

No Matter Where You Go, There You Are

by Melanie O’Kane

This article is the property of Melanie O’Kane. You may not copy, redistribute or otherwise use this article without the express written permission of Melanie O’Kane. Copyright violators will be prosecuted to the fullest. Contact Melanie O’Kane at melanie@madtyping.com.

During a slow spell last week, I decided to visit my favorite search engines, Google and Yahoo, to examine various keywords like mad typing and consulting, virtual assistant Wisconsin, and so on. In this way, I could gauge my Web site’s popularity and organic SE (search engine) position.

Similar to past results, the data I gathered that day showed a pattern of consistency – no dramatic ups or downs. My business Web site had not gained in popularity, but it didn’t wane either. That was good.

Continuing on with my self-exploration, I clicked on one of the resulting links, which seemingly pointed to my Web site’s home page. You can imagine my surprise when this innocent click landed me on the dreaded “File Not Found” page. That was bad!

There was no question now that my curiosity had led me down a muddy path. What else could I do but dig my heels in and trudge along in hopes of clarifying the mystery before me.

And here’s what I discovered. The directory I stumbled upon provided a link, which was labeled www.madtyping.com. Unfortunately, it actually led to a Web page that used to be online but that I had removed from the WWW a couple of years ago. I concluded that, through the use of that hyperlink, a savvy surfer could easily assume that my business no longer existed – at least online – and would simply paddle on to more promising waters.

Luckily, I had only deleted that Web page from the online server and not from my hard drive. So I opened the file and created a redirect link of my own, which I then reconstituted back into my Web and re-posted to the Web server. Once the refurbished file was posted, visitors would no longer be taken to a dead-end page. Instead, they would be redirected to my home page – for real.

“Wow! How did you do that?”, you ask. Let me explain.

I began by deleting all content from the page (visible in Design view). I mean everything. Then, I switched to code view, which makes the HTML code visible and inserted the following HTML code below into the page between the <head></head> tags. This code will redirect any visitors who click on the “old” hyperlink found on the directory in question to my home page, <http://www.madtyping.com>.

```
<head>  
<meta http-equiv="refresh" content="0; url=http://www.madtyping.com">  
<script type="text/javascript" language="JavaScript"><!--  
    window.location="http://www.madtyping.com"//-->  
</script>  
</head>
```

The trick to this is not renaming the “old” file on your hard drive. Simply strip it down to the bare essentials and insert the above code. Save and replace the file using the exact same name!

When I finished republishing the HTML page to the Web, I checked to make sure it worked and was pleased to see that it had. Problem solved, right? Well, perhaps not...

I suddenly began to wonder about how many other Web sites contained links that sent visitors to non-existent Web pages. How many potential clients had sailed on passed MAD Typing because they thought we no longer existed? I would hate to venture a guess.

Please understand that when I began my VA practice, one of my goals was to get my business' name in, on and around as many relevant online locations as possible. My hope was that my organic search engine (SE) rankings would improve and thus decrease the amount of advertising and marketing dollars I needed to spend on building a client base. However, despite my good intentions, I had failed to follow up to ensure my information remained current and effective.

It was clear that, even though I had 'forgotten' about placing my business' information in that online directory, the hyperlink was still alive and kicking. What I had done was leave a little footprint in cyberspace, something I had created and then forgotten about as I moved forward.

The moral of the story is, don't forget to look around and take note of the tracks you leave and trails you create, because no matter where you go, there you are.

Melanie O'Kane is the Owner of MAD Typing and Consulting (MADTC), a professional virtual assistance (administrative support) firm headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, serving clients throughout the United States and Canada. MADTC specializes in executive administrative support; proofreading, editing and formatting; transcription; PDF conversion and form creation; event registration assistance; and e-mail newsletters. To learn more about Melanie and MADTC, visit her online at <http://www.madtyping.com>.