

How to Start Your Own Online Business

by

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LITTLEFIELD RESOURCE PRODUCTIONS

How to Start Your Own Online Business

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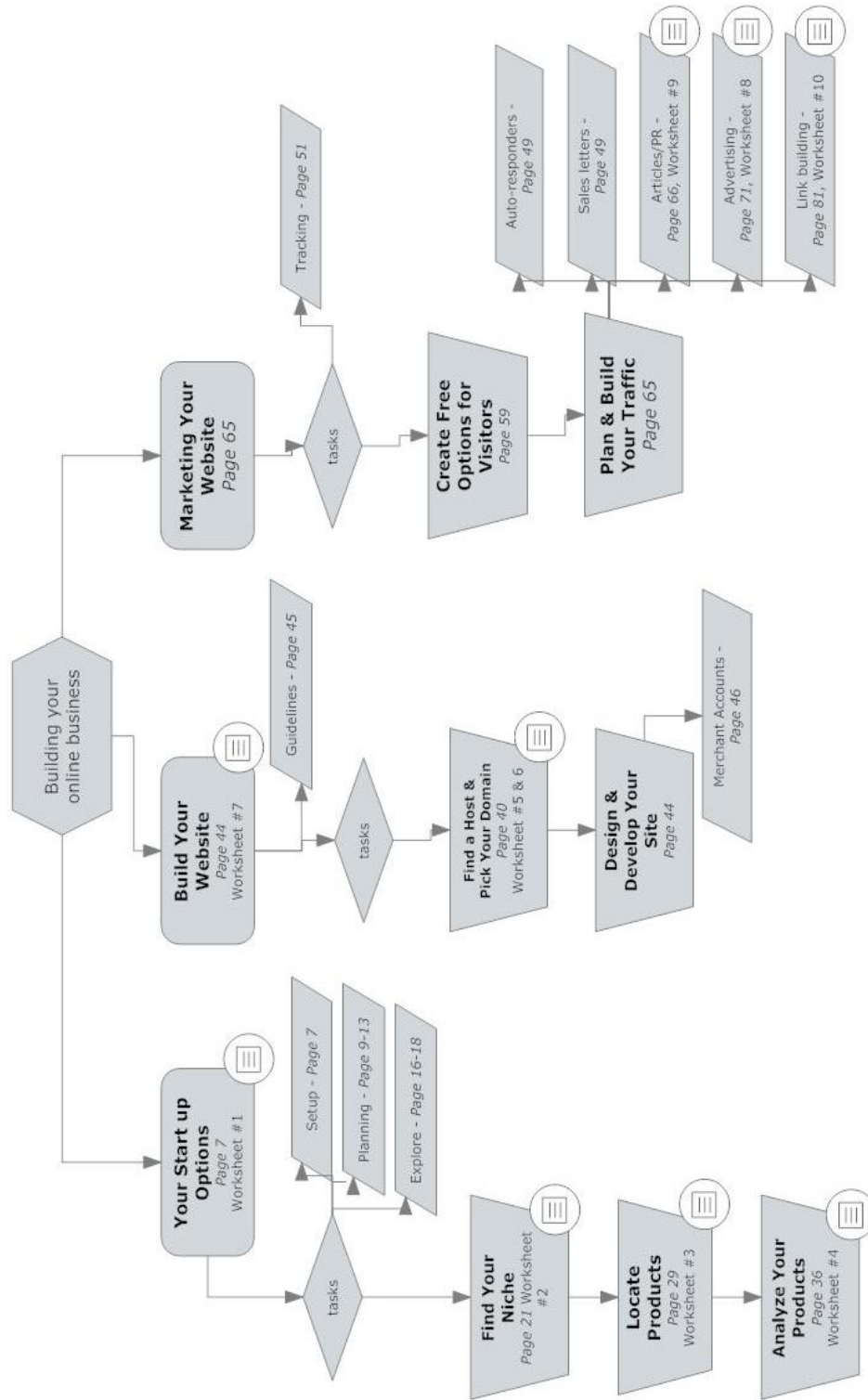
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Flowchart



Introduction

Starting your own online business can be very overwhelming. There is so much information that you may feel you will never absorb it. Take away the anxiety – our guide will walk you through the rough parts and help you on your way to online business success.

This e-book was created to help those of you who, like me, desire to develop one, or multiple, websites that will generate a monthly online cash flow. When I first began this process it soon became clear to me that although there was an overwhelming amount of resources and materials available on the subject, there were few who could help guide me through the process in a way that accounted for my non-technical knowledge base. This book is an effort to try and fill that void; the book is designed around a logical action flow model (see Figure 1) designed so that you can use it over and over again to build successful online businesses.

The process includes many resources, guides, tips, and definitions, to help you along the way. If you are a novice, or have limited knowledge on how to build your site, you may want to read the entire book before diving into your own project. For more advanced users, feel free to skip around and find only the information you need to make your site more successful.



The purpose of this book

The purpose of this eBook is to provide you a guide with which you can plan, research, develop, and implement successful online businesses. It is also designed to provide you with a wealth of internet resources.





Beware of “get rich quick” schemes. As I mention previously, this is not a guarantee of web business success, but should be used as a guide. As you begin to do your own research into developing your own web business, be very wary of information that promises success with little or no effort. These “too good to be true” schemes are usually little more than promises; you can be certain someone is making money, but it most likely will not be you.

Take time to learn the business. With this resource you will be able to implement many of its strategies for long term success, but the best results will come when you take the time to learn about the business. Once you learn about the web, and find good trusted sources, then you can discern which strategies to invest in and which to avoid.

This is a journey. The web continues to change and grow, so you will want to change and grow with it. Once you have mastered the steps and resources found in this guide, you will be well on your way to making a new path that works best for you and your business. So, let's get started by learning some terminology, discussing the process for developing your web-based business, and how to find great resources to help propel your vision. After all that, it will be your job to continue educating yourself on the new technologies and techniques. But first let's lay the foundation.

What this book is not. This book is not a guarantee of e-commerce success. As with any business, an online business will take dedication and hard work. And if you are new to the internet, it will require a fairly steep learning curve also. This book was designed as a resource to guide you through the requirements and processes necessary to build an online business, but you will have to do the rest. Do not panic, however. If you follow the guides outlined in this book, you will be well on your way to e-business success!

The Format

I C O N K E Y	
	Valuable Information
	Planning & Notes
	Tips & Ideas
	Terminology

How to use this book. This book is designed for ease of use, and to help you make mental notes as you progress so you can organize your efforts to build your site successfully. To help you accomplish that goal there are valuable reference points throughout the book so that you don't miss important information along the way.

The icon key above is a visual tool for much of the content in the book. It will help highlight important information that you won't want to miss. It will also provide you with working space and checklists to maximize your organization. You can then keep this book as a reference tool so when you need a resource you will have all the information you need right at your fingertips.

Items highlighted throughout this book include: 1) Valuable Information – information you won't want to miss; 2) Planning & Notes – these areas offer checklists and “to do” information in order to accomplish the goals discussed in that chapter; 3) Tips & Ideas – an area for development tips, resources or ideas; and 4) Terminology – defining key concepts to make it easier to understand what you are reading.

In addition, items [highlighted and underlined in blue](#) are internet resources. Use your favorite web browser and type the full resource name into the URL bar at the top to visit the listed resource.

Your unique goals. Each of you will have your own unique goals and objectives for your web business. Your goals will be more easily accomplished if you first have an idea of what they are before you begin. Use the checklist below to determine your most important goals for this learning effort. Use the empty lines to fill in goals that are not listed.

Keep these goals in mind as you go through the book so you will not overlook objectives and information that will help you meet these goals. If you need to learn specific information quickly you can skip chapters that won't meet your immediate needs. You can always come back to a skipped chapter later if you need to.



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH?

- Set up your new ecommerce business.
- Learn ecommerce basics.
- Acquire a comprehensive list of good resources.
- Determine what to look for in a host.
- Understand the eBook advantage.
- Establish a sense of the overall ecommerce business model.
- Learn an effective process to build and launch a web business.
- Understand the affiliate marketplace.
- Learn methods for finding products.
- Understand multiple options for driving traffic.
- _____
- _____
- _____

What is e-commerce?

E-commerce is a relatively inexpensive way to start a new business on the Internet. Once you understand how it works you'll be ready to jump in and start your own!

Ecommerce is growing at a much faster rate than traditional retail commerce. The Census Bureau, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, reports a recent quarterly increase in e-commerce business compared to the previous year's quarter to be about 19.3%; during the same period retail business rose only 3.8%. There is no indication that this trend will change any time soon. In fact, experts anticipate that new e-commerce businesses will continue to rise.

Forrester Research has estimated that online spending in the U.S. alone is expected to reach \$329 billion, up from approximately \$144 billion currently. As these trends continue new opportunities for e-commerce start-ups and business people just like you will develop!

The benefits of an e-commerce business.

There are many benefits of an e-commerce business over a brick-and-mortar one. First, e-commerce is less expensive. It is also a fast way for customers to connect with your products, and easier to start up. Irrespective of age, race, or personal appearance, online e-commerce is truly an equal opportunity employment venue. Your audience is the world with about 1 billion Internet shoppers!

Additionally, your site is open 24/7, even when you are busy doing other things like sleeping, vacationing, and enjoying life. E-commerce will continue to grow and evolve, so jumping on the wagon is a good economic investment if you already have a business, and a good business option if you are just starting out.

ECOMMERCE DEFINED



E-commerce is the exchange of goods and services through the Internet. E-commerce is also entwined with many other online services and business functions, including:

- A product(s) and/or service(s)
- A place which is your website
- A method to get people to your site
- A method to accept orders and payments
- Product fulfillment
- A method to accept returns and warranty claims, and
- Customer service and technical support.

Choose from many web business options

Now that you know what e-commerce is you are probably ready to begin, but do you have any idea where to begin? If you don't, you are not alone. There are thousands of e-commerce options; all these options can be confusing, and are riddled with techno-speak that can be difficult to sort through.

The web offers many creative ways to structure your business and make money online, but not every Internet business choice is for everyone. One of the purposes of this book is to help you wade through the miles of information so you can focus your planning efforts and explore the many of the options you have. From there you can begin to generate a picture of how you might approach the online market.

We will begin by formulating answers to a few simple questions. These questions are not all-inclusive, but are devised as a way to help get you started in the right direction. Some of the first questions to consider: *What will be the purpose of your site? What strategies will you use? How will you make a profit?*

Next, depending on your products or services, consider the following website options that may meet your business needs.



WEBSITE OPTIONS

- An informational site with paying advertisers
- Catalog sales
- Software sales which you develop or purchase, or sell as an affiliate
- A single product or families of products
- An informational site with affiliate links who will pay you a commission
- An informational site with your own products
- Your eBooks, digital pamphlets, workbooks, training, assessments, and webinars
- A front end product with back end e-books, consulting, training, coaching, or counseling
- Free offers linking to a front end product, add a newsletter and offer a back end membership for monthly annuity fees
- Training, coaching, or consulting services online with podcasts, tele-seminars, libraries, newsletters, RSS syndication, etc.

- Extension to your store front for international sales and service
- Web services such as hosting, marketing, auctions, directories
- Mix any of the above ideas
- _____
- _____
- _____

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A BUSINESS DIRECTION



Choosing an ecommerce business can be an exciting process, but keep in mind the following rules of thumb; they will help you avoid pitfalls and unexpected results.

