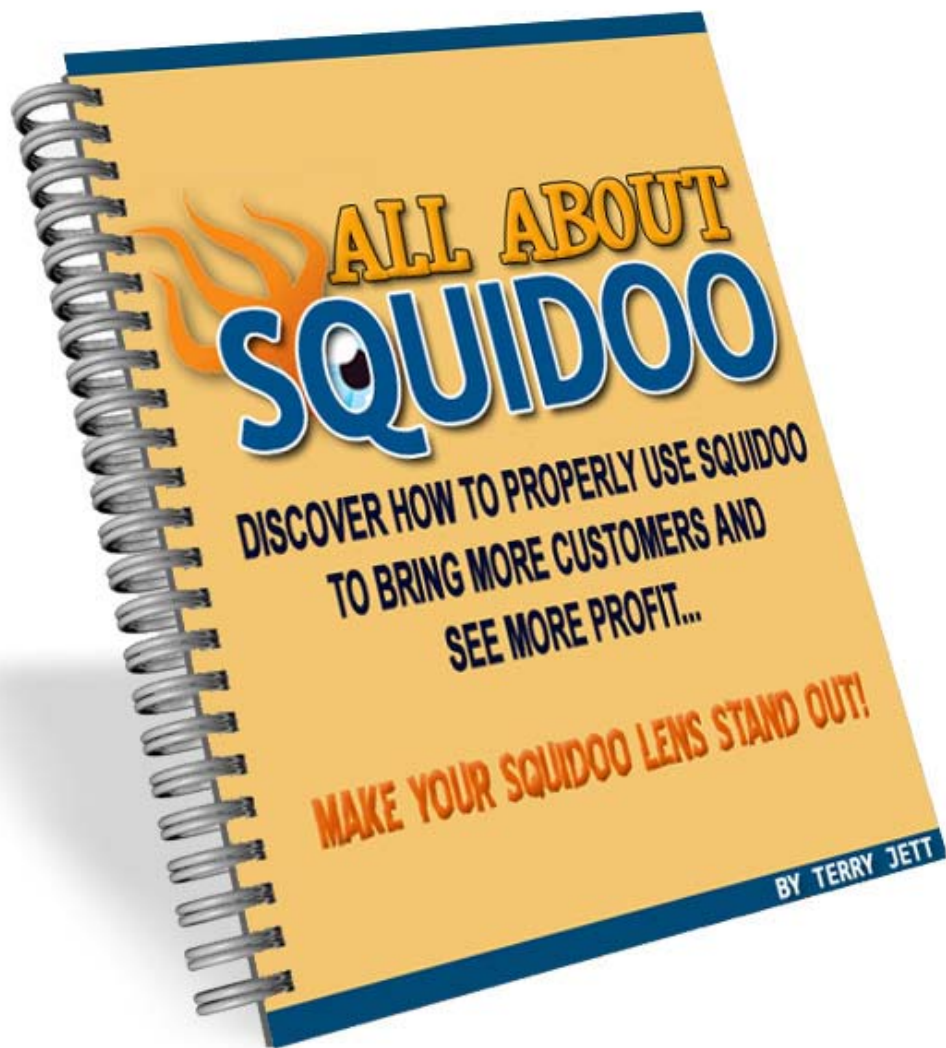


All About Squidoo



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What Is Squidoo?

On first glance, one might view Squidoo as just another social networking website. They might alternately view it as just another blogging community. In fact, Squidoo is a combination of blogging and social networking, taken to an ultimate level. Squidoo is more of a social effort than a social networking site, wherein the effort is to easily find the things on the Internet that matter to specific groups of people.

Squidoo essentially gives you a place on the web to direct other people to the places that you want them to visit. You build your page based on what matters to you – the things that you know about and want to teach others, or for things that you want to sell, such as your products, or affiliate products.

Through Squidoo, you can not only get more traffic to your own blog or web pages, and make more sales, but you have the added bonus of being able to earn half of the revenue that is earned by the creators of Squidoo from your page. You can elect to have that money sent to you, or sent directly to your favorite charity.

Squidoo, all summed up, becomes the ultimate 'word-of-mouth' tool on the Internet today. Users have found a real community exists at Squidoo, and they have also found that they get increased traffic to their other sites, and that they ultimately make more sales – and you can too, if you know what you are doing.

At Squidoo, you can create a lens, which will be covered in more detail later. Each lens essentially consists of one page, and that one page has links to more pages – either to your site, to other lenses, or to other web pages altogether – and you control where your Squidoo lens page links to.

