

# The Traffic Exchange Manual

by

**StartXchange**  
Delivering free traffic since 2001

v1.0

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## About this eBook

This eBook was written by Tim Linden. You may freely pass it around without modifying it in any way. Just remember to pass it around with your StartXchange referral link!

The idea behind the eBook is to help members dive into the world of traffic exchanges. Too many people fail to use them properly, and the end result is them posting on their blog that they don't work. I'd like to change that.

## Special Thanks

Special thanks to [Craig of E-Blah](#) for the inspiration of the format of the eBook. Also thank you to the following members who gave me some feedback to improve it:

revjoybunny - <http://www.joybunnysartdesigns.co.uk>

Grant (drkelp) - <http://www.angelfire.com/md/haematology/electrum.html>

Pat Marcello (patm7) - <http://ovweb.net/>

## Internet Security

Before diving into the world of traffic exchanges, or anything online for that matter, you should make sure your computer is secure from Internet threats. This chapter should only be considered a guide, I can't be responsible for your own surfing.

### Windows Updates

Since most surfers are using windows, it is crucial that you keep your copy of windows up to date. You can do this by going to [www.windowsupdate.com](http://www.windowsupdate.com) – or you can set your copy to automatically download updates for you. Either way you do it, it IS necessary and skimping out on it is not advised.

### Anti-Virus Programs

Well you do have one don't you? If not, download [AVG Freeware](#). There are many other anti-virus programs out there. I always recommend AVG Freeware to friends and family.

### Anti-Spyware Programs

I personally don't use an anti-spyware program. However if you aren't very computer savvy I'd recommend you download one. Since I don't use them, I can't recommend one for you so ask your friends what they use.

### Firewall Programs

As with the other programs, there are tons of firewalls available. I use [Zone Alarm](#), ask your friends what they use. Firewalls can sometimes seem unnecessary, however I don't recommend skimping out on them. They can alert you to programs on your computer that are trying to access the Internet, sometimes without your permission!

## Introducing Traffic Exchanges

Before we dig into how to use traffic exchanges, we first need to explain a little bit about what they are. The terms that are used can be confusing, and can be used to reference other ways to advertise.

### Traffic Exchange Defined

A traffic exchange is a website where visitors exchange traffic with each other by viewing each other's website. It becomes confusing for many users largely because many other types of exchanges call themselves traffic exchanges. This can include banner exchanges, link exchanges, pop-up exchanges, etc.

The traffic exchanges we know today started out as “start page exchanges”. The idea was simple: You'd set your browser start page as your home page, and you'd see a website every time you opened your browser.

It changed when many users wanted to earn more traffic faster. They wanted to be able to click a link and view another website. It also changed when users started using various methods and tactics to make the start page shown more.

Today traffic exchanges are all about surfing. You set some time each day to surf, and click a link each view to view the next page.

### Manual Vs Auto

There are some traffic exchanges that call themselves “auto” exchanges. These exchanges do not require a user to click next to view the next site. It simply loads after the timer reaches zero.

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The side effect is that the user can walk away from their computer and leave it running. Some even encourage “advertising while you sleep”. Since most users aren't viewing the sites, the quality of the traffic is poor.

It should also be noted that many harmful sites can be found in auto exchanges, because the users know you aren't likely to be watching. They know they can slip in a bad website and it can go unnoticed for a long period of time.

Manual exchanges on the other hand have some kind of system to ensure the user is surfing and viewing the page. This also means that the users are paying more attention, so if bad websites do enter rotation, they are reported quickly and removed quickly.

## Traffic Exchange Basics

Now we'll go over the basics. If you don't know them, don't feel bad. We all had to learn them at one point.

### Getting the Newsletter

When signing up, it is tempting to create a “junk” email account. Well I highly encourage you not to do this. In fact, I encourage you to read the newsletters. Most exchanges will send one out once a week, and things can change. We owners would appreciate it, because most support requests are answered in the newsletter already.

With StartXchange, I use a blog to send out the newsletter. Why? Well there are a couple reasons. Some people already subscribe to blogs, so adding another RSS feed to your feed reader is simple, and it's one less email in your inbox (or potentially the spam folder). The next reason is I use a third party service to send out the newsletter emails. They have the system setup so they can send out the newsletter fast, without it affecting the server's performance. They also take care of the bounced emails, spam reports, and give stats.

### Adding a Website

The first thing you'll need to do is add your website into rotation. It's simple, you grab the URL of the website you are advertising, and put it in the input form. Pay close attention to any pages that list the rules, or ask you a question after you hit submit. Many people get their website deleted because they click “No” when it asks if their site has sound. I allow sound, but only if you tell me it contains sound ;-)

## Adding Banners

You can also advertise banners on most traffic exchanges. Banners are just simple graphics that you can click on. The “Ad URL” is the URL of the actual banner. It must be a JPG, GIF, or PNG image. The “Site URL” is the website you want the visitor to goto when they click on the image.

