

Ostriches in view on the Internet

Do ostriches really bury their heads in the sand?

The Internet is probably the only place you can find information about the most esoteric of topics.

But often the information is part of a marketing plan rather than knowledge for its own sake.

The Internet has evolved from an almost purely academic medium to a commercial one. This is often true of the World Wide Web.

Not long ago, a company that deals in ostriches got my attention. They claimed that they were the first to provide information about ostriches on the Internet. I, however, did find others who offered information about the long necked birds.

If you don't mind long web addresses, you'll find some interesting facts about the birds from a student's page at the University of Michigan (http://www.oit.itd.umich.edu/bio/doc.cgi/Chordata/Aves/Struthioniformes/Struthionidae/Struthio_camelus.ftl)

But most of the other information about ostriches has a commercial motive. They want your business.

One such company is the Ostrich Meat and Marketing Company (<http://www.omm.com.au/index.html>). They offer web travellers a great deal of information about ostriches, their history and facts about ostrich products, as well as the industry in Australia.

Their site isn't actually selling anything outright. They simply list their company address, fax and telephone numbers on their home page.

Another company in the Internet ostrich trade is Ostriches On Line. Based in Chicago, it is one company that isn't burying its head in the sand on Internet marketing.

"We're looking to create a world wide ostrich market. The Internet is the ideal place to do this," says Steve Warrington, president of Ostriches On Line.

Ostriches On Line have developed an interesting Internet marketing plan. Their web site offers information on ostrich farming, ostrich cuisine and a soft sell for investors interested in their business.

Warrington listed every web page connected with his site on numerous search engines. In fact, if you do a search on the Net



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for "ostriches," the first 50 sites that will be listed are most likely his.

In March, Ostriches On Line began publishing a weekly newsletter. Today, there are over 4,000 subscribers to it the world over. And Warrington says that he's adding 300 to 400 new subscribers a week.

With little more than a few ostrich eggs as investment, Steve Warrington and family started an ostrich farm in Manchester, England, in 1992.

Ostriches On Line (<http://www.achiever.com/ostrich>) — the actual Internet aspect of the business — began its Internet operation in late October of 1995.

Ostrich meat, leather goods and eggs for breeding are just a part of the Ostriches On Line's business. Warrington has business interests in at least 60 countries around the globe.

Warrington claims that he recognized an opportunity when he couldn't find anything about ostriches on the Internet. So, he decided to create a comprehensive site about the birds and related businesses.

Warrington knows that not all of his clients — mostly ostrich farmers — have Internet access. But they're still reading the weekly newsletter because others in the business are sending them copies of it, he says.

Ostriches On Line's clients include restaurant owners in the United States. Although he hasn't yet expanded into Canada, Warrington soon hopes to.

The biggest problem he faces is government regulations, says Warrington. The ostrich business has come under greater government scrutiny in many countries. In the US, the Securities Exchange Commission has investigated the ostrich trade after investors lost money.

And, as a final note, ostriches don't actually bury their heads in the sand. That's just a myth.

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