- Catalog sites require more time to develop, stock and fulfill
- Utilizing more than one drop shipper and supplier adds complexity to your order fulfillment, returns, and control
- Affiliate marketing requires the visitor to leave your site
- Mixing products with more than 3 affiliates on the same site may confuse and lose visitors
- Paid advertisers require a lot of traffic from your site to be profitable
- Mixing a complimentary site's front end or back end with yours can help you get up and running faster
- Mini sites can get great results and are easier to set up and maintain
- Utilizing affiliates with high conversion rates, higher commission percentages, and low return rates is more profitable

Start Up Options and Resources

Starting an internet business is just like starting anything else – it requires you to put one foot in front of another, and begin!

This e-book is primarily focused on helping you effectively and efficiently plan your online business, but in order to do that you will first need a basic understanding of some of the technical options available, as well as what technical resources you will need.

Before you run away in frustration certain that you will never be able to grasp all the technical terminology and knowledge, have no fear. The information provided in this book is enough to get your feet on the ground and going. We will leave the more technically complex concepts to the experts and just guide you enough so that when you do run into something you are not familiar with, you will at least know where to go to find out more.

Your computer setup.

It is assumed that you have a reliable, relatively fast PC or laptop that is capable of handling newer software and hardware and a DSL or faster Internet connection in order to maximize your productivity. For more computer information you might try any of the leading brands like Apple or Dell Computer or Best Buy. Also explore www.computing.howthingswork.com.

Legal company entity

In discussions throughout this book it will also be assumed that you have set up your legal company structure such as Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Limited Partnership, Limited Liability LLC, S Corporation, or Corporation, and will appropriately handle accounting requirements when the funds begin rolling in.

For a chart comparing and contrasting legal company entities published by the US government go to the following website address using your favorite browsers. This link will download a Microsoft Word document you can then review offline:

www.sbdc.mt.gov/INCLUDES/DOR_Checklist_Revised_Text_6-03.doc.

Also, go to your state's government website. State's often outline the information on legal business entities, as well as provide references for your state's legal regulations and requirements.

Tax ID

You will need to apply for a Tax Identification Number, also known as an Employer Identification Number (EIN). Go to www.irs.gov for the appropriate forms or call 1-800-829-4933. To be eligible for an EIN your social security number must match your current name. If you have changed your name you will need to update your Social Security Card first using form SS-5. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov to download a copy.

Accounting Software

For accounting Quickbooks™ is a reliable standard for small business. You can download a “try before you buy” version at www.quickbooks.intuit.com.

Or, if you need a more robust inventory control and reporting system, Peachtree Accounting™ software may be a better fit. Visit www.peachtree.com for more information. Peachtree offers multiple versions with focus on specific industries as well.

You and the Copyright Laws

As you develop your e-commerce business it will be important to know the law. Copyright laws are very often overlooked on the Internet but are just as important online as they are for a brick and mortar business. Copyright laws are also dependent upon the type of products and/or services you provide. Once you know what type of business you will be developing you will want to do a thorough research for information on copyright protections.

Wikipedia states that copyright limits property rights to the author's method of expressing an idea and information. Copyright does not include the idea itself or facts or other public domain information that the author may have incorporated. The same ideas and facts may be used as long as the author's original work is not used.

Wikipedia states, “The United States copyright law protects "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works.



COPYRIGHT PROTECTED WORKS

- Literary
- Musical
- Dramatic
- Pantomimes and choreographic works

- Pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works
- Audiovisual works
- Sound recordings
- Derivative works
- Compilations
- Architectural works

Today's U.S. copyright laws do not extend to any idea, process or procedure, system, methods, concept or principles. Visit the Wikipedia website at the following location for a more complete description: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_copyright_law. If you have developed something that you want to sell online and you are uncertain about your property rights, consult a lawyer with expertise in copyright law. The one hour of legal fees could save you thousands in hassle in the future.

Anti-spam laws

Most will agree that spam continues to be an irritating problem. To retain customers and build trust you don't want to be lumped in with all the "spammers" of the world. Staying in compliance with anti-spam rules and regulations should help you stay above the fray.

Often new online business owners do not realize the significance of spam, and how it affects their ability to succeed online. Sending out unsolicited e-mail messages, no matter how innocent, can get your e-mail address, and possibly even your domain name, banned, forever!

For beginners, the simplest way of avoiding these pitfalls is by using a third party mailing list service, such as www.aweber.com. There are free and premium options available, though the premium service options are often safer as paid services work hard to ensure their client messages don't end up in the spam box. Sticking with a company more familiar to online users is also a safe way of avoiding getting thrown into the "spam" black list.

As a general rule, you should avoid sending messages to individuals who did not expressly "opt in" to receive them. Your message might seem completely harmless to you, but for the recipient it may be just another unwanted e-mail plugging up their inbox.

To avoid spam accusations you are required to provide recipients with a way to unsubscribe from your list. You must also offer a valid e-mail address or other contact information. Once a customer has purchased a product or service from you, you can send future e-mail messages and updates, but try to limit these so your customers are not annoyed (another way to end up on a spam black list).

The Planning Pieces

Planning is an essential element to developing a successful online business. As a result of my own experiences I have developed the following planning pieces. These have really helped me clarify the steps to success in my own businesses. For each of the planning elements below fill in your own responses, goals, needs and ideas. Putting these pieces together on paper will help you establish a solid foundational concept for your business needs. A planning worksheet is included in the Appendixes.

Vision. Planning a vision for your web business is a sensible place to start. Your vision will ignite the fire and passion inside you, and create commitment that will help you to excel and succeed. An example of a vision might be the desire for financial independence that allows you to leave a legacy and provide security for your family. Another vision might be to develop a foundation to support, educate, and transition unwed mothers into a life of family prosperity. What is your passion and what does it look like? Your passion is the first place to look for business ideas.



MY VISION

Mission. Your business mission will express the essence of what your business is working toward. It embodies your vision. For example, you may be a gifted passionate teacher and your mission is to train up an ever increasing number of satisfied participants to reach their potential. Your vision to support that may be to establish a nationally renowned life skills learning center.



MY MISSION

Goals. Your goals will help you reach short-term and long-term directives. This will make up the specifics of “what do I want to accomplish”. It is the desired achievement signifying the direction you intend to go, based on the mission you outlined above. It is shorter term than your vision, often geared for the 1-3-5 year time frames.

For example, the overall goal might be to live a balanced life. Or, in the area of an internet business the goal might be to establish and maintain the premier website in your field. Or, implement 3-4 easy to maintain websites that siphon off \$1,000 to \$3,000 in each market for a steady monthly cash flow.



MY INTERNET GOALS

Strategy. Attached to each goal is its strategy explaining *how* you will accomplish that goal. The strategy is usually static and subjective. For example, to sell your home your strategy could be to use a Realtor or sell it yourself. To develop an e-book you could write it yourself, or hire a ghost writer.



STRATEGIES

Goal #1: _____

Strategy: _____

Goal #2: _____

Strategy: _____

Objectives. Each of the goals above will also have multiple objectives. The objectives define what you want to accomplish, and are specifically bound by time, place, and resources. They are measurable, realistic, and achievable.

For example, if your goal is to establish three websites, the first objective might be to find several niches. A second objective might be to find or develop products, with a third object to implement the websites. The forth is to market the heck out of them for free. You could almost consider this a business “to-do” list with timeframes, deadlines, and measures with which to judge their completion.

Specificity for the objectives above might involve finding a specific number of projects to develop, deciding how many free marketing opportunities are necessary to accomplish your goals, etc. Get specific so that you can measure success, avoid failure, and adjust the objectives when necessary. Each goal from the previous steps will have these measurable objectives attached.



OBJECTIVES WITH BOUNDARIES

Goal #1: _____

Objective #1: _____

Objective #2: _____

Objective #3: _____

Tactics. Tactics are the activities required to accomplish each of your defined objectives. You will want to be very specific here, and include necessary steps, people who will be involved, costs of the effort, timeframe and deadlines.

In the example outlined above, one of my objectives is to find several niches for my business. Following this example, here are a few tactics I might use to accomplish this objective:

1. Brainstorm opportunities today at 4:00 PM.
2. Write down key words for the top three options.
3. Research key words and phrases for all options by the end of this week.
4. Analyze the competition next week.

Make planning easier by following the steps in this e-book and include timeframes for objectives and tactics to help keep yourself on track.



TACTICS

Objective #1: _____

Tactics/Steps:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Be prepared. Once you have outlined all of the basics you may be wondering what else you could possibly need. Well businesses are fraught with uncertainty; preparing for the unexpected is one of the best ways to avoid failure. For this step, analyze what could stand in your way as you build your plans. Be realistic and plan work arounds for potential troubles. Also include a timeline, cost projections and budget, and a marketing plan, and success measurements.



ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT COMPONENTS

- Obstacles & workarounds
- Timeline
- Cost projections & budget considerations
- Marketing plan
- Success measurements and tracking

Nesting. One of the reasons goal setting can be confusing is because there is a nesting dimension. For example, several of your boss's objectives may be assigned as your goals. Or, your tactics may become the administrator's goals.

Add Balance. For the purpose of this exercise we are concentrating on web presence and profit. As you expand your plan however, include goals for several other areas of life including health, education, family and friends, spiritual, interests and fun, career, community, and financial.

Do It the Best Way. These goal setting terms serve as guidelines. If you have a better or more comfortable way that works for you, use it. Just make sure you include all of the pieces. Keep it simple and make sure it is visible, and/or in writing to keep you on track. Review your progress regularly and adjust the plan. If what you are doing does not support your vision and mission, simple don't do it.

Business Plan Templates. If you require financing for your business you will need a formal business plan to present to investors. Planning aids can be found at the Small Business Administration. (www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/index.html) You may also be eligible for free resources available through SCORE where retired experts assist small business owners. Or purchase a business planning guide from Amazon at www.Amazon.com. Happy planning. And, stay on plan!

Your Mastermind Team. Several minds are always smarter than one so capture those minds to catapult your business well beyond what you could accomplish on your own. Great entrepreneurs like Ford and Rockefeller had powerful mastermind teams. Who is on your mastermind team? Consider your accountant, copyright patent and business lawyer, technical guru, marketing and Internet genius, positive thinker and coach. Other possibilities include a spouse, mom and/or dad, siblings and other family members. Find both your best supporters and your critics. Critics help you stay focused and point out potential flaws in your reasoning or plans.

Invite your mastermind team members to provide simple guidelines and constructive criticisms. Establish planning and review times to keep them in the loop and hold yourself accountable. Ask for and expect honest criticism and solutions. Listen to their advices and discern what is best for your business and vision. See this as a growing experience and learn from your mistakes; bring them along on the adventure.



MY POSSIBLE TEAM MEMBERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

A Positive Attitude. Studies show that a person's attitude is a major factor in getting, keeping, or losing a job. So it is important to be careful of the little foxes that nip at your attitude and chip away at your self confidence. As you build your web business and meet with frustrations, give yourself positive pep talks and avoid the little foxes - persevere. If you do this successfully, when your first mistake crops up, you will be prepared to remind yourself that learning from your mistakes is a positive, and not a negative. It is the most common method of learning and growth that successful people deal with every day.

In fact, our rich history is riddled with failures that became eventual success stories. Take for example, Ben Franklin, President Lincoln, Beethoven, and Colonel Sanders. Perseverance overcomes; your positive attitude will alleviate anger and frustration.

Consider that in the valley is where the green grass grows and the only way to look and go is up. And, the green grass also grows over the septic tank. I like the old adage, "When you're green you're growing and when you're ripe you rot." Don't fear the valleys. They are powerful growth vehicles.



