

# Using & Understanding Traffic Exchanges

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[Written by David Congreave](#)

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction to Traffic Exchanges

## Getting Started

Traffic is the lifeblood of any website. Whatever your website is or does, without traffic it will not work.

Traffic exchanges (TEs) were created with the lofty goal of allowing the users to gain a steady stream of traffic to their website without the cost of PPC and without the difficulties of SEO. In this series of reports we're going to consider how to get the most out of TEs and, you'll be pleased to know, it's a lot easier than you might think.

Before we begin, it must be understood that the traffic that TEs generate is relatively untargeted. This isn't to say that the traffic isn't valuable, it's just important to realise that TEs are not a silver bullet.

For maximum effect, TE use should be approached in a very specific way and should only be used as part of a wide spread of different traffic generating techniques.

OK. Now the disclaimer is out of the way, let's begin by considering exactly what a traffic exchange is and how to get started.

# What Is A Traffic Exchange?

The philosophy of a traffic exchange is simple:

You visit someone else's website and, in exchange, someone else visits your website.

The traffic exchange provides a simple control panel for performing this function while, at the same time, ensuring that users don't cheat.

Virtually every traffic exchange (and there are many), have their own unique twists and themes, but the basic principle is absolutely the same.

The majority of traffic exchanges are free to join (there are some exceptions, but we'll discuss that later on) and, once you've opened an account with one, it takes just a few moments to get started.

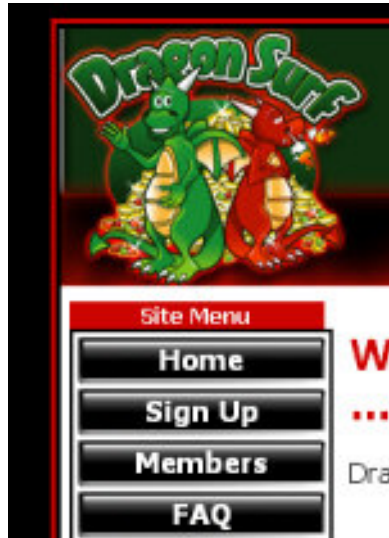
We will discuss other traffic exchanges and the variations later on as well but, for the sake of consistency, we're going to mainly focus on just one traffic exchange to use as an example.

To get the most out of this report, I recommend joining this exchange so you can follow along with the steps.

# Getting Started

Click the link below to enter the Dragon Surf homepage and then select "Sign Up" from the menu to begin your registration.

## [Dragon Surf](#)



Whatever you decide, once you've finished the registration process you are ready to log-in to the members area.

From here you are presented with a lot of options. You can ignore most of it for now as the main thing is to:

1. Setup the website you want the traffic to go to.
2. Activate your account.

# Your Website

Begin by clicking on "My Sites" in the left-hand menu:



Next, click on the link that says "Add a new site here".



You can add the direct URL of your website. But, if you want to send traffic to multiple websites you would do well to use a rotator.

PageSwirl is the approved rotator for many traffic exchanges. By using your PageSwirl link in every TE you join it makes changing the destination of the traffic much, much easier. In future you will only need to make changes to your PageSwirl account to update the flow of traffic across all your TE accounts. Click the link below to join Pageswirl.

[Pageswirl](#)

Once you have entered your web address (or PageSwirl link) you will be asked to verify your website. This is simply a case of waiting for about 10 seconds while the TE checks your website to make sure it doesn't break any rules.



