



Model of Excellence

ThomasNet

Company:

Business Model:

Thomas Industrial Network, Inc.
 (a division of Thomas Publishing Co., Ltd.)
New York, NY
www.thomasNet.com

**Advertising Supported:
 Free Listings with Paid Enhancements**

Overview of General Business Model Characteristics

The **Advertising Supported: Free Listings with Paid Enhancements** business model represents the traditional buying guides/yellow pages model executed online. The value of the free basic listing is it allows the database to be comprehensive in coverage, which builds usage that in turn drives demand for listing enhancements (which can take a number of forms, including online catalogs) from listed companies seeking increased visibility.

Models of Excellence Benchmarks

Thomas is one of the largest and most content-rich providers of Internet sourcing and marketing solutions for industrial buyers and sellers. Thomas has been a consistent innovator since the early days of the Web, taking chances while blazing new trails and showing the way for many others in the industry. This relentless embrace of the online medium, coupled with a willingness to buck trends in favor of what made the most sense for the product and the business, have earned it an unassailable position online along with iconic status as the poster child for what's possible in terms of advertising-supported online information products.

The company's latest, and arguably its most ambitious move, is the recent launch of ThomasNet, a combination of *Thomas Register* and its Thomas Regional Directory products into a single site. This move, which acknowledges that the Web recognizes no regional boundaries, is an impressive achievement, both in the technical implementation as well as the wrenching changes that were required in the company's organization and operation.

Thomas continues to innovate on all fronts. While the combination of these two databases gave the site tremendous breadth of coverage, Thomas continues to build out the depth of its database through a variety of initiatives. The search interface is smooth, powerful and intuitive. The optional visitor registration strategy it employs is an interesting compromise path for publishers torn between the two approaches. The range of advertising options fully illustrates the revenue potential of online buying guides. In short, ThomasNet offers a tremendous example of how powerful and profitable buying guides can be in online medium.