You may already be thinking 'Oh no, not another profile page that I have to keep updated and stay on top of and keep up with in general...I don't have time for this!' In today's online world, it seems that we each have five hundred different 'social networking' sites to keep up with, keep updated, and more. It becomes

quite time consuming, and very overwhelming. Obviously, you don't have time for another site that you have to keep up with.

Relax. Squidoo isn't what you are thinking, and in fact, once you've got your Squidoo Lens set up, you really don't have to mess with it much at all. It's very simple to set up and maintain. You are looking at about an hour or two of setup, and maintenance, if you do it right, probably takes less than fifteen minutes per week, if that. Some people never have to 'maintain' their Squidoo Lenses at all.

What is A Lens?

A Squidoo Lens is your page on the Squidoo network. It is very easy to create and set up, and often, once this is done, you never have to 'touch' it again. When you think of a Squidoo Lens, think of a camera lens, where you are able to 'zoom' in on a particular subject. That is, after all, what Squidoo is about...zooming in on the millions of topics covered by 'Lensmasters.'

A Lensmaster is a person who creates a Lens on the Squidoo network. This is a word that you will hear a great deal when you start creating your own lens. All it takes to become a Lensmaster is to set up a lens, and this is done just by joining the Squidoo website, for the most part.

Setting up a lens on Squidoo is 100% free. You do not need any technical knowledge – no HTML skills are required. Each lens 'zooms' in on one topic. As a Lensmaster, you can create as many lenses as you want, all with just one free account. It is also important to note that you are not required to set up a lens immediately – or at all. You can join the Squidoo network, and not set up a lens. Instead, you can take the time to really put some thought into it before you create a lens. Just understand, that until you create a lens, you can't possibly benefit from one.

The lens is very important to you, as a business person. With your lens, you will point people to the places on the Internet that you want them to go to learn more about the topic that you are portraying on your lens. You can connect to other relevant lenses, which only serves to increase traffic to your own lens, and ultimately, to your sales pages.

A lens has a header, a title, a toolbox, glam ads, an inside toolbar, lens rolls (which connect to other lenses), fans (people who love your lens), a top ten list,

and a link to the lens of the day. A lens also has content, in the form of the written word, pictures, and/or video, which are added by you.

Naturally, you want to jazz your lens up, and make it very busy. The busier your lens is, the more interesting it is found, and this, in turn, creates more traffic to it – creating more traffic to the places where you want your lens visitors to go. You can dress your lens up by using numerous modules, pictures, videos, and of course, content. Luckily, you don't have to write the content.

More on designing a winning lens will come later. Right now, all you need to understand is that your lens is essentially your page on the Squidoo network – the place where it all begins.

Getting Started with Squidoo

So, you are ready to get started and become a Lensmaster on Squidoo. Congratulations. This may be one of the smartest online business moves you've ever made. Obviously, in order to get started with Squidoo, you need to sign up for a free account, at <http://www.squidoo.com>.

When signing up, the only thing that you really need to be careful of is your username, because it will be seen by others – on all of your lenses. Therefore, since you are setting up a lens for business purposes, make sure that your username suits you in a professional manner.

When you set up your lens, you will be asked what your lens is about. It is important to include keywords. After you've stated what the topic of your lens is, you will be confronted with a page that asks what you intend to do with your lens. As a business person who is trying to increase sales, you should choose the second option – you are trying to make money.

The next most important thing you will decide is the title of your lens. Here, it is important to use keywords. If you are selling doll clothes, you will want the term 'doll clothes' to be a part of your title. Make sure that your title is relevant to your topic. This is very important!

Next, you will choose the URL for your lens. The URL is <http://www.squidoo.com/whatever>, where 'whatever' is whatever you choose to put for the URL. Obviously, again, you will want to use your main keyword here, if possible, or some variation thereof. Note, however, that your chosen keyword

may already be taken, and you may have to alter it a bit. This is okay – just make sure that the keyword is in there.

Next, you pick a category for your topic. The categories are limited, but there may be one there that closely resembles your business. If not, select business as the category. Following this, you rate your lens. The choices are G, R, and X, and obviously, as a business person, you will choose the G rating, meaning that your lens is suitable for all audiences.

Now, it's getting fun. On the next page, you are asked to 'tag' your lens. This means that you type in words that relate to what your page is about. Here, of course, you want to use your main keyword, followed by three sub-keywords in the boxes below. As you can see, in total, you are only allowed four tags. Make good use of those tags!

Once this is done, you are confronted with a page that you may or may not like. This is where you can add your picture and update your biography. We will cover the biography in more detail later, but you will definitely want to add a picture, and as a business person, a professional photograph is highly recommended. You may also opt to add a picture of your product instead, but the best option seems to be adding a picture of yourself.