Each TE will have its own rules, but the most common are:

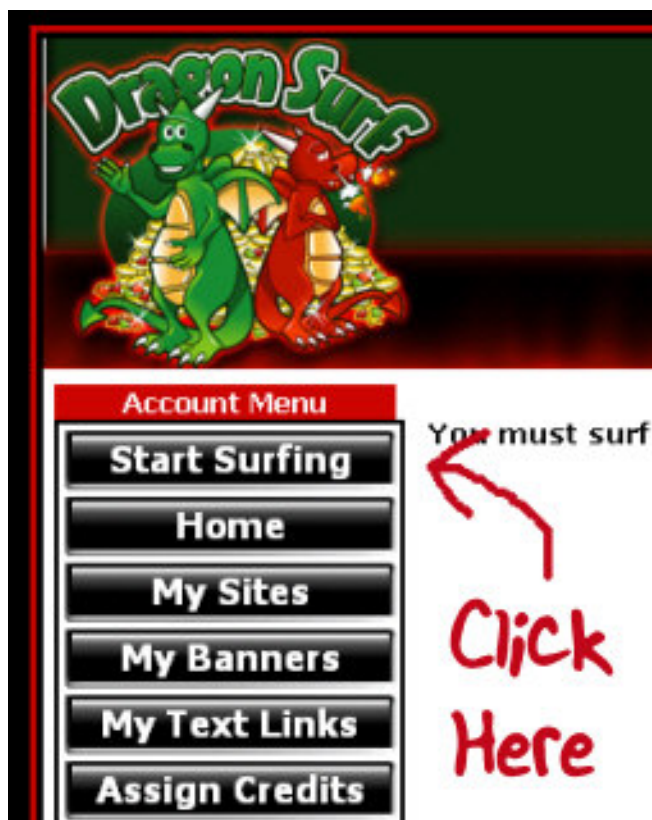
- Maximum of one pop-up.
- No frame-breakers.
- No Adult content.
- No Fly-In-Ads (or any ad that requires a window to be closed before leaving the website)

As long as your website doesn't break any of the above rules it should be accepted without any difficulty.

# Start Surfing

The next step is to visit a few member sites to activate your account.

Go back to the members area and click on “Surf Now”.



You will be taken to the surfing control panel. The website you are being asked to view will be in the centre of the screen with a control bar at the top and the bottom of the screen.

View the website in the centre of the screen. If it interests you, feel free to explore it, click on it, whatever you feel like. Just one word of warning: If you want to bookmark the website, don't use the "bookmark" option in your browser as it will only bookmark the TE. Instead, right-click in the centre of the screen and select the "bookmark" or "favourites" option from this menu.

In the unlikely event that you lose the surfing control panel, don't panic. Just go back to the TE homepage, log-in again and start over.

Once you've finished looking at the website on display, it's time to move on to the next one. Look for the "timer" and the "cheat protection".

# Cheat Protection

# Timer



## Find out what everyone

The timer and the cheat protection will move randomly so it may be at the top or the bottom of the screen. Once the timer reaches zero, the cheat protection will appear.

To view the next website, just click the image that matches the one on the left. In the above instance, you would click the circled image.

As soon as you click, your visit will be registered and a new website will be loaded. Once you have recorded two visits, your account will be activated and you will start to receive visitors to your website.

That's all for now.

There's lots more to learn and in the next chapter we'll be talking about things like surf ratios, referrals and banners. In the meanwhile, take a break from this report, do some surfing and explore some of the other menu options.

## Chapter 2 - The Control Panel

Hopefully by now you've got the hang of surfing exchanges and are already seeing traffic coming to your website.

Later on in this report we'll talk about how to plan a surfing schedule and what kind of web pages to promote in the traffic exchanges. But first, you need to familiarise yourself with the rest of the facilities offered by the traffic exchanges.

Again, we'll be using Dragon Surf as the example, and we'll take a brief look at each of the different menu options and what they are for.

If you are already a member, you may find it useful to log in to Dragon Surf now so that you refer to it while you read. If you are not yet a member, click the link below.

[Dragon Surf](#)

### SURF NOW

We've looked at this function already. This simply begins a surfing session.

### HOME

This button takes you back to the main page of your membership. This page contains a lot of useful statistics.

### MY SITES

This page shows the web pages that the exchange is going to send traffic to. Depending on the level of your membership you can add a number of different web pages to this section – although you may find it easier to use a page rotator such as [Pageswirl](#) (see chapter one).