STAYING POSITIVE

What valleys am I facing now?

How have I overcome the valleys in the past?

How can I improve my current attitude and progress?



BUSINESS CHECKLIST

- Up-To-Date Computer System
- Fast Internet Access
- Phone & Fax
- Legal Company Entity
- EIN or Tax ID
- Accounting system
- Operational Processes
- Products and services
- Business Plan
- Sales & Marketing
- R&D
- Mastermind Group
- Attitude Check-Up
- Others:

Explore the Opportunities

There are many opportunities waiting; you need the desire, the determination and the persistence and you will succeed!

As you proceed through this guide I will define for you terms along the way. These are designed to help the novice, but can be useful for anyone in the online business world. Often when getting wrapped up in a new project we make assumptions about what we know and what we don't. I learned very quickly that, though I thought I understand a concept, it wasn't until I tried to succinctly describe these concepts to friends and family that I didn't understand it nearly as well as I had thought. For example, let's start with two very common Internet terms. How would you describe a search engine versus a browser?

Search Engines

A search engine can best be thought of as a digital directory of indexed terms and concepts. It is a group of programs that searches websites on the World Wide Web (WWW) based on key words specified by the searcher. When a search is initiated, these programs quickly and efficiently cull all the indexed web sites that correspond to the search in question.

Popular search engines include Google, Yahoo, Live Search by MicroSoft (formerly MSN) , Ask.com (formerly AskJeeves) and many more less-well-known engines. Each offers their own creative features and programs in an attempt to maintain and attract more users and ultimately more clients.

Features include programs such as marketing services, social media services, reverse search engine tools, design tools, blog tools and hosting, research capabilities, tailored homepages, and more. If you don't know what all of these mean, don't worry! By the time you are done with this guide and off working on your own web business, you'll be able to find out all the features of these services and eventually you'll find one or two favorites that you will likely use the most.

Search Engine Rank

According to Nielsen Net Ratings, a media and marketing Internet research organization, Google is the largest search engine, dominating about 49.2% of the

search engine market. Close behind is Yahoo at 23.8%, MSN at 9.6%, AOL with 6.3%, ASK with 2.6% and all others with a 8.5% of the search engine market share. Overture provides a different set of market share figures ranking Yahoo the largest due to its larger database of sites while Google is the most often used by searches.

Consumersearch.com, another Internet business ratings organization, rates the top search engines as follows:

- www.Google.com, the most popular and best overall
- www.Yahoo.com, Yahoo! Desktop, second best to Google with best desktop toolbar combo.
- www.ask.com, the best alternative to Google and most improved
- www.live.com, the best new search engine, Windows Live Search
- www.Jux2.com, a meta search engine, combines Google, and Yahoo searches

Once you have your website up and running, you will want to submit your site's domain name (URL) to all of the top search engines at the very least. Submitting to many of the smaller search indexes can be useful, but won't affect your overall search engine traffic nearly as much as these top five search engines.

Website Browsers

A web browser is a program that allows the user to see and interact with text, images, music and videos found on the WWW, and interfaces with the search engines' search capabilities. Web browsers are your gateway to Internet whether for shopping, information research, file downloads and uploads, videos and other multi-media, or just about any file that can be shared digitally.

Top 10 reviews for 2008 Internet Browser Software ratings rated the Mozilla Firefox Browser as Gold, Microsoft's Internet Explorer as Silver and Mac's Opera browsers as Bronze, trailed by Safari for Mac, Maxthon and five others.



Although nearly 80% or more Internet users typically will open an Internet Explorer browser for surfing, those numbers are declining with the advent of faster, more user-friendly and flexible browsers like Firefox. Google also recently launched its own version of Internet browser, and there are bound to be more to come. Once users are educated with the options that are available in browsing online, Microsoft will likely lose its hold in the browser wars.

HTML

HTML, or Hyper Text Markup Language, is the dominant programming language used to create web pages that you view with your Internet browser. Simple tags of code indicate to the browser how the web page that you are viewing will look on your computer screen. How a page is programmed, or "coded" will determine everything from how images should be displayed on the screen, to where those images and associated text are located, and even what color text on the page will be.

Although today's web pages are becoming more and more technically complex there are many web development software programs that can make developing your site a fairly simple process. These programs, called WYSIWYG, short for *what you see is what you get*, help you build a professional looking site without knowing any HTML. Often host providers will offer this type of software, and many come with hundreds of templates for you to customize for your own unique look.

Whether you decide to build your site from scratch using HTML code, or using one of the more sophisticated WYSIWYG programs, having a basic understanding of common HTML tags will help you along the way. Two nice HTML resources include: <http://htmlgoodies.com>, and <http://www.jmarshall.com/easy/html/>.

What is your strategy?

What is your e-commerce strategy? How do you want to achieve long term web presence? And, what are your specific goals?

Remember that a strategy describes how you are going to accomplish your goal. For example, if you want to lose weight, two different strategies might be eat less or exercise more. Sometimes a strategy might incorporate concepts that are well-recognized, and other times, something completely new. Take for instance the Chia Pet.

Recall the day when the Chia Pet market was created? Who wanted a Chia Pet? Marketers for this company had to create a need. Likely, however, Internet marketing isn't quite so complex. People want to purchase goods and services on the Internet, you just have to help them find yours. With the internet providing an audience of about 1 billion shoppers your challenge is to learn to market to their specific needs and to capture a share of their business.

One strategy might be to develop multiple websites and skim your share from those markets resulting in \$1,000 to \$10,000 per month income per site. Or, you may want to go deep and be the premier provider and spend more time on one or two sites for similar overall revenue.

Another popular strategy - mini-sites that promote a single product. These sites have even become popular with large corporations. They take only hours to develop and require a buying decision from the visitor.

Consider one of the most profitable market places selling information, e-books, e-workbooks, DVD's and CD's. You'll enjoy the advantage of minimal overhead and the highest profitable returns.

An important aspect of your strategy should be a well designed site. First impressions are critical. Because your visitor doesn't know how big or small your online business is, your well designed sight can level the playing field with much larger sites and companies.

Mini-sites require another strategy, however. Often these sites are packed full of information, with several fonts, different colored text, hand-written graphics, and other stand-outs that keep the browser's visual interest. The content for mini-sites is also different from that of a regular business website. Mini-sites tend to be one or two pages, but those pages are very lengthy, and are packed with information, testimonials, and product stats. The key to mini-site success: excellent sales copy! Without good sales copy it's just another page out on the Internet that is as easily dismissed as remembered.



STRATEGY TIPS

- Consider the time required for each approach. Some e-commerce sites can become more labor intensive while others, once they are set up, require less than 1 to 2 hours a week to maintain.
- If you do not have a product, partner with a drop shipper or affiliate so you don't have to carry costly inventory and manage the hassle of shipping. Your profit margin will not be as high but you also won't have the expense of purchasing, stocking, and maintaining stock levels. Plus, if your items don't sell, you don't have to absorb the stock investment.
- Note also that most drop shippers do not offer low-cost products due to low profit margins.

Website Options

Begin evaluating multiple options. As you surf the Internet, notice the strategies, especially for the topics you are most interested in. How do others successfully market their products? What complimentary products, services and information do they offer? What can you add for greater value?

Several possible website business options to consider include:

- Write and market an e-book, the easiest and least expensive product to carry and fulfill. Hire a ghost writer to write the book for you if you don't have the time or resources to finish one yourself.
- Submit your product idea to a development firm and have them manage the patent, licensing, development and manufacturing of your gem idea.
- Explore www.inventionhome.com.
- Develop your site and utilize affiliates until you select a product or line of products. See www.cj.com , www.clickbank.com, www.linkbank.com.
- Develop a simple product idea; package products together as a "kit" and sell them. For example, package together a hanging container, organic dirt and heirloom seeds for indoor, winter garden production.

- Set up a store front through Yahoo Store, eBay, or with Amazon. Here's a good how-to resource for Amazon stores: <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-an-Amazon-Store-Front>.
- List and sell items on Craigslist.com or eBay.
- Use a drop shipper like www.Doma.com, www.Simplex.com, www.theshipper.com, or www.nawca.com to stock your site, auctions, and eBay store.
- Buy wholesale - purchase products in volume for a price advantage.
- Sell information for direct sales and provide corresponding consulting services in addition to your products.
- Educate for free; use this as a jumping point for private tutorial sessions and other educational tracks or course.
- Choose good front-end products that lead to more expensive options. For example, offer table-top water purifiers, plus more expensive systems for the whole home.
- Build in long-term customer loyalty with newsletters, free reports, and other quality repeat business strategies.
- Build and maintain a great newsletter or video/graphic/software download and charge a monthly subscription rate.
- Build your product into many venues. For example: one e-book could generate the following products: e-pamphlets, e-workbooks, webinars, teleclasses, CD's, DVD's, speaking engagements, live seminars, and hard-cover books, all from your original e-book.
- Conduct recorded interviews or produce podcasts with experts. Scribe the content and offer it as CD's, DVD's, and e-books.
- For a quick start-up use a mini-site and sell a single product or pre-sell an affiliate's product.

Evaluate these options based on your expertise and passions, your schedule, the availability and cost of the products, time to market, cost of ramp-up and advertising, and how complex (or time consuming) the project would end up being.



YOUR OPTIONS

List the ecommerce strategies that best fit your areas of need:

The best method to include:

What is the rationale for your choice?

Note: You may want to rethink this strategy section once you have solidified your niche, as it may change how you develop and expand your business.

Now, let's brainstorm to find a great niche!

Finding your Niche

You cannot begin planning until you have an idea about what you would like to sell! Use this chapter to help you narrow down your choices.

If you have never been through the process of building a new business then you will want to take time to focus on this chapter. Unless you already have a very clear direction for products and/or services for your business, this chapter will be a necessary component of your business planning process.

First, ask yourself these engaging questions: What makes you come alive? What is your passion? What do you love to do? What are your favorite products or needs? What new combinations of products and or services provide a unique product?

What if your passion could provide direct income and you could have fun and enjoy the benefits of working for yourself? Ideally this is what we all would like to achieve. Luckily for you, everyone has the capabilities. Now you just need the direction, and firm commitment to the process.

Let's begin by brainstorming your passions for great business start-up ideas!

Brainstorming ideas

Begin your brainstorming by writing down all your areas of interest, hobbies, sports, expertise, things you know how to do or make, or what you've learned during your life that others might benefit from learning. For example: snowboarding & hockey; curling; collecting trains; how to repair power engines; how you got healthy again; how to write a play or publish your music, or play an instrument, how to train animals, maximize home schooling, build a product, molding, designing buildings, and the list could go on forever.

Also consider your favorite products and items you strongly believe in that might benefit others. Keep this list active and continue to add to it. Use a lot of paper and don't be afraid to write down whatever comes to your mind.

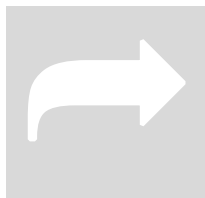
To help your brainstorming process, review the comprehensive list of “prime your pump” ideas below.

Ideas to prime the pump

What are your passions, interests and expertise? Scan these to prime your creative juices. Mark those you have an interest in.