On the right hand side of the page, where you now see your picture, you will need to change your payment options. You can choose to send the revenue that your page earns to charity, to yourself, or to a combination of yourself and charity, as you see fit. It is also wise to 'max' your lens, and this is covered in more detail later.

Next, near the bottom of the page, you will want to click the button to add modules to your lens. Review each module carefully, and determine which ones you want to use on your page. There is information concerning each module when you hold your cursor over the module listed. Currently, available modules include Amazon, Duel, Flickr Photos, Guestbook, Link List, Poll Module, RSS, Table of Contents, Text/Write Module, Twitter Follow, Yelp, and YouTube.

After you've selected your modules, click save, and then go in and modify each module as needed. For instance, if you choose the Amazon module, you can give the module a title, a subtitle, a description, and of course you will want to select the books that you want to recommend.

Take your time setting up your modules. This is the meat and potatoes of your page. This is what matters the most on Squidoo. Don't rush this. Put a great deal of thought into it, but remember that you can edit your lens anytime you wish, add and remove modules, change modules – anything that you want to do.

That's it. That's all that there is to setting up your Squidoo lens. You will, of course, want content on your lens, and the easiest way to do this is with RSS, which is covered later.

As you can see, it is very simple, but because this lens represents your business, and will be used to generate more business, it takes a great deal of thought – but not technical know-how.

The best news is that once it is set up, it is done. You don't have to update it. You don't have to do anything to it...unless you want to. You may, however, want to add new links to your link list, or recommend new books from Amazon or things of this nature, but it doesn't take a lot of time to maintain your Squidoo Lens – as promised.

The only thing you need to do now is to get your lens noticed. In the following pages, you will learn a great deal about that...and you will be amazed to find that getting noticed on Squidoo is one of the easiest online promotional activities you will ever participate in.

Use Keyword Rich Content

One of the first things that you want to do with your lens is ensure that you are using quality, keyword content. Again, we will cover the creation or addition of this content later, for now, we just want to talk about keywords, and their importance.

Keywords are how you will be found on the Squidoo network. Now, it is true that Google and other search engines give Squidoo pages a great deal of attention, but without the proper use of keywords, they can't really properly index your site. In this context, a Squidoo lens is just like any other web page – it needs to use keywords properly and effectively in order to get indexed and indexed well.

The titles of all of your modules should contain your keywords. The subtitles should contain keywords. The descriptions should contain keywords. There is no such thing as using your keywords too often. It cannot be done. With Squidoo, you don't have to worry about 'keyword spam' as long as there is also relevant content – and with Squidoo, it is pretty much impossible to have irrelevant content.

Do you get what I'm trying to say? Use keywords as much as you possibly can. Keywords are vital!

On your dashboard page, you need to click to edit the portion that says Introduction, Contents, and Discovery Tool. First, turn the Table of Contents on. This allows your keywords to be used more often on the page. It also increase your revenue earned through your Squidoo Lens.

Next, use the discovery tool. This means that Squidoo will link to other (relevant) lenses from your page...and they will link to your page from other relevant lenses as well. This is important in gaining traffic. Just a tip: in the three links that you get to choose, link to other pages that USE YOUR KEYWORDS IN THEIR URL!

Then, of course, there is your intro text, title, and photo. Use your keyword in all three...for the photo, save the photo using a file name that includes your keywords.

As you go through and edit each module, make sure that you are strategically using your keywords, in a way that makes sense. You don't want a page just full of keywords – without content – of course, but you can get your keyword on the page in numerous ways, multiple times, and this is essential to getting listed higher in the search engines.

Max Your Lens

Earlier, when you were setting up your lens, you were advised to 'max' your lens. This option is found on the right hand side of the page when you are logged into your account. You can always choose to max, or un-max your lens. But what exactly does this mean?

Maxing your lens does not change the content of your site. The only thing that it does is make the advertising used on your site better – meaning that you earn more revenue through Squidoo. It also brings more traffic to your lens, which is important to your overall sales strategy.

So, why should you max your lens? Well, as stated on the website, professionals are tracking things across the Squidoo network day in and day out to discover what works the best – in other words, they are tweaking and tuning to find out what is going to bring them the most money.

This in turn determines what is going to bring you the most money, in terms of revenue from the site. But, at the same time, it also determines how much traffic comes to your page. Remember that without traffic, there can be no revenue.

Therefore, instead of having to hurt your brain trying to figure out what to do on your page to bring in the most traffic, and therefore the most revenue, all you have to do is set your page up, and leave all that other stuff to the professionals – by maxing your lens.