Also on this page you can see how many **Hits** have been sent to your website, how many credits have been assigned and whether your URL is currently in rotation. By clicking on the number under **Auto-Assigned** or **Credits**, you can change the percentage of credits that are automatically assigned or assign more credits out of your stock.

Click around a bit on this page and it will soon become clear how the different functions work. If you haven't yet assigned a website, do this now. If you need more detailed instructions, see part one of this report.

# MY BANNERS

While you are surfing, you've probably noticed that banners are displayed in the surf bar. While you are earning credits for visits to your website, you are also earning banner impressions.

In this section you can upload your own banner and assign impressions to it in the same way that you can assign credits to your website.

**Add New Banner**

Banner Name :

Banner URL :  - This is the actual banner - No HTML!

Banner Target URL :  - This is the site that people go to when they click your banner - No HTML!

In the first field – **Banner Name** – just put a name that will help you identify the banner later on.

In Banner URL, enter the direct address of the banner you want to display. This will usually end in gif, jpg or something similar.

Banner Target URL is for the web address that you want people to be directed to when they click on your banner.

If you don't have a banner, you really should consider getting some made. You can hire a designer at a website such as [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com), alternatively post details of what you need on your favourite forum and there is a good chance that you will find someone who can help you out for a modest fee or some kind of swap.

Another idea is to log-in to your favourite affiliate program and use one of their banners. Just remember to put your affiliate link in the Banner Target URL field.

**\*\* Please Note \*\***

This probably should go without saying but just in case... there's no point adding a banner for the traffic exchange that you are already in.

## MY TEXT LINKS

Also in the Surf Bar, you'll notice text links. This works exactly the same way as the banners, just enter a **Link Name**, the web address you want visitors to go to in **Link URL** and the text you want to display in **The Link Text**.

## ASSIGN CREDITS

You might have already seen this page by clicking one of the links in the "My Sites" section.

In this section you can assign unused credits to one or more of your websites.

## CONVERT

Cash can be earned by using your affiliate link to bring more members into the traffic exchange or by referred members purchasing credits.

We'll talk about this in more detail later on, but if you have a cash balance, this section allows you to decide what you want to do with it.

The simplest option is to have the money paid into your PayPal account – usually you need a minimum of \$15 before you can request this option.

The alternative is to convert your cash into more credits, banner impressions or text impressions.

## BUY CREDITS

This is an excellent option if you want to send a large amount of traffic to webpage over a very short period of time.

Even if you generally prefer to surf, purchasing credits will allow you to send a stream of traffic to your website far quicker than you could usually manage by yourself.

If you think that you are likely to purchase credits on a regular basis, you should strongly consider...

## UPGRADE

Upgrading your membership usually requires a monthly subscription (some traffic exchanges will offer a discount if you purchase in bulk) and provides you with a number

of benefits.

If you are serious about using traffic exchanges, it makes sense to upgrade in at least some of the programs you use. We'll talk about the merits of this later on but for now, study this page carefully.

## REFERRALS

This page shows the number of members that you've referred to the traffic exchange.

Referring new members is not necessary to use traffic exchanges, but it does offer a lot of advantages.

The top line shows your referring URL. If someone joins the traffic exchange after visiting from this URL, they will appear in your downline.

After that you will receive a percentage of all the credits they earn and you may also earn a commission if they purchase credits.

The downline count shows the number of members that you have referred on Level 1. Level 2 shows the number of members your referrals have referred. Level 3 shows the number of members their referrals have referred. And so on...

## PROMOTE

If you are looking to refer some members to the traffic exchange, this area will provide you with landing pages, banners and ad copy.

This is all self-explanatory, but it's worth stressing the importance of never using spam to promote your affiliate link. This is a sure-fire way to have your account deleted by the administrator.

## MY SPLASH PAGES

This is a very handy extension of the PROMOTE section. Here you can create a customised splash page that promotes Dragon Surf. With a little imagination you can create something unique and eye-catching.

## PERSONAL DETAILS

You can use this page to update your email address or change your password.