- Affiliate programs
 - Antiques
 - Aromatherapy
 - Art and art supplies
 - Automotive products
 - Aviation
 - Aviary: types, cages, toys, feeding and health, training
 - Baby: health, training, toys, food, clothing
 - Batteries
 - Bed & Breakfast
 - Bedding
 - Camping: sites & locations, activities, tents, pop-ups, RV's, cooking utensils and tools, recipes
 - Candies
 - Candles
 - Canning and drying
 - Clocks and watches
 - Clothing specialties
 - Coin Dealers
 - Collectibles
 - Computers
 - Consulting
 - Construction know how, tools, techniques, and supplies
 - Corporate Gifts
 - Coupon books
 - Craft supplies and know how
 - Diabetic supplies, recipes
 - Dieting
 - Doctors: specialists, health aids
 - Dolls and doll making
 - Dance steps
 - Dating Game
 - Debt Consolidation
 - Designer clothing and handbags
 - Diamonds
 - eBay stores and know how
 - Educational sites
 - Employment Agency
 - Entertainers, comedy
 - Event Promotion
 - Exercise tapes
 - Financial consulting and services
 - Fitness: nutrients, equipment, instruction, drinks, clothes
 - Fishing
 - Furniture
 - Gardening: organic, fruits, flowers, supplies, & know how
 - Gift baskets
 - Graphic Arts
 - Greeting Cards
 - Health and Beauty
 - Health Issue Solutions
 - Herbs and natural remedies
 - Home decorating tips
 - Home Schooling
 - Homemade soaps
 - Interactive children's books
 - Internet Marketing
 - Internet Training
 - Jams and jellies
 - Jewelry: stones, settings, supplies
 - Job Listing
 - Landscaping
 - Lawyers
 - Lights, lamps, shades, supplies
 - Lingerie
 - Linens
 - Luggage
 - Math tutoring
 - Marketing services
 - Medical
 - Menu Planning
 - Models and modeling
-

- Mortgage Business
- Music
- Network marketing
- Newsletter Publishing
- Notary
- Nutritionist
- Painting
- Party supplies and planning
- Personal Coaching
- Personal Shopper
- Pets
- Photography and supplies
- Poetry
- Real Estate services and education
- Resume Writing
- Scrapbooking
- Search Engine Optimization
- Sewing
- Skin Care and Make-Up
- Software and training
- Sports
- Swimming pool chemicals
- Tax Preparation
- Toys
- Traveling
- Video Games
- Water: purification, drinks, testing
- Web site services
- Weddings
- Women's Issues



BRAINSTORMING TIPS

When brainstorming, all ideas are acceptable. Having a lot of ideas is a good part of the process. There is no place for evaluation or criticism. Link ideas and expand on them with different flavors. For example, if jewelry is your passion when thinking about rings, add toe rings, nose rings, birth stone rings, military rings, school rings, anniversary rings, etc. When you run out of steam, review the list. Leave for a 10 minute energy boost, then come back, or sleep on the ideas and begin fresh later. Keep your list alive and ongoing. Look for good ideas everywhere, always.

Researching product demand & supply

The Internet is full of free tracking tools to help you decide what products are hot, and which should be avoided. The following research steps will provide a display of the results for the previous 30 days of Internet search activity and provide the average daily search request for what people are looking for.

Step 1: First, prioritize your ideas, selecting your favorite one to three topics from your brainstorming session.

Step 2: Make an extensive list of words or two to three-word phrases related to the product or service you believe searchers may request. For example: words and phrases describing model trains might include - HO trains, Lionel trains, American Flyer trains, G gauge, O gauge, S gauge, N gauge, Z gauge trains, train tracks, train layouts, train scenery, prewar trains, box cars, miniature trains, etc.

Record and track your work using an excel spreadsheet or table. For example:

Niche				
Key Words & Phrases	# of searches	Allintitle	Allinanchor	Comments
Keyword 1				
Keyword 2				
Keyword 3				
Keyword 4				

Step 3. Conduct a search on the web to determine the number of searches conducted over a 30 day period using those key words and phrases. Search the top search engines, especially Google. Search several search engines using the methods below.

Keyword selection tools

Search engines typically provide reverse search engine statistics. These statistics provide you with information on the previous 30 days of searches. You can request this information for any of the key words used in the previous 3-step process. This will give you an indication of the type of demand a product or service might have.

Google. Go to google.com and put in key words and note the number of finds listed. Then, using the same key words and phrases, type in allintitle: “your key words”. The results signify the number of sites with those key phrases in their web page titles. This list will give you a good idea of who your competition would be for those products or services. Searches with less than 15,000 returned results are desirable.

Next type in allinanchor: “your key words” for the number of links linking to that phrase. This signifies the number of those key words that are anchor linked internally and externally in websites indexed by Google. For analysis purposes, consider numbers less than 30,000 to be more desirable business options.

Wordtracker. For a free keyword suggestion tool go to <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com> with your favorite browser. Provide your key words and phrases where prompted. You will then be provided with a list of the top 100 related words and phrases and the average times those words have been searched for the previous 30 day period.

Once you have completed this preliminary search and recorded your findings consider signing up for the Wordtracker premium tool. You can set up a paid account for a day

or a week which gives you access to full functionality of the service, unlike the more limited trial version.

SAMPLE SEARCH

Below is an example of how you might go about using these search engine tools to help determine how competitive a particular business idea might be. For example, to calculate the *demand*, using a Google search, type in the following terms:

- Weddings - results in about 78,800,000 references.
- Wedding ring - the search finds 2,720,000 sites.
- Wedding ceremonies - this narrows down the demand to 2,390,000.

Add in this search to help analyze the *supply* side, or how much other competition might be out there, try this:

- allintitle: “weddings” The results are 10,200,000 sites with that word in their titles.
- allintitle: “wedding rings” results are 158,000 sites
- allintitle: “wedding ceremony” shows 113,000 with that focus.

Unless you have something very special and unique, you may surmise that this competition is very high to jump into for your first web site business. If you have a unique angle, or “hook”, then you will have a better chance. Additionally keep in mind that a business like this would depend upon local competition. There may be thousands providing these services at other locations around the world, but if there is no one in your city offering unique wedding rings, you might just be on to something.

Keep in mind as well that competition doesn't have to be a negative. In fact, competition often raises awareness of products or services, providing a larger customer base. Add spin, a unique doodad, something of value, a free add-on or just become *the* expert in your field, and your chances of success grow even more.

Note: 95% of websites receive an average of ten visits per week with only 2% conversion rate. So, if you learn to market well you can outperform the competition.

Two additional sites that allow searches from multiple indexes simultaneously include:

- <http://search.com>
- <http://www.EasySearcher.com>

Sponsored links. In Google you will notice that the highest paid advertisers, called *sponsored* links, are located in the top light colored box and in the right column. Some are also located at the bottom of the search page. Following these sponsored links are the *organic* or *natural links*, listed in order of search engine relevance and ratings. We'll get to more about these ratings in a later discussion.

Ideally all of your site pages will fall into the first ten results, or the first page that shows up after a searcher inputs their search criteria. Research has shown that a majority of searchers do not go further than one to two search result pages to find the information they need. A search engine optimized page will help you go a long way toward reaching that first or second page goal.

Landing page. Once you have completed a search through one of the many search engines, the links correspond to individual "landing pages". Basically all that means is the page where you will end up, once you've clicked one of the search result links. The landing page will correspond to the page that included the key words or phrases the searcher was looking for. You can influence which key words and phrases the search engine sees on your pages through what are called meta tags.

Each website page has the option to include meta tag information, which is just fancy-speak for code that search engine "bots" find on your web page (a bot is simply a computer with no human interaction). Meta tags will be discussed more fully later on. For now, it is important to recognize that there are some things you can do with your web pages to help others browsing the Internet find you.



SEARCH TIPS

- Set up tables to keep track of your key phrases and numbers for analysis. Update them frequently.
- Find as many key words for your interest as possible. Try using www.thesaurus.reference.com for relevant options.
- Note that if large vendors such as Bizrate, Shopzilla, Target or Amazon show up near the top for your product, then there are not many competitors paying for a high listing. You could likely advertise for little and come up near the top for those products. Because larger sites bid on so many terms, the advertising price for your niche product may be very low, which is good news for you. Large market places are not specialized.
- Rule of thumb: look for less than 15,000 for allintitle results as a possible unique niche.
- Rule of thumb: look for less than 30,000 allinanchor results as another good sign.
- Consider keywords and phrases with 20 searches or higher on the larger search engines.

- Combine Yahoo, Google, and MSN numbers for a larger representation of your market searches. Or, as a rule of thumb, multiply the Yahoo numbers by 10 or the Google numbers by 8.
- Analyze the ratio of searches and the number of results.

Additional options to find a niche:

- Search www.clickbank.com for hot marketplaces and categories.
- To help your creative juices, go to www.brainstorm.com.
- For niches to market eBooks go to www.weeklyniche.com.
- www.slashdot.org is news for nerds for fresh ideas.
- Join forums in areas of interest and see what people are asking for and discussing.
- Research a list of newsletters at <http://new-list.com/>
- Research offline magazines to see what is selling and being advertised.

Audience profile

The World Wide Web offers a tremendous audience potential with 1 billion users. The temptation is to believe that everyone needs your product. The cost to create the need and convince them however is very high.

In the World Wide Web people ask for what they want, creating a *demand pull* versus pushing products on them like the Chia Pet example. What do those demand pull shoppers look like in your niche?

What is your exact audience fit? Profile your market specifically by defining the characteristics in the following areas:

Niche 1: _____

Category	Profile	Comments
Perceived wants based on key word searches	(See key word spreadsheet)	
Age group		
Income level		
Educational level		
Geography		
Interests		
Family and friends		
Community Support		
Causes		
Problems your product can solve		
Technical level		
Bandwidth required		
Health		
Vocation		
Spare time, leisure and entertainment activities		

Products where are you?

Once you have an idea of a good product niche the next step is to find a source for good products! This chapter provides you with several resources that can get you started.

Once you have decided on your desired product set you will want to begin researching sources for your products online. Consider dealing directly with the manufacturer or supplier. Most manufacturers rely on distributors to work with resellers such as store fronts and e-commerce businesses so this may be your link to products you can purchase at wholesale costs.

Profitability is key and the closer you can get to the manufacturer the larger your profit margin will be. Keep in mind that manufacturers often use jobbers to find distributors and resellers. These jobbers will tack on an additional fee, reducing your discount levels and ultimately, eating into profits. Since most wholesale companies can provide drop shipping you might try to eliminate the middleman altogether if possible.

Public Domain

One fascinating option for product reselling is to search public domain records. You may use informational products created prior to 1923 any way you want, without having to worry about compensating the author, or paying royalties. Recreate the information into a course or e-book or re-introduce it in its original work. To find some old and rare books, Google the phrase “old book stores” and look for treasures you can repackage for sale online. Be sure to research any works for current ownership rights.

Publishers

Another information option is to go to publishers. Speak to the rights department and ask if there are any books that you can buy the rights to and the remaining copies. Pay a minimal fee of less than \$2 per book and they will be happy to get rid of their excess. Then list these items on eBay, Amazon or other reseller sites. You now can provide customers new books for sale for far less than the original market prices.

Wholesaler services

Find wholesalers that drop ship customer orders based on the orders you transfer to them with the shipment details. You, the retailer make a profit on the net difference between the wholesale price and the agreed upon retail price.

If you use more than one wholesaler or drop shipper you will have to split the order, making sure that your ordering process tells your customer to expect two or more packages. By setting up an account with UPS, you can manage and pay UPS directly for their shipping costs.

Be sure you research wholesale services before you sign any service agreements. Write a tailored e-mail to each potential wholesaler and follow up with a personal phone call. Ask the types of questions listed below.