It is important to note that un-maxing your lens does not remove advertising from the page. It simply reverts to a more simplified layout. So, you may as well enjoy all of the benefits of 'maxing.'

At this point, you are probably thinking 'hold on...I've been told time and time again to never link to other people from my web page – keep my visitors on my page. Why am I doing this?'

You are doing this because this isn't your web page. This is your Squidoo Lens, and in order to 'be a part of the community' you want to max. You also want to link to other Squidoo pages, and some even suggest linking to your competitors on Squidoo. The purpose of Squidoo is to build a following, by bringing traffic to your Squidoo page (through any means possible), which in turn gets them to your sales page.

Trust me...max your lens!

A Visit Given is a Visit Earned

Once you have perfected and published your lens, it is important to become a part of the community. This is where Squidoo becomes much like operating a blog. With blogs, you visit and link to other peoples blogs, to bring more traffic to your own blog.

The concept is much the same with Squidoo lenses. You visit other people's lenses, and take part as much as you can on those lenses, in an effort to bring other people to your lens.

Does it work? You better believe it works. It's what the entire Squidoo concept is based on.

Overall, this is where you will spend the greatest amount of your Squidoo time once you've set up your lens. Remember that once you are all set up, and you have content being fed into your lens (so you don't have to create new content for the lens), you will spend your time visiting relevant – and irrelevant – lenses.

When you visit those lenses, participate in polls, duels, and of course, sign guest books. When you link to other lenses, make sure that you let the Lensmaster know that you've done so, in an effort to get them to link back to your lens as well.

Keep in mind that every action that you take on the Squidoo network only serves to bring more traffic to your lens, which in turn brings more traffic to your business blog or website, which in turn creates more sales. This is why you must also think of a visit given, as a visit earned, and take the time to visit other Squidoo lenses and participate.

You don't have to spend hour upon hour surfing Squidoo lenses – although if you aren't careful, you can easily find that this is exactly what you have done. It can be addictive. But, if you make a commitment to spend just fifteen minutes a week visiting other Squidoo lenses, you will be amazed at the difference it makes in the traffic coming into your own lens.

Again, don't just visit – participate as much as you possibly can. Sign guest books, do the polls and the duels, do as much as you possibly can. When you do this, while logged in, you leave behind your linked username. Other visitors to that page like to surf around, and will click on your username and arrive at your lens...and you know what that means.

The All Important Biography

Earlier, we briefly mentioned the biography, which most people actually hate filling out. Luckily, for those who hate it, Squidoo doesn't require much. You need to type something into the box that appears next to your picture. You can be brief, or you can go into more detail.

For those of you who like the biography part, you will be disappointed in the amount of space that Squidoo allows for this. You can, however, use the introduction section for more information, and if this isn't enough, add a text/write module below that for more space.

The biography is important. Who are you? What makes you an expert on this topic? This is where you start to build credibility, and the more information that you are willing to provide, the better off your Squidoo lens will be.

Again, the biography section is really easy to overlook, because Squidoo doesn't make it a priority like social networking sites. You must remember that Squidoo isn't like any other social networking site.

For the most part, writing a bit for your biography is actually the largest amount of writing that you will do for your Squidoo lens. Therefore, you can afford to put more time and effort into this activity when you are setting up your lens. The rest of the work is mostly just writing titles, subtitles, and descriptions, and clicking little circles to make selections.

Don't make the biography harder than it has to be. Most people aren't going to visit your lens to learn more about you – they will visit to learn more about your topic. However, if they are thinking about purchasing something from you, they will want to know more about you – and this is why it is important to have something there for them to read.

It isn't as complicated as setting up a MySpace biography. Nobody cares who your hero is or what your favorite movies are. Make your biography stick to the topic, and it will not only be easier for you to do, but your visitors will find that it is perfectly acceptable. They don't care if you are married, what your dogs name is, or anything else. They care about the topic – so your bio needs to be 'on topic.'

Again, just give basic information. You can post a quote for the bio section, as long as it is your own quote. You can be very basic, just make sure that you are being very honest as well, and of course, make sure that you do indeed put *something* there for your bio!

Using RSS to Build Your Lens

Here is where the content for your page comes in. Obviously, a page that is nothing more than links isn't very interesting, and in the world wide web, it seems pretty pointless to just click from link to link to link without really every accomplishing anything – or having the information that you are looking for.

Squidoo is much more than links. It is also content. Most people, however, don't actually write content specifically for their Squidoo lenses, although there is always that option by using the write/text module.