## CONTESTS

Contests usually take the form of referral competitions. Check this link occasionally to make sure you don't miss out on anything.

## DOWNLINE BUILDER

The "DL" stands for Downline and is a relatively new facility for traffic exchanges.

This section will offer a large selection of related programs that also have referral or affiliate programs. The idea is to join as many of these as you like and then enter your own affiliate link into the fields provided.

Later on, when you refer a new member to the traffic exchange, their DL Builder will contain your affiliate links.

This section is optional to use, but if you are planning to refer new members, then you should complete all or part of this section first.

## NEWS ARCHIVE

The Dragon Surf newsletter archive is located here.

## THE FORUM

This is a good place to ask the owner - and other members - questions about Dragon Surf.

## CONTACT SUPPORT

If you have support issues, this page provides a number of different methods of contacting the administrator.

## DELETE ACCOUNT

If you want to remove your account, click here and enter your password. Of course you will lose all your credits, banner impressions and referrals.

# LOG OUT

Have a guess what this button does? Then click to see if you were right.

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I appreciate that a lot of this will seem really obvious, but it's important that you understand all the different sections before we look at some of the strategies you will want to employ.

## Chapter 3 - What to Promote

One of the things you'll quickly come to realise while surfing traffic exchanges is how boring it can become.

Don't worry, this feeling is perfectly normal and it's not your fault. The problem lies with the pages people are choosing to promote and, most of the time, it's totally inappropriate.

But really, this is a good thing!

As long as the majority of people are promoting the wrong pages in the wrong way, it just makes it easier for you to stand out from the crowd.

Let's start by deciding what you're going to promote.

Generally speaking, it's not a good idea to try and promote a page that is directly trying to sell something to the surfer. Most of the time the surfer is concentrating on earning credits and is not in buying mode. The best you can hope for is to distract the surfer for a few seconds with the lure of information, a freebie or the answer to an intriguing question.

Therefore, your goal should be to get the surfer to either click on your link OR submit their email address.

Try and think of traffic exchanges as a way to generate leads, either to offer your product to at a later date or to build your mailing list. Pages with an Internet Marketing relevance are the most likely to appeal to the surfer, but products and services that are aimed at a very broad audience can also be effective.

Ideally, you should be using the traffic exchanges to – in the long run - promote you and your products, rather than just promoting an affiliate program but, if you must, avoid using the standard splash pages that everyone else is using and go for a custom solution instead (more on that in a moment).

Once you know what you are promoting, then try getting into the head of the surfer. That's the easy part – just start surfing and observe which websites make you stop and read for longer than it takes for the timer to slow down.

Most of the time, you'll observe that the pages that work are the pages that grab your attention - usually due to a strong headline or an eye-catching picture or image.

Whatever you decide to promote, the page that you use must contain one or both of these elements. For maximum effect, keep the rest of your page and your call to action as simple and as straightforward as possible.

If you have some knowledge of HTML or can use web design software, you can design the page yourself. A little bit of quality clip-art can do a lot to help your page stand out so consider investing a small amount in this.

Just a word of warning - avoid free clip-art websites. The quality is low, the images are often overused and there is always the risk that the clip-art has been stolen from another site.

The website I use is called Graphics Factory. It contains over a million images and at less than \$7 per month is one of the most cost-effective.

## [Graphics Factory](#)

If you don't have the skills necessary to design a page on your own, there are a couple of great free online services that can help you. They both use a point and click system and you can instantly create great splash page, they will even host them for you.

## [Instant Squeeze Page Generator](#)

## [Splash Page Maker](#)

It's a good idea to experiment with different kinds of splash pages to see which produces the best results.

Sometimes asking for a simpler action (such as clicking a link) before asking for a more involved action (submitting an email address) is a more effective way to get the desired response.

Alternatively, you may find that having the email capture form directly on the splash page produces the best results.

Split-testing and tracking is very important to maximise your efforts and, before you glaze over, let me assure you that this is far simpler than you might imagine.

There are two programs I can recommend that will help you with this.

