



Promoting With Newsgroups (The quick fix)

This section is a basic tutorial of what newsgroups are, and how to use them. If you already know this stuff, skip to the bottom of the page for **'Newsgroup Tips'**

The easiest - and quickest - way to build traffic is to post to "Newsgroups". A newsgroup is like a giant bulletin board. People post messages to it, and respond to messages posted by others. You can respond to either the person who wrote the message, the entire newsgroup or both. There are almost 60 different newsgroups covering antiques and collectibles. Most allow general "commercial" messages ("Brand New Web Site!"); some allow for sale (FS) and want-to-buy (WTB) ads. Some get very upset, or "flame" you for posting FS and WTB messages, though usually someone will tell an obvious "newbie". One giveaway as to what the site allows is the word "marketplace" in the newsgroup's name, where, generally, FS and WTB are a mainstay. If you are not sure, either scan the newsgroup for a few days or a week to see the general content, or just ask before you post a message to a group with which you are unfamiliar. Newsgroups are a great way to promote your Web site.

If you use Netscape as your browser, you have access to "Netscape News" which is one way to access the newsgroups. When you are in your Web browser click on the word "Window" at the top of the screen then scroll down to "Netscape News" and click on it. This will bring up the Netscape News window which should already have a "default news host" selected. There should be a small unopened folder on the upper left portion of the window. The host is usually called "news.(your internet service provider)". For example, I use a company called earthlink, so my default news host is "news.earthlink.net". If you have a problem getting this set up ask your internet service provider for help.

Next, double click on "the default news host" folder. This should open it. Now, click on "File" in the upper left corner of the menu at the top of the screen. Scroll down to "Add Newsgroup", click on it. A small window will appear at the center of the screen. This is where you will type in the name of the newsgroup you want to "subscribe" to.

The two most popular of the "commercial" antique and collectible newsgroups are probably rec.antique.marketplace and rec.collecting,. Type one of these into the window and click on OK. The newsgroup will be added to your list on the left side of the "Netscape News" window. If you want this newsgroup to appear the next time you open "Netscape News", you need to click in the box following the name of the newsgroup, so that a check mark appears.

Once the newsgroup is loaded into "Netscape News", double click on it, and it will start to download messages on the right side of the window. This works like email, just click on the message you want to read, and it will download that message at the bottom of the page. To send a message to the entire newsgroup, click on the first square in the upper

left hand corner of the window marked "To:News". A window will open to write your message. Remember, this message is going to the entire newsgroup, not just one person.

Here are some new user (newbie) tips;

1. Monitor, or read the newsgroup before you post a message to it. Some newsgroups get really upset if you post a commercial message. Make sure this is "allowed" before you post. It just takes a few minutes to look over the types of messages that are in a newsgroup. If you see people posting messages about their commercial Web site, or people are buying and selling items, it is probably ok to post. If you are still not sure, post a message to the group, asking if it is ok. Even though it IS easier to type, don't use all caps for your message as that is considered "shouting" and will also annoy others in the group. All caps is ok for the subject line, however.
2. Only post to newsgroups that deal in what you are selling or promoting. As an example, don't post a message about dolls you have for sale in rec.toys.cars You will just get people upset and yourself flamed.
3. Don't overpost. Three or four times for one subject, per week, per newsgroup is probably enough. If people complain, then cut back. You don't want people to automatically skip all your postings because there are sooooo many of them! Phrase the subject differently each time or try to have something new to offer. If you post the same message every day, people will just ignore it, or ask you to cut back on the posting. If you are tempted to make several postings to one group each day, DON'T. Condense them into one post, something like: Great Roseville, Weller, & Van Briggie, then list each of the items in one message with your email or URL.

Newsgroup Tips

1. I've found the best time to post is between 12pm and 3pm Eastern Standard Time. This is when the most people are on-line. Anytime is a good time to post, but I've found that I get a slightly better response to messages if I hit this time slot. I try to post 3-4 times a week to about 22 different newsgroups each time.
2. In the "subject" space of the message you are going to post, try using capital letters with S P A C E S between them. Your subject will really stand out from the hundreds of others that are listed. For instance, take a look at this list of subject headers that might appear in a newsgroup:

dead cat vase for sale
 broken teapot wanted
 chipped vase, need info
 found 1million cash
 N E W W E B S T O R E
 free antiques to good home

stolen 1996 penny
baby shoes 4 sale

3. "New Web store" stands out from the crowd, even though it is not the most interesting of the bunch. This technique only works with short subjects, though, and shouldn't be over used.
4. Try to make the "subject header" of your post, something that will catch the readers attention. Keep it as brief as possible. If it is too long, the end is cut off in most viewers.
5. Probably the two most popular antique and collectible related newsgroups that allow commercial posting are: rec.antiques.marketplace and rec.collecting. Post to as many of these as you can, as long as your merchandise fits the newsgroup.
6. In the message you post, make sure to include the URL or Web address of your store, so the customer can find it! This may sound ridiculous, but people do forget to put it in their messages. One of the easiest ways to do this is to have your URL be part of your signature, which is typically covered in the "Preferences" section of your news service.
7. Another good place to post to are the newsgroups in America On-line. We all seem to get those AOL disks in the mail with "10 Free hours". AOL has their own newsgroups for antiques and collectibles. They are not accessible to the rest of the Internet. So, take those 10 free hours of time, and tell all those AOL users about your Web site.
8. When you update your site, post a message to newsgroups. Customers love a "fresh" site with new inventory. Let them know you have new stuff. If you have good online customers who are looking for particular items, however, you might want to give them first crack at anything new, just as you would with regular customers who frequent your stores.
9. Run occasional promotions. If and when your inventory becomes a bit top heavy, offer 10% or 15% off (more if you can), and post the "sale" to the newsgroups, too (as well as to your customers).
10. Check around for list servers. Some sites, like TIAS, have several on-line mailing lists which cater to specific collecting groups such as art glass, fine china and clothing buttons. Membership is free, and often attracts additional buyers and sources for more collectibles. These are very similar to newsgroups, but you are connected via your email rather than a bulletin board format. This is a great way to promote your site. If you have the time, you might want to consider running your own group in areas you have expertise or want to get expertise. TIAS is very helpful in this area. Just ask for more information.