Most people use RSS and they send content from the websites or blogs that they continually update. This keeps your lens full of fresh content as well, but because of the things you've learned while marketing your website, you may be leery of this.

You see, search engines penalize for duplicate content. This is true. You may think that if you use RSS to feed content into your Squidoo lens that either the lens or your website/blog is going to be penalized.

The fact is that Google knows if RSS is being used, and it doesn't penalize for duplicate content when the content is duplicated through the use of RSS. Do you feel better now? You should. This means that you don't have to write fresh content specifically for your Squidoo lens if you don't want to.

Remember that I told you Squidoo wouldn't take up a great deal of your time...I meant that.

Using RSS is very easy with Squidoo. Simply add the RSS module, fill in the information, and you are good to go. Now, each time you update that site or blog, where the RSS points, your Squidoo page will be updated as well – and you don't even have to log in.

Setting up the RSS takes less than five minutes. Add the module; give it a title, a subtitle, and a description (if you feel the need). Type in the RSS URL, put the number of headlines that you would like to be shown on your page, whether or not you want excerpts used, how often you want the module updated (daily), and whether or not you want HTML displayed (you do).

Hit the save button. Hit the publish button. Viola! Your Squidoo lens now has valuable content – and you didn't have to write another word – and you won't have to write another word for your Squidoo lens in the future.

The Importance of the Bookmarklet

Squidoo has something called a Bookmarklet, and it is important that you learn how to use this, because this is how you easily and quickly add content to your Squidoo lens on the fly.

Using the Squidoo Bookmarklet, you can add links to your lens. You simply go to <http://www.squidoo.com/pages/bookmarklet>, click on the Squidoo Bookmarklet link. The bookmarklet is added to your favorites or bookmarks in your web browser.

Now, all you have to do, when you visit a website for which you want the link added to your Squidoo lens is find this bookmarklet in your bookmarks or favorites, click it, fill in the information really fast, and you are done. The bookmark is added to your Squidoo lens as a link, complete with description.

If you use FireFox, and you should, you should also get the FireFox extension for Squidoo. This is a great extension that adds two little icons to your toolbar in the FireFox browser. Clicking on one icon brings you to your lens, and clicking on the other brings up the small form needed to add a link to your lens.

So, why exactly is the bookmarklet so important? Because it allows you to update your Squidoo lens, which in turns means that 'content has been added' according to Squidoo and Google, which results in being re-indexed, which results in potential higher search engine placement for your keywords. Cause and effect, so to speak.

While this bookmarklet is important, there is another one that you need on your browser toolbar. This particular one is found at OnlyWire (<http://www.onlywire.com>). This is a mass social bookmarking site. You set up a free account, include your username and password for all of the listed social bookmarking sites (join the ones that you are not already a member of), and add the little OnlyWire logo to your browser toolbar by dragging it up there.

Now, when your Squidoo lens is updated, go to it, click the icon, type in the tags that you want to use, and click the button. A bookmark will be sent to all of those social bookmarking sites, which brings in more traffic to your lens...and it only takes seconds to do. You can also use this when you update your blog or website, or when you find sites that are of great interest to you, which you feel should be of great interest to others.

Squidoo is Web 2.0 at its best. Social bookmarking is part of Web 2.0, and therefore, you should use as many Web 2.0 techniques as possible to promote it as widely as possible.

Start or Join Groups

Being part of the Squidoo community means being part of groups. It is important to find groups that relate to your topic and join them. It also isn't a bad idea to start a group of your own, for your particular product.

Too often, people think that they shouldn't promote their product on the Squidoo network. This is absolutely wrong. You can easily promote a product directly from your Squidoo lens, and from your Squidoo group. It is perfectly acceptable, many do it successfully, and there are no rules against it what-so-ever.

Therefore, start a group specifically for your product, and make sure that you invite customers and potential customers to join that group. However, realize that you will most likely make more sales if you start a group based on your products 'topic' rather than the product itself. Which group would you be more likely to join...a group that pertains to writing, or a group that pertains to the Mead brand of paper, which is used for the purpose of writing? The writing group would be more interesting.

Interest is a word that you must keep in mind if you want to increase sales with the use of Squidoo. The more interesting your page is, the more traffic you get. The more interesting your group is, the more members you get – and this results in more traffic to your lens and to your website and so on.

You should also allow the groups to which you belong to appear on your Squidoo Lens. This results in people who are interested in your topic to join those groups, and list the group on their lens, which in turn brings more people to the group, and ultimately to your lens – and you should know the rest of that drill by now.