The first is called HitsConnect. Using their system is simply a case of converting your web page address into one of their links and then copying a small piece of code onto your 'end result' page. It's easy to set up and, once you're done, it's easy to test different kinds of splash page and see which traffic exchanges are the most effective for you.

And of course, HitsConnect can also be used with most other advertising mediums and not just traffic exchanges.

You can try the system out free for 30 days and, after that, prices start from less than \$12 per month.

## HitsConnect

If you would like some more detailed instruction on tracking and split testing, GoTo-Pro offers a combination of training videos and a system to begin doing your own testing.

In fact, if you have not done any testing or tracking before, this is the probably the best place to start. You can get life-time trial access for free and the training videos alone make this worthwhile.

## GoTo-Pro

If it's come as a bit of a shock to you that some of the services featured in this report require an investment, then it's important to realise that the people who try and muddle through without spending any money on tools and training, are usually the same ones who give up because they don't see results for their efforts.

It's important to manage your finances carefully and not to overspend, but it's also important to use the right tools and learn the right techniques to get the results you need.

If your available budget is very small, I would recommend using:

- a free HTML or web page editor to make a simple splash page,
- [www.ymlp.com](http://www.ymlp.com) to create your email capture form,
- GoTo-Pro.com (a one-time investment of \$9.97) to learn how to test your splash pages and gradually improve them.

Put all of this into practice and you will be light-years ahead of the vast majority of traffic exchange users and, more importantly, you will start to see results from your efforts.

# Chapter 4 - Ethics and Cheating

The behaviour you employ while surfing may seem trivial in comparison to the business of receiving traffic, but the two go very much hand in hand. For the traffic you receive to have any value, it is important that as many surfers as possible adopt the correct surfing etiquette.

The owner of the traffic exchange will put certain safeguards in place to try and prevent outright cheating but, for the most part, the manner in which you surf is down to you.

At this point I should point out that surfing etiquette is the subject of much debate in the TE community and there is no absolute agreement on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In this report I will endeavour to offer some guidelines, but just be aware that these are my opinions and you should still take the responsibility to make your own decisions in this area.

An easy way to draw your own conclusions is the “Golden Rule” principle. Essentially, this means to examine your own behaviour while surfing and ask yourself if you would be happy with other surfers adopting this conduct whilst viewing YOUR web page.

If you adopt the attitude and behaviour that you want other surfers to display while visiting your web page, then it is likely that you are on the right track.

## Distractions

What is going on in the background while you surf? Do you listen to music, watch TV, instant message your friends?

Because surfing can become dull very quickly, it is easy to begin multi-tasking and your attention on the pages you are supposed to be viewing can wane.

I believe it is unreasonable to shut out everything else while surfing but, the pages that appear should take up the MAJORITY of your attention. Background music is fine, but watching TV, playing on your mobile phone and instant messaging your friends is out of order.

If you couldn't hold a polite conversation while you are doing it, then it's not an acceptable activity to carry on while you are surfing.

## Attention

How much attention do you give to each page that appears?

Initially this is easy but, the more you see the same pages repeatedly, it becomes easy to shut off mentally. Another problem occurs when a page gets a little bit of your attention but, before you've finished reading, the timer hits zero and you instinctively click away.

It helps to remember that there is another surfer out there who is working hard to get you to view his page. So show it as much respect as you can muster.

Another trick is to bookmark interesting pages, rather than trying to take it all in during the 20-30 second window that the timer suggests. When a page catches your eye, simply right-click on the main window, select "Bookmark" or "Add to Favourites" and add it to a folder that you name "Look Later".

Once you've finished surfing, open the folder and take all the time you want to examine each page.

Just remember not to use the bookmark function from the browser menu, as this will only bookmark the traffic exchange and not the page you are viewing. You must use the "right-click" technique for this to work correctly.

## Tabbed Browsing

This term is often used to describe the common practice of surfing more than one traffic exchange at the same time. Possibly one of the most controversial aspects of traffic exchange surfing, this issue divides users right down the middle.