Banners are reviewed by me before they are rotated. I usually check them at least once per day. Please don't add some banners and email me telling me you added them, this only takes more time for me to go through my email! I check reported websites and banners before checking my email, so I've already checked your banner before I've read your email ;-)

## Adding Forum Ads

Forum Ads are displayed on the forum. You earn ad impressions by using the forum. The forum ads display your text and your photo, and link to the site you are advertising. You give a title, two lines of text, and the display URL. The Actual URL is the website they are taken to when they click the link. The display URL is a portion of the Actual URL. I recommend just putting the domain as the display URL.

## Assigning Credits

On StartXchange, a credit is worth one hit. Some exchanges require more credits per hit. To receive traffic to your website, you'll need to assign those credits to your website. This simply tells the exchange which pages to send traffic to. If you don't assign credits, you won't receive any traffic.

You'll need to assign credits after you earn or purchase credits. One easy way to assign them is to use "auto-assign". On StartXchange, "auto-assign" will split all the available credits between all your websites. You have to click the "Assign" button on the surfbar to use it. Other exchanges "auto-assign" means the credits you earn while surfing are assigned as you surf.

No matter which way you do it, **assigning credits to your website is crucial**. Not doing so means you aren't getting traffic, which is the whole reason for surfing.

## Surfing Websites

Surfing is the process of earning credits. You view a website for 20 seconds, and then click a button to view the next site. Some exchanges have a different timer, or a different style button, but the process is the same.



With StartXchange there are 6 shapes that load. Simply click one of the two matching shapes. In the example above you would click either of the two stars because there are two of them.

## Reporting Websites

**REPORT** As you surf you may come across websites that have content that isn't allowed. Simply click the Report Button. It will give you a list of the last 5 pages you've viewed, so even if it closes the window or causes a crash, you can report it.

## Building a Downline

Building a downline is optional, but highly recommended.

### The Benefits of a Downline

It's simple really. You tell people about StartXchange, and receive a percentage of the traffic they earn. So as they surf, you earn traffic. If you get a lot of people to sign up, you can earn quite a number of hits!

### The basic referral URL

Your referral URL is the link to StartXchange that tells StartXchange it was you who sent them. If you don't use it, then we'll have no idea it was you, and you won't get credit. Below you'll see the referral URL for StartXchange. You'd replace "xxclixxx" with your actual username (that's my username).

<http://www.startxchange.com/?referer=xxclixxx>

### The splash page URL

The splash page URL is the link you'd advertise in other traffic exchanges. The splash pages are quick loading pages that grab the surfer's attention, and ask them to open up StartXchange in a new window.

What's even better: I'm tracking the splash pages and adding, tweaking, and deleting pages from rotation all the time. You don't have to worry about choosing the right splash page. I have the stats to show which ones are working! Again, replace xxclixxx with your username ;-)

<http://www.startxchange.com/refer.php?referer=xxclixxx>

## The rotator URL

After you add your websites to StartXchange, you can use the rotator URL to rotate them on other exchanges. At the same time you'll be advertising StartXchange since there is a small frame that includes your referral link. It also has a link to open your site in a new window.

There will be more about the rotator later in another chapter. Just remember to replace xxclixxx with your StartXchange username!

<http://www.startxchange.com/r/xxclixxx/>

## Using Banners

Just about every traffic exchange offers you banners you can use to advertise with. You then insert the Banners and your Referral URL into other exchanges and websites, and can build a downline that way.



**I use StartXchange, do you?**

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With StartXchange you can create your own custom banners. These banners have your photo in them. This helps with branding yourself (more on that later). To make the banners you'll need a photo of yourself in JPG, GIF, or PNG file format. Then you simply goto the banner creator and upload the photo. It then resizes the image and inserts it into the banners.

[Tools > StartXchange Banner Creator](#)

## The second Downline

StartXchange also gives you a second downline. This downline isn't your typical downline. It's solely based on your activity. StartXchange has activity levels (further explained later) and the higher you rank, the better the second downline you have.

Every night your second downline is regenerated. So if you don't surf, you'll have someone else that doesn't surf in your downline, and you won't get any extra credits. But if you rank high, you'll get someone who ranks high (a level below you) and you'll get free hits!

## The Activity Levels

StartXchange has a unique activity level system. The idea is simple: I want people who are actually using StartXchange to get the most benefit. If you help me out and surf, I'll try to help you out the best I can.