Being part of a group does not, by any means, mean that your time will be sucked away by participating. If you spend fifteen minutes a week visiting other Squidoo lenses and participating, you should spend ten to fifteen minutes per day visiting your groups and participating. Because participation in groups does take time, limit the number of groups to a number that you can easily live with. Remember, also, that starting your own group is an option, and one that you should seriously consider.

Unfortunately, Squidoo doesn't make it easy to find groups on your specific topic. Instead, you can only really see the top groups in the very broad categories. Hopefully, someday Squidoo will make this easier, but in the meantime, the easiest way to find groups that relate specifically to your topic is to visit lenses that relate specifically to your topic, and see which groups those lenses belong to.

Links, Links, and More Links

If you've been doing business online for more than five minutes, you know that the Internet is essentially one great big pool of links. You also know that links are essential to SEO, or Search Engine Optimization. On Squidoo, they are essential to getting traffic from other lenses.

Where you have always heard that you should never link to someone else's page from your web site, because you want to keep that traffic all to yourself, the exact opposite is true at Squidoo. The whole spirit at Squidoo is to link to other Squidoo lenses, as well as to your website or blog.

In a way, you might consider your Squidoo lens as your own personal link farm...except that all of the links point to where you want them to point to, which brings your lens visitors to the sites that you want them to go to. This may be other Lensmasters lenses, but if those same Lensmasters are pointing back at you, that traffic eventually finds its way back to you – and if your lens is good, or even great, you get added to their favorite lenses list, which many display on their own lenses.

Links are the backbone of the Internet, and definitely the backbone of Squidoo. If you fail to realize this, you will simply fail with Squidoo. If you aren't linking to other lenses, they aren't linking to you. If you aren't linking from your other sites to your Squidoo lens, you are missing out on potential sales.

You are freer to express more about yourself and your product on your Squidoo lens than you could ever be on a traditional sales page. In fact, you will be amazed by the fact that where people will not make a purchase from your sales page, they will happily visit your sales page – from your Squidoo page – and make a purchase.

Somehow, it's like your Squidoo lens gives them greater insight into your product, and why they need it. It could be that the Squidoo lens seems more personal and less 'salesy' than a sales page.

So, in the grand scheme of things, when it comes to Squidoo, don't be afraid to link. Embrace the whole linking concept, and make as much use of it as you possibly can. More links – whether they are inbound or outbound from your Squidoo lens – simply means more traffic for you, and more sales for you.

While links are important, make sure that your Squidoo lens consists of more than links. Be sure that you are feeding actual content in as well, or writing content, and don't forget to use other modules to really spice things up.

Have Your Current Customers Use Squidoo

One way to increase exposure for your Squidoo Lens is to encourage your customers to use Squidoo as well. You might be wondering how that helps you, but there really is a method to the madness.

Each time someone links to your Squidoo page from their own, it increases traffic to your lens...and if you've been paying attention, you already know that this results in more traffic to your website or blog, and more sales. So, if you persuade your customers to start their own Squidoo lenses, you benefit.

How does this work?

Simple – hold a contest, or offer a discount for any customer who creates a lens on your topic and links to your lens. People love deals, and if they are purchasing your product, they obviously have some level of interest in your topic – which means that they are perfect candidates for Squidoo, and perfect candidates to help boost the level of traffic on your Squidoo page.

You can also get your customers to participate at Squidoo by setting up a group for your specific product or service. Through this group, you can offer 'classes' so to speak, that teach your customers how to get the most out of your product. The only way, of course, that they can join in on this group is to be a member of Squidoo. This encourages them to set up their own lenses, and of course to link to your lens.

Use Squidoo badges and buttons on your website or blog. This lets those visitors know that you have a Squidoo lens, and it brings them there. Because Squidoo is easy, interesting, and fun, they are likely to set up a Squidoo lens without you even asking them to do so. However, it is also a good idea that you ask them to let you know about their Squidoo lenses on your website or blog, so that you can link to them, and they can link to you on your respective lenses.

Just because a customer has already been a customer, this does not mean that they won't purchase from you in the future. You never know what the future holds, and if you are a good business owner, the product that you've created won't be your last. Old customers will eventually be customers again, and by

having them set up a Squidoo lens, you are essentially creating another link to them for future use.

Get your current customers in on the fun. Be sure to send an email to your list, announce your lens on your blog, and use badges and buttons on your website to promote your Squidoo lens as well.

Spice Up Your Lens

As you may have noticed, one of the drawbacks of Squidoo is that all of the lenses look pretty much alike, and all of them are – well – for lack of a better word, plain.

You can jazz up your lens a bit – most people just don't realize that. This however is good news for you, because it means that your lens will look more interesting than most other lenses, which in turn means that you will gain a bigger following.

