



Use FCH to Market Fasteners and Promote Your Business Online

FastenersClearingHouse.com

If you do business in the fastener industry in the 21st century, you should be using the Internet to drive your business. It's just that simple.

This is even more true as economic conditions cause resellers in every market area to search for better ways to attract new customers and to increase their overall visibility, all with a watchful eye on the bottom line.

Since it was launched more than two years ago, FastenersClearingHouse.com (FCH) has become a regular destination for thousands of fastener distributors and industrial buyers in search of hard-to-locate fastener inventory. Visits to the search engine website have grown every month, and January 2009 saw an increase in inventory searches of nearly 30 percent, despite the harrowing economic headlines.

If you haven't been using FCH (www.fastenersclearinghouse.com), then you've overlooked the largest industrial fastener database on the Internet.

The website is free to use as a searching and sourcing channel, and it features almost 350,000 line items from more than 150 North American distributors who list their inventory. Searches are commodity-based, and the database includes thousands of parts indexed by part number, mil-spec number and brand name.

"When we first entered the market, we had the challenge of introducing ourselves and letting the industry know we are here to stay," said Eric Dudas, FCH operations manager. "Lately, the majority of calls we make are to distributors who already know us and use our service. We're explaining our value proposition and showing them how simple and cost-effective it is to become a part of

the community. And we're showing them that the benefits go way beyond just selling excess inventory."

FCH members are able to list up to 10,000 line items on the website and update their inventory listings anytime using a secure web page. The process of uploading inventory is fast and easy.

The most common method is to upload a spreadsheet that is then run through FCH's proprietary "scrubber" software, rendering easy-to-search listings. The heavy lifting all happens behind the scenes. New members frequently remark with surprise at how quickly their list of shorthand and abbreviated inventory can be converted and added to the search engine database, where it can be seen by thousands of potential buyers, 24/7.

In many cases, making a few extra sales or winning a new customer is simply a matter of getting the word to the right person at the right time. As a virtual crossroads for the industry, FCH can be an extremely effective way to achieve this. Buyers come to the website when they can't find what they need elsewhere, typically when their usual supplier cannot deliver or when an import needed for a fast turnaround comes in short.

This underscores the idea that inventory sitting in your warehouse that you consider to be "slow-moving" might be considered "hard-to-find" by someone trying to locate it.

"During a very slow time of year, and since we uploaded our list about two weeks ago, we've had five inquiries, and we just finished shipping the second order," said FCH member George Carson of Anchor Bolt & Screw, Naperville, Illinois. "These were overstock items that would have been difficult to sell otherwise, and one of the customers was new to us."

Even as distributors have come to recognize FCH as a valuable sales channel, others are leveraging the website to funnel fully qualified leads to their sales teams using the SourceFinder system.

Here's how it works

When a user searches for a specific item using the FCH search engine, and there are no matching items in the database, they are offered the chance to send a real-time request to all participating FCH members. This routes a SourceFinder inquiry to all participating members based on their profile settings, and they are free to respond or not based on their interest in the inquiry. It's an optional system available to all FCH members at no additional charge.

"Some members use SourceFinder to their great advantage," Dudas said. "We've seen numerous four- and five-figure sales occur as a result of the system. We have a handful of members who joined simply for that part of the service. Thinking about it their way, who wouldn't want a steady stream of fully qualified leads coming in all the time? Others have no interest in it whatsoever and have disabled the system on their account. We deliver value to our various members in different ways, and it's their call."

This leads to yet another feature of FCH membership. Every participant receives complimentary banner advertising along with a link to their company website. Members' banner ads randomly rotate across the FCH site, and this provides a tremendous and often under-recognized benefit for FCH members.

Those who have spent time and money attempting to attract the attention of search engines such as Google, MSN and Yahoo know the process is not cheap or for the easily discouraged. The fact is that quality inbound links, such as those provided with FCH membership, are vital to building serious traffic to your website, and they also build credibility with the major Internet directories.

"My sales team relies on FCH to make sales all the time, but I was really impressed when I found my own site through FCH while doing a Google search!" commented



Joe Truckey of Cal Fasteners, Anaheim, California.

In many cases, companies that are successful in positioning themselves with the search engines are spending thousands of dollars a year to achieve their rankings. FCH includes a quality inbound link as part of membership at no additional charge.

joining because the site is accessible to users outside the fastener industry.

The fact is there is a wide mix of vendors, each with its individual business model and many that do business with other fastener distributors only. A quick search for a common fastener item on the website provides a fast survey of members to demonstrate this.

choose and at their own discretion.

Ask any FCH member who has used the service to their great advantage, and discover how well it can work for your company.

Better yet, try FCH for yourself by taking a FREE 30-day trial membership. List up to 10,000 line items and receive SourceFinder inquiries, too, at no cost or obligation. It's an offer designed to remove any barrier to entry. To take advantage of this offer, simply go to www.fastenersclearinghouse.com/join. In the Promotion Code field, enter FCH333. Your trial membership begins right away.

FCH is a great, cost-effective way to leverage the Internet to advertise inventory and to promote your business. You need to be there!

FCH is an independent search engine serving the industrial and commercial fastener industry by providing a place to buy and sell surplus, hard-to-find, and odd lot fastener inventory on the Internet. Founded in October 2006, FCH is based in Naperville, Illinois. ■

FCH MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO LIST UP TO 10,000 LINE ITEMS ON THE WEBSITE AND UPDATE THEIR INVENTORY LISTINGS ANYTIME USING A SECURE WEB PAGE. THE PROCESS OF UPLOADING INVENTORY IS FAST AND EASY.

FCH provides a full range of benefits for fastener distributors, and offers it all for a price less than the cost of a small ad in a trade magazine. The site has enjoyed success and continues to expand as a result. Yet some companies have refrained from

FCH supports distributor-to-distributor sales in several ways, including with a restricted "distributors-only" section and by making pricing information optional. Further, it is the site's expressed policy that members do business only with whom they

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Fastener Database
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"It's the 21st century, of course we use FCH."

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And do it all at no charge, with no commissions or line charges. When the need arises, you won't find a better way to locate hard to find fasteners than FCH.

It's the power of the Net. It's not just nationwide, it's worldwide.

It's where you need to be.

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