Supporters of this technique argue that they are still viewing each web page and it allows them to generate more traffic without breaking the terms and conditions. Opponents argue that the surfer is not viewing every page for the full length of time and that this is only one small step away from cheating.

Because of the delicate nature of this argument, I'm going to refrain from offering an opinion. Except to say that tabbed browsing is NOT necessary to earn traffic and if you decide against it, this does NOT mean that you won't be successful in using TEs. However, if you decide to go down this route, I would recommend the following steps:

- Never load more than 5 TEs at any one time.
- Be sure to still view EVERY web page carefully.
- Never open the same TE in two different browser windows.
- Never use software that claims to surf automatically.
- Read Dylan Campbell's supplementary article – [HERE](#)

# Cheating

It should go without saying that cheating traffic exchanges is not acceptable and will likely lead to your account being banned.

An easy way to measure if a technique or software tool is acceptable is simply to ask whether it eliminates the need for you to view every single web page. If it does, then it is cheating.

In the final chapter of this report I will reveal the tools and resources that you can use without breaching surfing etiquette.

# Chapter 5 - Recommended Resources

So if you didn't understand traffic exchanges and how to use them before, by now you should have a pretty good idea.

And remember, among those that use and enjoy traffic exchanges, most do not have a fraction of the knowledge that you have acquired from this report. Not only do you have the understanding, you also have the edge in getting the best results.

But that knowledge is useless unless you put it into practice. To fail to make traffic exchanges part of your marketing arsenal, is to miss out on a valuable source of free and low-cost traffic.

So to conclude, let's summarise the resources you need to fully utilise this advertising.

## **Traffic Exchanges**

There are literally hundreds of these available and opinion is always divided as to which are the most effective and the most worthy of your time. Here is a selection of my personal favourites:

[Dragon Surf](#)

[I Love Hits](#)

[Traffic-Splash](#)

[Advertising Know How](#)

[MaxTrafficPro](#)

And a small selection of my favourite Pro Traffic Exchanges:

[Clickn'Putt](#)

[Pro Fat Cat](#)

## [Pro Traffic Shop](#)

### **Downline Builders**

If you're planning to build downlines in your favourite traffic exchanges (and you really should), a downline builder can save you a lot of time.

Downline builders work by allowing you to put the referral URL for all your traffic exchanges into one program. Simply promote the single program and when someone registers they will be presented with all of your referral links in one go.

Below are two of the most popular downline builders:

## [Home Income Team](#)

## [Affiliate Funnel](#)

### **Splash Pages**

Making simple but eye-catching splash pages is essential. Here are some resources that will help you create a unique splash.

## [Graphics Factory](#)

## [Instant Squeeze Page Generator](#)

## [Splash Page Maker](#)

### **Miscellaneous**

There are a myriad of other programs that can help you make better use of traffic exchanges. Here is a selection.

Pageswirl is an easy to use page rotator so you can promote multiple pages and make changes from a single control panel

## [Pageswirl](#)

HitsConnect lets you track your traffic so you can see which sources are providing the best results.

## [HitsConnect](#)

GoTo-Pro will teach you how to split test your splash pages and provide you with an easy system to do this.

## [GoTo-Pro](#)

### **Reading**

Last but not least, it's important to keep up to date with the latest developments in the traffic industry. The following two resources will ensure you don't miss a trick.

Hit Exchange News is a weekly newsletter from traffic exchange expert, Jon Olson. As well as the latest news from the industry it also rounds up the current ten most effective traffic exchanges. Subscription is free so just click below:

## [Hit Exchange News](#)

And make sure you don't miss the forum where the owners of these traffic exchanges love to hang out. NetMarketingForum is a great place to network and get advice from a variety of traffic exchange experts.

## [NetMarketingForum](#)

And, of course, I can't forget to mention my own website – The Nettle.

Members of The Nettle get to re-brand this report and give it away for free. To get a free one month trial of The Nettle, just click the link below.

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