Frame the questions first by saying something like: “We are opening up a new online business. Several of your products are of interest to us. Could you spend a few minutes explaining how you currently distribute your products?” Additional questions to keep in mind as you speak to a representative include:

- How do you distribute your products?
- Do you wholesale your products for sale on the Internet?
- Do you or any of your distributors/resellers drop ship products?
- What is your minimum order/transaction amount?
- What are your guidelines/requirements/terms and conditions?
- How quickly do you ship?
- Will you allow me to market your products on the internet?
- May I use copies of your graphics and descriptions on my site?
- What is your pricing structure? Wholesale discount, handling fees, shipping method.
- How do you handle returns and damaged goods?
- What is your process for exchanging funds?
- Will you ship worldwide?

I have just asked a wholesaler who has a product I would like to feature, to pilot a drop shipping program with me. They are considering it. Another distributor said he was willing to try it out with a 25 percent discount, as long as I advertise the same price they have listed in their catalog. A third U.S. manufacturer said he would drop ship the larger more expensive items but not others. Be creative. You never know what you might be able to arrange that could benefit both you and the drop shipper.

Product Resources

Explore the following options:

- Look on your competitors sites.

- Search in local stores.
- Research on www.manta.com for company profiles and products.
- Go to trade shows. Refer to www.aptyaffordable.com
- and www.biztradeshows.com
- In Google, search for wholesalers by category, for example, type in (topic) wholesalers.
- eBay products that list for under half of the retail price list are found at www.half.com.
- For a Google product search go to: www.Froogle.com.
- Log onto wholesale service and drop shipping sites:
 - www.doba.com
 - www.theshipper.com
 - www.nawca.com
- Search manufacturing directories such as:
 - www.Thomasnet.com
 - www.TradeKey.com
- Search International resources:
 - [Http://machines.indianyellowpages.com](http://machines.indianyellowpages.com)
 - www.DHgate.com for China products
 - www.alibaba.com for the Asian market
 - www.expo-export.org
- Another method to find products is to look for them in retail stores, magazines, or catalogs.
- Get the manufacturer's name and go to www.worldpages.com to get their phone number. Ask for their sales department and begin by asking the questions above.
- Gail Bradney has a great book of wholesalers called *Buy Wholesale By Mail*.
- Find order catalogs using the Vista Catalog book. For a copy, call 214-333-2111.

Drop Shipping

Drop shippers provide several valuable services such as:

- Inventory of products negating carrying and warehousing costs for your business.
- Manage ordering, inventory, packaging, and receiving.
- Kit and ship direct to your customer.
- Manage manufacturing or distributor relationships.
- Price products at wholesale pricing.

Consider the position of a drop shipper in the retail food chain. The lowest price will be directly from the manufacturer. The manufacturer then has the option to: (1) use a

jobber, (2) find distributors, (3), sign on resellers. Any one of these three could be a drop shipper, so you want to find a drop shipper closer to one than three. Remember that the further out on the chain the lower the wholesale discount.

Not all drop shippers are trustworthy or professional however. Several areas for evaluating a potential drop ship partner include:

- Do they sell wholesale and will they drop ship?
- What is their history of delivery service?
- How do they notify you when shipment is made?
- How do they interact with you on the phone?
- What are their policies and procedures?
- How many and what products do they warehouse? (They may have to order a drop shipment from overseas.)
- What are their return policies?
- What are their shipping guidelines?
- What are their payment requirements?
- What wholesale pricing do they offer? (Do not accept a % off MSP. Their MSP price may be too high for you to be competitive.)
- Will they provide graphics and product content?
- Do they offer an eBay program and interface?
- Will they provide referrals?

The E-book Advantage

***Flexibility, ease
of distribution,
control of your
audience
100% profit...***

There are many advantages to publishing your own e-book and selling them online. It opens a wide array of opportunities. Below are just a few of the advantages you will have in publishing and selling your own e-book.

- Writing and self-publishing your e-book puts you in control and allows flexibility in editing, changing, and updating your content.
- Hard-copies can be printed on demand one at a time for between \$5.00 and \$7.00 each. Search online for “printing on demand” and you will find several hundred options.
- You control your customer list.
- You enjoy much faster ramp-up.
- You can easily offer a front-end sale or free sample of portions of the product to entice the reader into buying.
- You can transform your e-book into many other revenue producing products such as a DVD, teleclasses or webinars, e-workbooks and even live seminars.
- You can easily outsource the writing and retain 100 percent ownership.
- Best of all, you receive 100 percent of the profit!

I purchased the rights to 30 e-books. My purchase rights include the ability to edit and make them my own, adding my own name as the author. You will notice that there are many free e-book offerings attached to other products to entice you to buy related products or services. I have found that many of these free e-books are outdated and often the main thrust is to get you to buy their product. That is why they allow you to market their books for free. It builds their customer base and often gets your customers into their opt-in mailing lists.

Affiliates, Partners, and Links

When you don't yet have your own products to sell consider promoting someone else's product(s).

How would you describe affiliates? An affiliate is essentially a sales person, working on commission. You promote the products and/or services of the seller, and receive a percent of the sale as a commission. As an affiliate you become a marketing partner for the merchant's products. You earn as much as you put into the effort by driving traffic to the grantor's website. Special web URL links keep track of the sales that you helped to generate.

Affiliate Definitions

- An *Affiliate Program* is a system for recruiting Affiliates.
- An *Affiliate Grantor* is the product provider who pays the commission.
- *Affiliates* are the 'sales force' the website partners who market the product and get paid for sales made.

Consider the following various options for selling a grantor's products.

- Utilize paid advertising to drive traffic directly to their website. This does not require you to have a website!
- Advertise and pre-sell their products on your website with a link to their site.
- Add your free e-book products to their product; you can differentiate yourself from other affiliates by advertising "bonus products" that come with the purchase of their products.
- Write articles and publish them for free. Add a link to their site at the end of the article.
- Set up several Amazon aStores.

To find affiliate grantors' products visit any of the following sites. You can also do some research on your own for similar affiliate program sites, but these sites will get you started in the right direction.

- www.clickbank.com
- www.CJ.com

- www.linkshare.com
- www.Amazon.com
- www.PetSmart.com
- www.WalMart.com
- [www.BestBuy.com, etc.](http://www.BestBuy.com)

How to get started. Find complimentary, non-competitive sites and arrange to become an affiliate. Then, position and sell your affiliate partner's expertise and their products using key phrases and their logo which they will provide.

On a click through from your site, company's such as PetSmart and Best Buy pay a 15 percent commission. Remember however, when visitors click on your affiliate's site they leave your site. If they do not purchase on that first click to your affiliate grantor but later go directly to that site, you will not receive a commission. In some cases you may retain rights to that sale for a period of time if the grantor uses a web browser cookie that can later identify them as your lead. You will want to ask how your grantor handles these type of leads.

To build your traffic, offer your own affiliate program by becoming the grantor. There are several software packages that can manage your affiliate program. However, the easiest would be to join a vendor like Clickbank or Amazon; these sites manage the process for you.



AFFILIATE PROGRAM TIPS

- Look at the bottom of a desirable company's home page for affiliate or associate opportunities.
- Add affiliates to your informational site and eventually add your own products.
- Pre-sell e-book programs in your niche using mini-sites (short 1 to 3 page web sites with only one selling purpose).
- E-book affiliate grantor's often pay you 50 percent or more in commissions.
- Treat your affiliates like a business.
- Really market and promote the grantor's products.
- Write your own advertising copy so that you are different than other affiliates marketing the same product(s).
- Add your own free "bonus" to the affiliate product to build value, and set yourself apart from other sellers.
- Start small (one or two to begin with) and then grow your affiliate products as you go.
- When choosing an affiliate program, look for a good product that you believe in. Try it out. Now you can sell from a personal "I tried this and it was the best thing ever" perspective.
- Research and study the product so that you can write compelling marketing materials.
- Promote your affiliate products with ads and e-zine articles in your own e-books or newsletters.
- When selecting an affiliate partner choose one that does not promote a lot of other products or services on the same page as the link you send customers to. You want to sell their product and earn commission, not have a potential client find another product and jump to other offers.
- Select products that have low return histories.

Sample. Notice the two Amazon aStores linked to and from my HobbyToolShed site to compliment the offerings. For an example of how your store might look go check out these two Amazon aStores associated with <http://www.hobbytoolshed.com>: [Laini's Hobby Book Store](#) and [Hobby Tool Extension](#).

Set up your aStore

To set up your aStore, browse to www.amazon.com. At the bottom of the page you will find a link called *Join Associates*. Click this link and sign up for the affiliate program. Once you have finished registering go to the Amazon Associate's page. Click on *Add an aStore* and it will walk you through selecting a template and adding products to your site.

Additional software program resources can be found at www.kolimbo.com and www.myaffiliatesprogram.com.

Competitive Advantage

Competitors don't have to be a negative concept. Instead, use competitors to jump-start your own business in a way that will help you both.

Once you have selected a possible niche you can now use the information you generated from your top two to three key word searches (previous chapter) to evaluate competitors' sites. Visit their sites, find ideas that make sense, improvement concepts that might be marketable, and other ideas as you find them. Look for areas where there are gaps, a unique way to add value, free offers that would attract visitors such as free video clips, graphics, or e-books. Basically the idea is to build on the competitions' successes and fill in potential market gaps. You can use the scale below to evaluate each of the competitor sites you find.

Rate your competitors on a scale of 1 to 5

Competitors: #1 _____ #2 _____ #3 _____

Appeal

Relevance to the audience

Ease of use

Number of clicks to check out

Content quality and amount

Attraction, freebies, specials, discounts

Links

Affiliates

Newsletter

Articles

Database builder method

Profile info acquired

Checkout

Shopping cart and payment methods

Return and privacy policies

Security

Shipping
 Colors and look
 References
 Product portfolio
 Graphics
 Uniqueness
 Contact info and accessibility
 Opt-In strategy
 Others:

Then, be sure to follow them to see how they respond to market changes, or how they continue to interact with their customers. Add each site to your browser's favorites or bookmarks list, sign up for their free newsletters, and then watch the site for changes. Many times there won't be anything of interest, but on the occasions in which there is something significant to find, you'll be right there to get the information you need.

Another approach to analyzing your competition is to "reverse engineer" their site to see how they are generating traffic. Visit www.compete.com or www.PRweb.com and perform a search for various competitor sites. You can use these results to improve their process and garner more traffic for your own website.

Some marketers don't conduct heavy competitive marketing. Ponder the fact that 95 percent of all websites receive less than ten visitors to their site in a week, and less than two percent of those visits result in a sale conversion. These statistics imply that the majority of site owners don't know how to market. You can use this knowledge to your advantage by improving your own marketing strategies for the best results.



COMPETITION RESEARCH TIPS

- Go to www.whois.com to find out about site owners.
- Use www.BBBonline.com as your online Better Business Bureau resource.
- Review products at <http://wize.com>.
- Try www.ePubliceye.com for consumer ratings on your competitors.
- To find out what links your competition has. Use Google to search their URL address using the following format: 'link:www.whateversitename.com'. The results provide you with a list of their links.
- Try www.ePublicEye.com for consumer ratings on your competitors.



YOUR COMPETITION

Who are your greatest competitors?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What great ideas do you want to incorporate?

Where are the holes that you can fill?

What will you avoid?

Name it and Find a Host

Now the fun part begins! You have your products and you have figured out your niche market; now, you need the perfect business name and a place to park your web site.

