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Steve Humphrey
webmaster@merrymonk.com

Millennium Market-Place <http://www.merrymonk.com>

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Your business needs traffic to survive and it might seem like you could get some from Free For All (FFA) link pages.

In ancient times (2-3 years ago), people visited FFA pages, posted a link to their site on them and visited some of the sites listed on the page.

You may have heard a lot about FFAs recently. Some of what you've heard is true, but most of it is not. Allow me to clear this up for you.

THE PROBLEM:

Nobody clicks on your link. Why?

Thousands of people are posting to them, hoping to get traffic. People using the so-called FFA Blasters flood the FFAs with traffic. New links are posted and yours is moved down the list until it drops off. The bottom line is that this is simply not going to bring you traffic.

THE SOLUTION:

You need to own the FFA page so that *you* get the traffic it produces. There's a CGI script in my new ebook to show its readers just how easy it is to create an FFA with a CGI script, just for that purpose.

Do I practice what I preach? Darn right I do! On my site, my FFA page gets SIX TIMES AS MANY hits as my home page! Guess what? I don't advertise my FFA! Traffic just seeks it out.

Now, here's what I do:

Right at the top of my page it clearly states that by using my FFA, you agree to receive email from me. So, if someone cries SPAM, I can show they agreed to get emails from me. My script sends an email confirmation message when someone visits my page. A sales pitch or ad is part of the message.

People know that 1000s of these emails are coming because they've posted to 1000s of FFAs -- and dodge them! How? They use fake addresses or set filters to delete all your confirmation messages. They use free accounts that fill up and start bouncing mail. Etc...

My script compares their email address to those in a "banned" list and to a set of patterns that represent autoresponders and other useless addresses. An email address that matches any of these makes the browser display an error page -- not the perform requested addition of their link!

The script also logs each *unique* address in a file, so I have a record of every address that's ever been allowed to use the FFA. It's a simple matter to add the time and date of each entry if you wish.

When the script accepts an email address, it sends an email to an autoresponder. This starts a series of messages, spaced over several days.

Tip: ***

Be sure there's no limit on how much many names can be on the list. Set up the autoresponder to start sending messages 24 hours *after* the URL is posted.

When someone asks to be removed, I add their address to the "banned" list! They've asked me not to email them and I've complied. In turn, I've denied access to my FFA. That's justice.

In summary, here's what happens:

- 1) Today - someone posts a URL to the FFA page.
- 2) Their email address is verified with fairly good accuracy or else access is denied.

- 3) An immediate "confirmation" email is sent, which might be deleted or ignored.
- 4) Tomorrow - a series of sales messages starts going to the visitor and continues until they either opt out of the sequence or accept the offer.

And the answer is...YES, FFAs can help you to grow your business - if you use them right!

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Steve Humphrey is an 8-year Internet veteran who is widely regarded as a specialist in HTML, CGI, Perl, SQL, PHP and other programming. His new e-book "Learn to use CGI inTwo Hours: Automate your Web site Tonight" is available across the Internet and from his own Web site, <http://www.merrymonk.com> .
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