Start by going back to the modules. The ones mentioned earlier are part of the 'beginners pack.' There are literally hundreds of modules to choose from, if you click on the category links at the top of the module selection box on that page. You can use these modules to really spice up your pages.

Under the 'Add Unique Content' tab, you will find Blackbox. This is a module that adds a stark black box, in which you can write whatever you want, and the type will be in white. It really stands out on a Squidoo lens page, because of the boldness of it. The Polaroid module will allow you to add a very large picture to your Squidoo lens.

The StickyNote allows you to leave short messages, in the form of a sticky note, to your visitors. The Talk Bubble is also interesting here, because it really makes text stand out. All of these things add flavor to your page, while allowing you to get the message that you want to portray out to your visitors, in your own words. Also check out 'The Most Important Thing' module under this heading.

Next, click on the 'Interact' tab. Here, you might consider adding comments. If you are interested in making money directly from your Squidoo page – as opposed to making product from product sales of your own product – click on the 'Sell Stuff' tab, and add some of those modules as well.

The modules listed under the 'Widgets' tab are great for bringing content into your page. You can add everything from horoscopes to Hollywood gossip to news. Just be careful with these widgets, because you really want to keep your lens 'on topic' and many of these widgets will be completely off topic.

Finally, make it a point to click on the 'Search A – Z' tab. Not all of those tabs list all of the available modules, and you will need to do a letter by letter search to see what all is available to you.

One particular Squidoo Lens that you should visit is located at http://www.squidoo.com/Squidoo_Design. Here, you can get a logo designed for your lens, for free. Take advantage of this, because it is one way to really 'dress up' your Squidoo Lens, and make it a bit different from everyone else's. The person who owns this particular lens does fantastic work, and in this case, you really can't beat 'free.'

You will definitely want to add video to your Squidoo lens, and Squidoo makes this incredibly easy. Furthermore, you can add your own videos (meaning videos that you actually make) or bring in videos made by others, which relate to your topic.

You can have those videos automatically selected for you, or select them yourself. The choice is completely yours. You can also have full sized videos appear on your lens, or thumbnails of up to nine videos. Everybody loves video, so take full advantage of this.

Note that while having the videos automatically selected for you is nice and saves lots of time, because you want to be different, you might consider hand picking your videos, to ensure that the videos that are being fed into your site are not the same videos being fed into other lenses that cover the same topic, and use the same keywords that you use.

Someday, maybe Squidoo will give us more options concerning the layouts and overall look of our Squidoo lenses. Today, however, we have to work with what they've given us. Just remember that you can set your lens apart from other peoples, through the use of a logo, videos, and modules, but in the grand scheme of things, you can't really make it look 'all that much different.'

While you may view this as a negative thing, you could also view it as a positive. You don't have to worry that a competitor is being more creative than you, and drawing more attention than you. You can be comfortable in the knowledge that while your Squidoo lens cannot be any worse than anyone else's, it can actually be slightly better than everyone else's. It may not 'look' better, but it can certainly be more interesting!

Finally, when it comes to spicing up your Squidoo Lens, don't be shy. It is true that many people use Squidoo simply to get more traffic to their website or blog. At the same time, however, many are learning to sell their products directly from their Squidoo page. Use the write/text modules, and other modules that allow you to import HTML code. Put a picture of your product with a description, and link it to your order page (not your sales page).

Just make sure that in doing this, that your Squidoo lens doesn't become anything more than a catalog of your products. Make sure that there is valuable, on topic content there as well. You will be amazed at what this simple thing does for your sales.

Actively Market Your Lens

While Squidoo lenses do well in the search engines, and the Squidoo team works hard to promote Squidoo, you must realize that some level of promotion is also needed from you, in order to bring more attention and traffic to your Squidoo lens.

So, why should you spend time promoting your lens when you could just as easily spend time promoting your sales page? You should do this because Squidoo is fun...and your sales page probably isn't. People can interact with Squidoo, but can seldom interact with a sales page. Squidoo is interesting, and while sales pages have some level of interest, they aren't as interesting as Squidoo.

Obviously, the first thing you want to do, and continue to do, is to be a part of the Squidoo community. Join and participate in groups. Visit other lenses and participate on those. Make sure that your own lens is interesting, and when people participate on your lens, contact them and acknowledge them.

Use the features that Squidoo provides to get the word out about your lens. Click on 'My Account,' and then on the 'My Stats' link at the top of the page. Near the top, you will see a link that says 'brag about your lenses.' Click that link, and start sending emails about your lens to everyone you know. Invite them to join in on the fun.