Your domain name is one of the most important elements of your web site. It serves as the address used to find your site on the World Wide Web (WWW). Domain names are typically one to three words in length. They often contain numbers, dashes and underscores, but spaces are not allowed.

Pieces of a Domain Name

Domain names can be divided into three separate pieces: 1) the prefix (either www, or nothing), 2) the “name”, and 3) the suffix.

The prefix. URL names are often preceded with “www”. This stands for World Wide Web, but it is not always necessary to type the www with a domain name. Domain service providers will often make sure that your site can be viewed with or without the www, but it varies by service provider. If you find that your URL requires the www to be typed in, you may want to ask them to also ensure that your site can be found without the www prefix so customers don’t think your site is gone if they forget the www.

The “name”. This is the part of the URL that you will want to spend most of your efforts on. Your name choice will be a permanent part of your business’ identity, so be sure to choose wisely. Some things to keep in mind when choosing a name:

- Try to choose a name that will work well with both human visitors to your site, as well as search engines looking for key words on your pages.
 - Choose a name that is easy to remember and that is easy to express in advertising campaigns. If your business name is already established, using that name can work well unless there are potential syntax problems. For example, if your business name is Sam’s Salon, you will be unable to easily duplicate this for it to make sense when providing the name to others. You could choose sams-salon.com, but on a radio ad, for instance, it will be hard to express to
-

people the two “s” letters. In other words, it will create confusion for buyers that will hinder your marketing results.

- Try to choose something that is catchy, but related to your business. In the example above, instead of trying to come up with a domain name that fits the business’ name, choose something like “best-cuts.com”, or “stylish-hair.com”.
- Make sure the name isn’t too long. In some online advertising campaigns, really long domain names will get truncated.

The suffix. The suffix is another significant part of your domain name. There are many choices, with new ones cropping up daily. The most familiar domain name extensions are included below.

- .gov - for Government agencies
- .com - Commercial Business
- .edu - associated with Educational institutions
- .org - denotes Nonprofit organizations
- .mil - for Military use
- .net - for Network organizations
- .ca - for businesses residing in Canada

How do you know which extension to choose? Well some of the extensions above are reserved for particular organizations. You will not be able to register a .mil, .edu, or .gov domain, for instance, unless you are registering on behalf of one of those relevant organizations.

Most all the other extensions, however, can be chosen, but I typically recommend that businesses stick with the .com domain extension, or a .biz. If your website will be advertising a non-profit organization, then .org makes sense as well. Typically though, most everyone is so familiar with the .com, that they do not think to add any other extension when typing a name into search engines. Additionally, when a search is made for what appears to be pronoun words (such as those in a business’ name) the first domain the search engine checks is .com.

When tracking visits to your site from other countries, the suffixes of those countries help you easily determine where traffic is coming from. For instance, any traffic from a .ca domain indicates a Canada origination. Private sites on the other hand will show up on reports with a numbered URL, like 65.123.543, for example.

The URL

The URL is an acronym for Uniform Resources Locator and is a reference or address to a resource on the Internet. Your domain name is a URL or may be part of a longer URL that points to a specific page. For example, www.hobbytoolshed.com is my

domain name and a URL http://www.hobbytoolshed.com/carving_tools.html is a longer URL from the same site, but from an internal page. For a more detailed description (and an example of a URL) go to <http://java.sun.com/docs/books/tutorial/networking/urls/definition.html>.

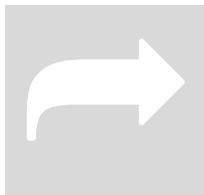
Purchase Your Domain

You can register your domain name at any one of several popular providers. One year registrations fees vary from around \$2.00 for .net and .info extensions to \$3.95 or more for more common .com extensions. If you can, try to find a host provider before you pay someone to purchase a domain name. Often your host provider will offer at least one domain name free as part of your hosting package.

If you plan to use your domain to redirect to another site, like an eBay store, then you can simply purchase your domain and then have it redirected. This is what is called domain name pointing; Essentially you buy a domain name (best-cuts.com) then have anyone typing that domain into a browser be directed to another site (like your eBay store).

To purchase a domain name use your favorite registrar or try one of the following popular sites. Many of these sites also offer hosting, so be sure to check out package details on a number of sites. Often the only difference between host provider services are the features they offer as part of their package.

- www.godaddy.com
- www.register.com
- www.1and1.com
- www.site5.com
- www.networksolutions.com
- www.ixwebhosting.com
- www.freesitenow.com a free 5MB site



DOMAIN TIPS

- Use the .com domain unless your business is relevant to one of the other categories listed above. The .com extension is more widely recognized by Internet users.
- Find a name that is easy to remember and spell.
 - You may use numbers, underscores, and dashes.
 - Use three words or less.
 - It is beneficial for your domain name to reflect the theme of your site.

- Consider purchasing variations on your domain name to protect future branding. For example, purchase the same name in .com, .net., and .org, or purchase the plural versions.

Find a Hosting Company

There are many web host providers on the internet with varying degrees of services. A host is a company that stores your website on their servers that can be accessed by the world wide web, charges a monthly hosting fee, and provides a range of services and upgrade packages and tools. Key capabilities to look for include:

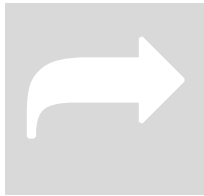
- A website builder to match your needs and level of experience and offers many templates.
- A 24/7 accessible technical support staff to assist with their tools and web builder.
- A high uptime guarantee, equal or greater than 99%.
- A 30 day trial with full money back guarantee.
- A design team if needed.
- A shopping cart and access to a merchant account to accept credit cards, a tailor-able order form and UPS ground integration.
- An auto responder that can automatically send follow up emails and manage a large opt-in mailing list.
- Security at the top level for 128 bit SSL encryption.
- Control panel for you to manage your site.
- FTP access so you can upload files.
- A free domain name registration.
- Multiple email capability.
- Ability to easily add affiliates and links.
- RSS capability.
- Tracking and statistical analysis.
- 10-20GB of Bandwidth to begin. Determine at what point you have to pay extra.
- More than 10MB database storage capability or more for intensive video, graphics, and audio needs.
- Redundant backup connection.
- Support for multiple domains and sub-domains.
- Blogging capability.
- Ability to easily add your meta tags and descriptions at no extra cost.
- Ability to add HTML code and tailor the site yourself.

- Download capabilities for eBook type products.
- Guest Book feature for list building.
- Marketing offers for Google AdSense and other advertising programs.

Many of the above services can be purchased separately through well known and trusted providers. You will find that the cheaper hosting companies will require adding services like a shopping cart, auto responders, and a separate blog site when needed. So, depending on your e-commerce strategy, carefully select your hosting partner for the long term.

Next, evaluate the following web hosting solutions:

- www.sitecreatorplus.com, excellent but no blogging capability
- www.BlueHost.com
- www.startlogic.com
- www.lunarpages.com
- www.HostMonster.com
- www.Top10HostingList.com



WEB HOSTING TIPS

- Beware of free or cheap hosting companies as they may advertise and place pop ups on your site.
- Hosts with large client bases may negatively impact support availability.
- Find out what the average wait time is for customer service.
- If they offer unlimited bandwidth, space, emails, find out what the actual cutoffs are and what it will cost to upgrade when needed.

I joined a hosting company with a 24/7 technical support line that *always* put you on hold for over 20 minutes. That same company which was rated #1 for two years in a row also took out the ability to add meta descriptions. To add the descriptions you had to purchase a \$300.00 development package for each website you owned. So much for the \$9.95 per month cost effectiveness of the 25 sites you were allowed.

Add-on service providers to consider

For add-on services that your host provider might not offer evaluate any of the following:

Website builders

- www.freesitetemplates.com

- www.bluevoda.com - a WSIWIG site builder
- www.homestead.com - site builder
- www.web.com
- www.sebsitebuilder.com – free
- www.mghosting.com - a directory to find add on services

SSL, secure hosting

- www.securehosting.com - in the UK

Templates

- www.templatemonster.com - Free icons, website templates, clip art, fonts, sounds
- www.4templates.com
- www.oswd.org, - open source web design, 2040 designs
- www.templatesbox.com
- www.openwebdesign.org

Answering Service

- www.MyAnswering.com

Designing & Developing Your Site

Designing and developing your own site doesn't need to be scary. There are many resources online that can help, and any number of HTML and WYSIWYG programs that don't require knowledge of HTML or programming skills. So let's start designing!

Modeling is a simple strategy that gets results based on using others' successful processes and methods without breaking copyright or trademark laws. For example: *What did you like about your competitor's sites? What colors work best for your market? What types of pages are included? How did the navigation work? Why would visitors stay? What is the draw?*

Remember that modeling is not illegal plagiarism.

To build a better front page for your own site, copy the top five competitors' sites and sales letters. Then combine, spin, and improve on them, making them your own.

Designing & Developing

You may or may not want to contract a hosting company before you design your site. Many hosting companies offer a 30-day trial. This may give you enough time to test it out. However, if your site is more intensive and complex, it may take longer than 30 days to find out that they don't offer what you need.

First, I suggest that you find products, develop content, and explore all of the software options such as merchant accounts and auto responders prior to evaluating hosting companies. Armed with this information you will be prepared to ask intelligent hosting questions and select your best option.

Begin developing your site by mapping your site pages. The essential pages to include on your web site are listed below.

- A home page,
 - About us,
 - Contact page,
 - Privacy policy,
-

- FAQs page,
- Links or resources page,
- Site map or site index page,
- Products and informational pages,
- Shopping cart and merchant account pages, if appropriate,
- Support page, and,
- An affiliate page, if appropriate.

You may also include an opt-in page to build your prospective client list. Additional pages might include articles pages, pages with information on how to recommend your site to others, survey pages, features, benefits, message boards, newsletter, media share area, and other pages that help to engage the visitor.

Search engines love good content and so do visitors. The web has become more sophisticated and searchers are hungry for more quality content. Providing excellent content is an effective way to build trust, credibility, and encourage return customers. You don't have to write all of your own content, luckily. Draw from others' expertise by using their articles which adds interest and depth, and entices your visitor to linger longer. Be sure to include the author resource information at the bottom of each article, however, to avoid copyright issues. And, it is what you would expect others to do with your articles if you share them with article directory lists.

Design Guidelines

Easy to read

- Use accepted fonts which include **Vernanda**, Times New Roman, **Georgia**, and **Arial**. Be sure you use fonts that can be read by all machines.
- Do not mix more than two fonts together on a page.
- Avoid decorative, condensed, and italicized fonts that are hard to read.
- Align content text left. Save centered text for headlines.
- Bold only important information in black text.
- Use 1-2 main colors and 1 accent color.
- Use bold colors in small amounts.
- Avoid graphical backgrounds that reduce readability.
- Avoid colored backgrounds that are harder to read. White is preferred.
- Black print on white, or dark blue on pale yellow, or beige provides the best contrast for readability.
- Use 10-12 point fonts for content text.

Quick Download

- Limit graphics that may take too long to load.

- Grab attention by offering to click on digital audio or a short introductory video.
- Test all download times to be within 15 seconds.
- Limit animation which requires large files. Be strategic in its use for marketing impact and test download times.

Easy to Navigate

- Use easy to read icons, buttons and instructions.
- Use clear hyperlinks.
- Be able to clearly differentiate between headings and text links.
- Be sure all buttons, links and navigation works. Test, test, test.
- Stick to the 'two to three' navigation rule. Design a maximum of two to three clicks to get there or back from check out.