## Ranks vs Levels

Every member is given a unique rank. Your rank shows where you are in comparison to other members. Each member is also given a level, which is based off their rank. Each level has a different number of members. The first level has one member, the second two, the third has four, and it keeps going on like that doubling each level.

## Points vs Credits

Activity Points are used to create your rank. If you have 100 points, and your friend has 50 points, you'll have a higher rank than your friend. That is ALL they are used for, calculating your rank. Credits are used for actual hits. If you have 100 credits, that means I owe you 100 hits to your website.

## Earning Activity Points

Earning activity points happens in a few ways. The biggest way is surfing. Every page you view, you'll get activity points. The actual number of points depends on your membership type: Free or Upgraded (each upgrade has a different amount too).

You can also receive points for referring new members, purchasing credits, impressions, or upgrades, reading the newsletter (you have to retrieve a code), posting in the forum, and linking to StartXchange.

## Activity Level Nightly Updates

Each night activity levels are re-generated. This happens for two reasons. If it were to happen live as you surf, it would require much more resources. It would also mean that you could lose your level very easily. Having it update each night means you'll be on that level for at least one whole day.

## Activity Level Weekly Updates

Each week, Sunday Night to be exact, the activity levels do something weird. Or so it seems. What happens is a week of statistics is dropped. This is to ensure new members can rank highly just as much as older members. The side effect is drastic changes in rank.

## Spending Money

You can use most traffic exchanges without any costs. However, spending some money can bring faster results. The saying goes “It takes money to make money”.

## Upgrading your Account

With almost every exchange, you have the option to upgrade your account. You'll get a better surf ratio, that is, you'll earn more traffic as you surf. You also typically get a lump sum of credits every month you are upgraded.

Some other benefits include a higher referral ratio (you get more credits for your downline surfing) and random referrals. That's where the owner (that's me!) advertises the exchange, and all the people who sign up because of it are given a random upgraded member as their referrer.

StartXchange also gives upgraded members more activity points for every page viewed. That means you can rank higher in the activity levels faster and with fewer page views.

## Buying Traffic

Sometimes it is nice to buy a bunch of traffic, and take a break from surfing. That is where buying traffic comes in. Just remember when buying traffic, not every exchange uses 1 credit for 1 hit. Some take 4 credits for 1 hit, so take that into consideration when comparing. On StartXchange 1 credit = 1 hit.

## StartXchange Teams

One great unique feature of StartXchange is the teams. Some exchanges let you compete to get into different groups, but here you get to pick the team you are on! This means you'll be competing with the same teammates each month.

### Choosing a Team

Choosing a team is the toughest part. If you are in contact with the person who referred you to StartXchange, ask them what team they are on. That way you can further network with them. If they don't have a team, or you don't know who referred you, check out the forum.

You can always change teams later, so don't fret too much over it. Some teams require you to surf so many sites per month to be included in their winnings. Talk to the team leaders, or post in the team discussion board. If you are new to StartXchange it would be a good idea to go with a team who has an active team leader, that way you know you'll get the help you need.

The link to view the Teams is "[Browse Teams](#)". Click the team you wish to join, and then their team page will list the people on the team. There is either a link "To join this team, click here." Teams can go private. If that happens, simply ask the Team Leader via the forum's private message system.

### Team Competitions

Competing with your team is the fun part. You get to compete against other teams in three categories. "Top Surfing", "Top Average Surfing", and "Top Referring". At the end of each month the jackpot is split into 3, and the top team in each category gets the prize.

## The StartXchange Rotator

What is a rotator? Well a rotator is simply a page that shows one of your sites randomly. The idea is simple, you put all your sites into the rotator, and then you only have to add the rotator to every exchange. Then if you want to add a new site or remove an old one, you just have to do it to the rotator, and not to every exchange.

### The sites in your Rotator

StartXchange's Rotator uses the URLs in your URL Manager automatically. You don't have to add them separately to the rotator.

### Setting Priority

You can change the priority of the websites in rotation simply by clicking the “High” “Med” or “Low” options in the rotator url list.

### Using Tags

Tags are a simple way to add more tracking to your rotator. If you use a traffic coop, you can use a tag to show you the traffic coming from the coop. In the example below, “xxclixxx” should be your username, and “taggoeshere” can be any tag you wish. You can even use that text if you really want to!

<http://www.startxchange.com/r/xxclixxx/taggoeshere/>

## Advertising Effectively

You've learned HOW to use traffic exchanges, but there is more to that. You want to advertise effectively right? You want those hard earned hits to go to good use.

## Branding on Exchanges

In the offline world business brand themselves like crazy. You see a zillion commercials for companies you already know about. Yet they still advertise their brand. They want you to remember that they are still around.