Next, go to your blog and post about your new Squidoo Lens. Don't post just once. Post now, and post again in a week or so about how much you are

enjoying Squidoo. Also consider blogging about other interesting Squidoo lenses, and of course make mention of your own lens in those posts as well.

Ask others to blog about your Squidoo lens. This works great if the blogger is a personal friend, or a blogger that you have come to know fairly well in your blogging endeavors. Contact anyone who has made mention of your blog on their blog, and ask them to mention your Squidoo lens. Offer to do the same for them, in the event that they have a Squidoo lens.

Next, take the time to hit all of the social networking sites that you belong to, and of course, mention your lens on those profiles. Send messages to everyone on all of those friends' lists informing them about your Squidoo lens. Build your lens as well by asking them to send you the link to their Squidoo lenses.

You probably belong to forums and groups outside of the Squidoo network. If so, let them know about your Squidoo lens. Make sure that you aren't breaking any rules by doing so, and if need be, instead of a direct mention, add a link and description to your Squidoo lens in your signature file.

Write a few articles, and link to your Squidoo lens in the article, or at the very least, in the Author's Resource box. Submit those articles to at least ten article directories.

When you have your lens really jazzed up, take the time to compete for the Lens of the Day contest at Squidoo. Information regarding this can be found at <http://www.squidoo.com/groups/lotd>.

Bring people back to your lens time and time again. Using the write/text module, include a subscribe box on your Squidoo lens. Use this to build a list, and each time you add something new to your Squidoo lens, send out an email and invite them to come back. This list can also be used for direct email marketing as well. Naturally, if you have an existing list, you will definitely want to send out an email to that list about your new Squidoo Lens as well.

Finally, use any opportunity that you can to promote your Squidoo Lens. Tell people about it whenever you have the opportunity. Tell them how much fun it is. If they ask a question, instead of giving them the answer, tell them that the answer is on your Squidoo page, and that they would get more out of reading it there, then listening to your verbal answer.

Do what you have to do to get them to your Squidoo lens, and you will be amazed at how much more additional traffic that brings in...simply through their actions at Squidoo, or through word of mouth, when they tell someone else. It

may feel like you are promoting Squidoo, and while you are, you are also, in essence, promoting your presence on Squidoo as well.

As you can see, there are multiple – fast and easy – ways to promote your Squidoo Lens. Now, again, why would you spend time doing this, instead of promoting your website or blog?

That has been answered, but another thing concerning this, which it is important to note, is that you can spend about a week actively promoting your Squidoo Lens, and find that lens, using your keywords, near the top of the Google search results. You can spend months doing the exact same promotional techniques for your website or blog, and not get very high in the listings at all.

Simply put, the search engines just seem to love Squidoo Lenses, and those seem to get indexed much faster, and much higher up in the food chain, than blogs or regular websites. Only Google can tell us why this is – and they ain't talking. Once you're Squidoo Lens has been properly and actively promoted for a while, it will begin to take on a life of its own, and you won't have to spend so much time promoting it. However, you should keep a close eye on your stats, and if you notice that your rank is declining, you might want to start actively promoting the lens again.

Conclusion

Squidoo really is quickly becoming the ultimate online sales tool. It is true that you can make sales using social networking sites, and numerous people have been highly successful at it. More people have been more successful - if not more successful - using Squidoo than they have by using the other social networking sites.

The fact that one lens leads to another, which leads to another and so on is probably why people are having so much success with Squidoo. It's like blogging, but more successful than the blogosphere. You could post to a blog everyday, and do little or no promotion, and maybe have one or two loyal readers. You can create a huge expensive website, and maybe get five or six visitors a week – if that, unless you spend a great deal of time and money on advertising.

While we've mentioned that promoting your lens – initially – is important, the truth is that you could create your lens, link to a few popular lenses, and never do another lick of promotion, and your lens could still be read and successful. You really can't say that about any other site on the Internet – or any other promotional technique.

With the use of Squidoo, you don't have to worry so much about blogging everyday, and not having anyone read what you are writing. If you are using RSS with your blog and Squidoo, you will find that your blog actually is getting read, even if nobody is visiting – because they will read it from your Squidoo lens.

In a sense, Squidoo can actually become a 'set it and forget it' form of promotion – although the chances that you would 'forget it' are slim, simply because it really is interesting, and it really is fun.

As mentioned, it is possible to sell products directly from your Squidoo lens, and you don't have to worry about the layout or the sales copy or the colors that you use, or any of the things that you worry about with a traditional sales page. All you have to do is be interesting, and participate in the Squidoo community – and success is practically guaranteed.

My Top Resource:

-8-Your Resource Name 1-8-

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