Consistency

- Use consistent layout and design formats.
- Stay consistent with headers and footers, typefaces, alignment, margins and color.
- Begin all bulleted lists with the same grammar type such as verbs.
- Use the same color for all hyperlinks.

Miscellaneous

- Use colors that suit your market such as blue for water purification, or scuba gear sites, or brown and gold tones for construction.
- Use a different font to make your logo stand out.
- Include a link to your privacy policy at the bottom of each and every page.
- Consider adding a secure site logo/program up front to quickly build trust.

Resources

- A free blogging site www.wordpress.com has a website builder. You will need a host once your site is developed.
- Use a free website builder such as www.officelive.com or www.freesitenow.com.
- Use non copyrighted images: go to www.images.com or www.freesitetemplates.com
- For Sales Letters go to: www.turnwordsintotraffic.com
- www.netbreakthroughs.com
- Try advertising.info.com

Merchant Accounts

When you offer products for sale you will need a merchant account to enable you to accept credit card payments online. A third party service checks the authenticity of the credit card, processes the purchase transaction, and transfers the funds to your account. The payment gateway then processes payments through your website shopping cart.

There are a few options you can explore to open a merchant account.

Banks. Banks are a secure provider of merchant accounts. However, they typically outsource the service to a reputable provider and do not directly control the service. If you have opened a business account with your local bank, ask for their ecommerce service. *Note:* They may be difficult to work with if you are a start up.

Fees. These programs typically charge \$.30 per transaction plus 2.7-2.9% of the gross sale. Some programs may deposit the money directly into your bank account with a check book feature. A 3 day waiting period for fund transfer is typical. Some services offer an online banking feature which may be extra.

PayPal. Your hosting company will most likely offer integration of a PayPal account with its Shopping Cart software. Due to PayPal's popularity you will most likely want to include it with your payment options.

How does PayPal work? With an online PayPal account, collections go into your PayPal account. However, 3 days are required prior to withdrawal. The PayPal debit card allows you to use the debit card like cash. Unlike some other options, PayPal does not have a check book feature.

Check out the three types of PayPal options at www.paypal.com which include Personal, Premier, and a Business account. A power feature offers Website Payments Pro for \$30 per month to accept credit card payments directly on your site. Notice which options transfer customers to their location and then back to your site which may confuse and concern customers.

Broker. Another option is using an intermediary broker to find the best rates, credit cards, and services.

Your Host. The easiest option is to contract with a hosting service that has an integrated merchant account service (for a fee). Also a third party service is acceptable. However, you have less control over your funds, they charge higher fees, and they use their own designated order form.

Merchant Account Evaluation

When evaluating a merchant account service, ask these questions:

- What criteria do you use to evaluate a new merchant account?

- What fees do you charge for set up and transactions?
- How quickly will I receive payments?
- What order forms am I allowed to use?
- What tracking is provided?
- What reporting is provided?
- How do you service affiliate accounts?
- How do you accommodate a shopping cart?
- Will you do wire transfers to my account? What is the fee?
- Do you offer a stock management program?
- Do you have a way to control my downloads?
- How do you handle international transactions?
- Do you offer client follow up features?

Auto Responders

An auto responder is essentially a way for you to provide pre-written information to customers who sign up for mailing lists, or who purchase products from you. The messages are designed to build upon one another, and to encourage either a sale, or repeat business.

You can build an auto responder campaign for any number of iterations. For example someone may sign up for a free monthly newsletter delivered by your autoresponder. You can have an auto responder campaign set up to 1) send that individual a welcome message, 2) two days later send them a reminder about other services and products you offer, 3) send a message letting them know that you are there to help, and where they can contact you, and finally two weeks later, 4) send a follow up message asking them to follow through with an action (make a purchase) or visit your site for new information.

Auto responders are an important campaign tool for implementing a product launch, following up and increasing sales, pre-selling an affiliate's product, and building your prospect and client lists.

Look for a web hosting company that supplies auto responder capabilities that collects a customer database and allows an unlimited number of messages and broadcast e-mails. A good web hosting company will have helpful tutorials for using their auto responder software and services.

If your host does not offer an auto responder or you need greater functionality, evaluate www.Aweber.com to see if it might meet your needs. It is a well known, reliable auto responder with excellent features.

Auto Responder Usage

We all love **FREE** offers. Visitors are instantly caught up into your free offering. The web audience has evolved into becoming information seekers, the 'how to ...', '10 best methods', '7 secrets to...', 'Cure ...!', all entice the reader to read, opt-in, or copy your lists or articles. What can you offer for free that is related to your keywords and will not cost anything?

Use auto responder campaigns to capture and manage your customer lists. Each of your customers or potential customers are valuable assets of your e-commerce business. It costs less to retain a customer than to find new ones. So, nurture and protect your customers carefully.

Marketing studies tell us that customers require an average combination of six to seven exposures prior to purchasing. If you are the one that they associate most often with their choice you'll end up with higher conversion rates. Use your auto responder wisely and avoid spamming your e-mail lists; annoying your customers is a sure way to break trust and potentially violate anti-spam laws.

Opt-in Lists

One of the most important procedures you can add to your site is an opt-in offer that requires your visitors and customers to provide their personal information. Your auto responder will facilitate this strategy and build your customer and potential client list.

The following seven guidelines will help ensure building a strong opt-in list:

1. Build rapport, credibility, and trust so that your visitors are comfortable opting-in.
2. Make an appealing offer that is free, informative and meets a need for your niche audience.
3. Make your privacy policy clear, protective, and assuring.
4. Provide a guarantee.
5. Deliver as promised and provide easy access.
6. Keep your opt-out link current.
7. Find a web host that has templates, forms, and/or tutorials to build your opt-in strategy, forms, and list database.

Your Sales Letter

The **Sales Letter** is your marketing 'pitch' selling the visitor on your solution and is key to helping your visitor make a buying decision. It is interesting to note that studies show the longer sales letter actually does better than a short one.

Use your favorite search engines to research “starting an online business” and read several sales letters for ideas. Good ones will sell benefits such as: making or saving

money, time and energy, greater satisfaction and success, more leisure time for family and vacations, increased knowledge, improved health.

These include results like how much income they produced, referrals, pictures showing financial success, and free bonuses. They also try to build urgency with tactics such as time, coming price increase, or limited supply. Avoid the manipulative approach as your potential customers are sales savvy and trust will falter.

Sales Letter Pieces. When composing your sales letter, consider including the following pieces. Your headline, a story to build rapport, informative content, benefits, the offer, guarantees, real testimonials, free add-ons, price, and of course, ask for the order.

Words sell, and historical power words still work well. Use power words such as: free, easy, best, secret, guaranteed, save or make money, get results, hottest, newest, improved, breakthrough, leading, save time, results, winning, powerful, advantageous, impactful.



WRITING A SALES LETTER

Be sure to include the following:

- Headline:
- Story:
- Content:
- Benefits:
- The offer:
- Testimonials:
- Guarantees:
- Freebies:
- Price:
- Ask for the order

Test It. Test different strategies until you find one that works for you by sampling different versions with portions of your opt-in list or ad campaigns. Simple word and sentence changes may provide a better impact. And of course always track and analyze your results.

RSS

What is RSS? RSS, Really Simple Syndication, is the standard for the syndication of World Wide Web content and can be used for content distribution. The RSS protocol creates the ability to subscribe to content on the web and offer your content as well. You can subscribe to feeds from various sites and display them to read and use almost

any way you like. Additionally, you may offer RSS feeds from your site; this is a good way to build links and traffic.

You will need a feed reader such as Google Reader, which is free. Once installed, find the informative sites you want to pull from and add their RSS feed URL. To find sites that support RSS feeds, look for a small RSS icon that indicates a feed is available.

To stay current on market trends and information use RSS to set up your own personalized newspaper. You can pull every new article on your topics of interest into your e-mail account, or view content through one of the many free RSS readers. Just remember that your e-mail can become overwhelming and jammed, as many of these sites publish dozens of individual stories in a day.



RSS TIPS

- Improve Google ranking by using RSS.
 - Check with your host for RSS capabilities.
 - Check out www.fetch.com to extract intelligent alerts.
 - Follow copyright laws as you use other's articles and media.
- Capture content for your newsletters and blog.
 - Gather information for your own articles and writing projects.
 - Evaluate www.Newsgator.com for a free RSS reader that integrates with Outlook.
 - Check out www.FreeDemon.com.
 - If your site can read XML format, and can create an RSS document, you can offer your own articles for syndication as well.

Tracking & Analysis

As part of your planning and implementation, it is critical to include tracking capabilities of your website's activities. You will want to track, for example, where visitors are finding your site link, how many visitors are showing up on your site, which pages they view, and how long they stay on each page.

You can then use this information in combination with your sales records to determine which pages are providing the best conversion rate. Perhaps one page has better key words, so search engines are directing traffic to this page more often. If you do not have tracking code installed on your web pages, you will lose this valuable information.

Website Design, Development and Tracking Tools

Statistical Analysis

- www.google.com/analytics
- www.StatCounter.com

- <http://crazyegg.com>

Web ranking tools

- www.webposition.com
- www.linkpopularity.com
- Aranda-link-popularity-tool.com/screenshots.htm
- www.sitemeter.com – free tracking software
- www.statcounter.com – a free tracking software

Merchant Accounts

- www.authorize.com
- www.PSIgate.com
- www.PayPal.com
- www.websitepaymentpro.com
- www.echo.com

Shopping Cart Options

- www.2CheckOut.com
- www.ZenCart.com – a free open source ecommerce shopping cart
- www.Agoracart.com – a free open source ecommerce shopping cart
- <http://quickpaypro.com> – automate credit card processing, follow-up marketing, and affiliate program
- www.iShoppingcart.biz – tracks, responds, collects, delivers eBooks and collects contacts
- www.Authorize.com
- www.PSIgate.com
- www.echo.com
- <http://checkout.google.com>

Miscellaneous

- A free blogging site www.wordpress.com has a website builder. You will need a host once your site is developed
- Use a free website builder such as www.officelive.com or www.freesitenow.com
- Use non copyright images; go to www.images.com or www.freesitetemplates.com
- For sales letters got to www.turnwordsintotraffic.com

- www.netbreakthroughs.com
- Try <http://advertisinginfo.com>



WEB PAGE PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Home
- Product Catalog pages
- Information
- About Us
- Contact Us
- Privacy Policy
- FAQ's
- Links and Affiliates
- Site Map
- Shopping Cart
- Merchant Account
- Articles
- Recommend Us
- Newsletters
- Media Share
- Support
- Submit Comments
- Opt In
- Surveys
- Assessments
- Message Board
- Sales Letter
- Testimonials

Font Selection:

Industry Relevant Colors:

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an important and significant part of your development process. Use the information in this chapter to help you better understand what SEO is and how to optimize your site.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a strategy that you will want to plan prior to and during the development of your website. It will be important for your site to be search engine friendly and yet not depend on the search engine for all of your traffic. A good rule of thumb is not to depend on search engines for more than 20 percent of your business traffic. Avoid becoming SEO obsessed as there are many other strategies to incorporate such as social media marketing, shopping malls, linking, and article marketing.

A search engine is made up of three pieces of software: 1) Spider software, 2) Indexing software, and, 3) Query software.

The *Spider* software searches the web (referred to as crawling) looking for new pages to preview and add to its directories and indices. It collects text, links, and URLs.

The *Indexing* software receives what the spider provides and indexes the text and tags on the page using algorithms that create a compiled score; this page score is used to judge how important a page is for the searcher.