The same goes for traffic exchanges. Branding goes a long way. It builds trust and it shows users that you are still around.

So what do you brand? Many people are promoting multiple websites. What do you do then? Well brand yourself of course! YOU are the key link between all the sites you are promoting. YOU are the person you want the user to trust.

You want the user to see your name and/or photo and instantly think, "What is this? If [your name] is promoting it, I better take a look!" When that happens, traffic exchanges become very effective!

To be really effective with branding yourself, remember to use your name and photo wherever possible. In StartXchange you can upload your photo (Tools->Upload Photo) and it will use it as your forum avatar, and you can create custom banners with your photo.

## Splash Pages

Not the dreaded splash page! You mean I'll have to actually create my own **unique** splash pages? Yes, if you want to be effective.

Promoting the same affiliate link that everyone else is promoting, isn't going to attract much attention. On top of that, you don't know how effective the advertisement really is. With your own splash pages, you do.

You can make up any excuse you want, but your business is up to you. I can't force you to make your business better! I can, however, provide some great tools to help you along the way!

That's why I created [TEtoolbox](#). The biggest excuse was "I don't know how to" or "I don't have the resources to". Well with TEtoolbox you can create splash pages with a simple editor in your browser. There are also 6,000 clip art images you can use, so you can get creative and attract some attention!

## Tracking your Splash Pages

Tracking is crucial! Did you know that the search giant Google tracks everything? Did you know every time you click a search result it passes through a tracking script so they know what people are clicking on?

Traffic Exchanges need tracking too. You want to know which pages are generating interest, and which pages are just wasting credits. It's as simple as tracking the clicks on the splash pages. Just remember to try the pages out for a decent amount of time before scrapping a certain page. I try to throw at least 1,000 hits to each page before taking the click-through ratio into consideration.

There are many tracking services available online. If you are using TEtoolbox it actually has one built in. Just remember to actually LOOK at the stats, and be prepared to drop splash pages you think are oh so great but are not getting any clicks.

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When tracking, also look for odd patterns. I found out my links were broken when one page received a **948.31%** CTR! A ratio over 100% means that each person clicked the link at least once. When viewing it, I saw that the link was broken so they were trying again! The same goes for very low ratios, check that you actually have the trackers setup!

## Traffic Exchange Forum


Forums can be intimidating. Forums can get ugly. The StartXchange Forum is different! You'll find many members with a variety of experience. You don't need to be an expert to participate, and the benefits are great!


### Benefits of Using the Forum

The first benefit is relationships! You can network with other members and build your business. You can also talk with your teammates in your team's own private forum! Besides that, you also get some great help and activity points ;-)

### Forum 101

The forum is made up of different "Boards" and "Threads". You can think of a "Board" as a folder on your computer and "Threads" as the files in those folders.

To post in the forum you first need to select the most relevant board. Then click the "new thread" icon. 

To reply to someone else's post you'll need to be viewing the thread. You can then reply using the quick reply form at the bottom of the thread, or click the "copy" icon. 

Sending and receiving Private Messages (PM) is easy. You can send one by clicking a user's username in the forum, and on the right side towards the middle there is a "Send a Private Message" link. Receiving private messages is easy too, the top right of the forum will tell you how many you have and how many are new.

**Warning:** Spamming on the forum or private messages will get your forum account disabled.

## Useful Information

This chapter is about some useful information that isn't traffic exchange specific, but is good to know.

### RSS Feeds

The StartXchange Newsletter is in blog format. Blogs have what are called "RSS Feeds". RSS Feeds are just a specially formatted version of the blog content. This way blog readers can read the blog no matter how it looks on the site.

You can subscribe to RSS feeds using a feed reader. It's basically a program or website similar to reading emails, only it's reading the blogs for you. It downloads the latest updates from the blogs and lists them for your reading pleasure.

I've used Bloglines and recently Google Reader. I like them both. If you like the way Gmail is setup, you'd probably like the way Google Reader is setup. They are both web based, and you can download programs or plugins that will alert you whenever there is a new post to read (much like getting notified when a new email has arrived).

## Closing Remarks

Thank you for taking the time to read this eBook. I hope you found it informative and I hope it helps you succeed in the traffic exchange industry. You'll find many people, myself included, who have been using them for years.

I encourage you to participate in the [StartXchange Forum](#). You'll find a ton of great people there, and if you ever need any help there are plenty of people willing to help. The goal of the forum was to turn StartXchange into a Traffic Exchange Community, and we'd love it if you'd stop by!

I am always looking for ways to improve StartXchange. If you have any feedback, don't hesitate to contact me! You can PM me anytime, my username is "xxclixx".

Thanks again!

Tim Linden