The *Query* software is the front-end that you see. It is designed to accept search requests and presents the results after querying its database.

You will notice that there are paid listings and organic listings on the search engine results pages. The sponsored paid listings show up on the right hand column and the top one to three positions in the tinted box at the top of the search results. The most expensive positions are the top one to three. These results are presented based on your key word queries.

SEO is goaled to improve organic, natural results. The obvious best places to be are page one or two out the thousands of results. Unfortunately, there are many diamonds in the rough in the many buried pages. People seldom search past page two of search

engines results, which is why it behooves you to avoid becoming search engine ranking obsessed.

What do search engines do to analyze websites? Search engines like Google and Yahoo use a large range of undisclosed factors for their page ranking algorithms. Google is reported to use more than 200 different variables.

The purpose of the algorithm is to find the best pages on the internet that address the searcher's requested topic area. To prevent abuse, the leading search engines will not disclose their ranking algorithms. Additionally search engines are continually changing them so that abusers cannot have an advantage over other, more relevant web pages.

Page ranking is a quality score of between 0 and 10 devised by the Google folks. When linking, it is important to get links with higher page ranks than your own. The Google tool bar shows a page's ranking. Go to <http://toolbar.google.com> to download the tool bar. Notice the green bar in the upper right hand area that displays page rank.

Google's more recent ranking strategy is looking for lots of newer content that searchers are asking for, and newer links. The older sites that have reached high ranking and sat on their laurels will now have to update their site's content to maintain their ranking which is good news for many.

One thing that the most visited sites have in common is a large numbers of pages – content. Every page is another avenue for searchers to find your products. Often, the larger your site's footprint the greater the opportunity for browsers to find your web site through relevant key words.

Also keep in mind that quality and quantity of content is important. The best content to use on your site is informational; “how-to” pages, tutorials, and case studies can all help your page rank by becoming a useful community resources.

There are many SEO service companies that claim to help build traffic and optimize your site. Carefully evaluate them as you may pay high fees with limited results. Evaluate www.SEOcompany.ca/. Look for SEO tools at www.se-tools.com.

To further research SEO, go to: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization.

Key Words & Meta Data

Every page on your website needs to be optimized for search engine bots and rank analysis. Search engines will be looking for relevant key words and phrases imbedded in meta data found on each page. This isn't the only criteria search engines use for relevance, however. Search engine bots will also compare the content on your web pages to the key words and phrases found in your meta tags. A unique combination of meta tag information and content information is then used to determine your page relevance for particular key words.

Each page should contain the following meta tags to ensure proper search engines crawling.

- Page titles that reflect your most important key words.
- Keywords in header tags with a marketing message. Write for your audience first.
- Meta tags. These have lost a lot of their power due to abuses; the major search engines no longer rank based on your meta tags alone.
- ALT tags using description and key words on all images. Search engine bots cannot read images, therefore information provided in the description tags become an important SEO marketing tool.
- Meta descriptions describing content found on each page. Search engine results will often display some or all of this description information in search results, so this should be highly compelling phrases to entice users to click on your URL link.
- Content that is appropriately filled with keywords.
- Keywords close to the top of each page used two to three times per page. Don't over-do-it with key words or you could be banned from a search engine's index for abuse.
- Key words and phrases that link to other pages.
- Use of key words versus the URL in outbound links. For example, www.hobbytoolshed.com/carving_tools.html. Here carving tools are keywords pointing to the specific landing page.
- Use at least ten major key words in your meta tags.
- Do not just repeat the same key words or phrase several times; as mentioned above, too many key words on one page can get you banned from search engine indexes.
- Never ever put invisible keywords on your pages such as white text on a white background. This is considered an illegal use of key words and phrases and will get you banned from search engine indexes.

Your website developer should offer meta tag development but may charge extra for the service. Be sure to ask up-front before they begin developing your site to avoid unexpected expenses.

Remember to keep in mind your visitor when building a key word and phrase list for your web pages. Add words and phrases that would meet their needs for information and content, then optimize your text to work around those words and phrases. For more information on search engines, refer to: www.searchengines.com.

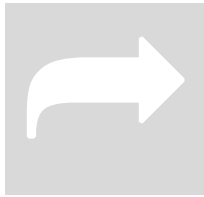
Your Titles. Your page titles are the first thing that search engine spiders will recognize as web page content. The key to developing great page titles is to place your

key words into them in a natural, human-friendly way. These tags should reflect your succinct marketing messages.

Google search engine bots read the first 80 characters of your title, whereas Yahoo reads up to 130 characters. An ideal compromise is to put your most significant key words and phrases into the first 80 characters. Then add more words to the end; Yahoo will see the additional words and Google will just ignore (truncate) them.

Meta Data. *Meta Tags* list all of the targeted keywords that you want the search engine to rank and locate your site with. The keywords should also be used in the content on your page. Due to past abuses, Google no longer ranks sites based on meta tags alone, but views key words and phrases found anywhere on your site to determine relevance. Some search engines, however, still rely on meta tags alone, so be sure to include them in your HTML code.

If you are using a website template meta tag code is often embedded at the top of your page. You just need to customize the tags to incorporate your own key words and phrases. Remember that this data is not visible to your reader but must be clear and strategic for the search engine software to capture and use.



META TAG TIPS

- Meta tags include a list of key words in order of importance.
- Do not repeat the same key words or phrase over and over within your meta tags, e.g., vitamins, vitamins, vitamins; use key phrases with the most importance first, e.g., vitamin C, cholesterol supplement, multivitamin.
- The meta description should be in sentence form, using key words, adding a brand or company name last. E.g., World's leading provider of vitamins and minerals – real results with Nutrilite. (80 characters total).
- Write the description with your potential customers in mind.
- Don't put too many keywords in your meta tags.

BEWARE!

- Search engines will ban sites that abuse meta tags. The tags need to be relevant to the page they are referring to.
- The tags are no longer the most important ranking criteria.
- Do not repeat key words many times in a row. It is considered spam and search engines may ban your site as a result.

Header Tags. HTML designs headers into six sizes. This functions by making text larger and bolder, signifying a new topic or something of importance.

Google, Yahoo, and MSN all place extra weight to keywords that are in header tags.

Alt Tags. ALT tags are tags with relevant keywords and short marketing phrases that are attached to images to help clarify or sell the items. If visitors put their mouse over the image while it is loading, the sentence or phrase will be displayed.

Because search engines prefer text versus images and can only read the ALT tags attached to each of your images be sure to include ALT tags for every image. Be careful not to overuse graphic images. Your web builder should provide the ability to add ALT tags easily.

Now that you may be overwhelmed:

Many good hosting companies have the tools for you to easily add this meta data and automatically turn it into HTML code for you. Before your 30 day trial is up, be sure to assess if how they accomplish this meets your needs.

The E-book Advantage

E-books provide you with 100% of the profit, making it a perfect option for online businesses. With a small up-front investment you can be up and running in no time. Just keep the ideas in this chapter in mind for the best results.

Owning and marketing your own e-book provides a great inexpensive product that is easy to download, update, and provide for free, or in pieces as articles or giveaways to potential customers.

Writing Strategies

Not everyone is a great writer. Fortunately there are options available even if you cannot write more than a sentence on your own, or if you need help developing your own writing skills. The following are options that are available to help you develop an e-book you can sell on your own website.

- Write an e-book yourself.
 - Hire a freelance writer to ghost write the entire book.
 - Hire a freelance writer to use your research materials and outline the book for you. You can then use this to write the book yourself.
 - Hire a freelance writer to enhance your original works by editing content, formatting the pages, adding graphics, or providing organization ideas for your materials.
 - Hire a freelance writer to change your book into a course or tutorial, or any other type of digital product that you can provide online to potential customers.
 - Work with an expert partner and do research for a joint project and use any of the other strategies.
 - Hire a graphic artist to produce a compelling e-book cover for your already written e-book, or have one made for a ghost written project.
-

If you decide to write the book yourself, software products such as Microsoft Word and other word processing software will be your best option for professional results. Once your content has been written you will want to convert your book into a more universal file type, such as Adobe PDF. You can also purchase e-book creating software to help you with the process. Here are a few software options:

- www.createpdf.com - Adobe's online pdf creator;
- www.ecovergenerator.com - for graphics; and,
- www.headergenerator.com for images - for images.

Consider your reader's needs. As you write, write the way your reader finds, understands, engages in, and remembers information. Ask yourself if the e-book is accessible, organized, accurate, and complete. Will readers be able to find what they need quickly and skip information they already understand? Is the book written clearly and in a style that your readers will be able to understand?

One great way of determining what your reader's needs might be is to ask them! Conduct a survey on your website and promise a free copy to those who answer the survey. Or, create and advertise your survey through www.SurveyMonkey.com.

What are the writer's needs?

As a writer, are these some of your needs?

- How can I organize the material quickly?
- How can I get started and avoid writer's block?
- How do I sequence information logically and concisely for my reader?
- How can I make it easy to update, divide, and add onto?

The Purpose of Your e-book

What is the purpose of your e-book, e-pamphlet or e-workbook? What do you want your audience to do as a result of reading your work? We all tune into that famous station WIIFM, What's In It For Me, so as you plan your book first consider your reader's needs, and then decide on the purpose of your book which will solve and satisfy those needs and desires.

Purposes for developing your e-book might include any of the following ideas.

- Inspire someone to accept your position and challenge them to take action.
- Alert someone to a problem and explain how to solve it.
- Announce or explain changes, new information, or studies and how to apply the changes.

- Provide some information, a need, and ask for information in return
- Convince someone to do something or that something should be done.
- Inform and describe guidelines for a project or a purchase
- Inform and call to action using outline options, recommendations and suggestions
- Provide information, descriptions, definitions, and findings for change.
- Recommend a product, service, or way of doing something, a how to approach.
- Entertain and inspire to help make a transition.

E-book Guidelines

- Use white space for readability.
- Add stories and testimonials for interest and validation.
- Use power words to convince.
- Use humor; go to www.steve.redcatstudios.com/
- Write at a 9th grade level as a common denominator.
- In the Table of Contents use catchy titles with 1-3 sentences selling benefits.
- Chunk the material for greater understanding and retention. (We can remember 5-9 new pieces of information)
- Be conversational and personalize it.
- Use 1.5 to 2 times for line spacing
- Write under 10 pages to a chapter
- Figure a 15 minute chapter
- Readers are used to hard cover books. Format accordingly.
- Books use 4.5x7 inch pages with 320 words per page in 12 type, double spaced with 1 inch margins.

E-book Resources

- Professional services for design, writing, programming, and more go to: www.elance.com
- For photographic images go to www.images.com, or try a search engine inquiry using the term “free images”. At the time of this writing a similar search resulted in over 84,000 free image sites.
- For illustrations try searching www.StockIllustrationsSource.com
- Use Microsoft Word to convert your book to an Adobe PDF file, or use any of a number of free software programs that will convert your file to PDF.

- Convert your document using online help at www.adobe.com or pay Kinko's to provide this service.
- To interview the experts and embed the audio in your book, use www.freeconferencecall.com.
- For design ideas visit www.bluetterfly.net/blog or www.thedailypost.net/.
- For adversity in advertising concepts and to add spice to your book visit www.chaos.gleeb.com/
- For live searches on the web, images, videos, news, maps and more go to: www.live.com
- For a dictionary and thesaurus visit www.wiktionary.com or www.dictionary.com.
- To develop e-book covers and more visit www.onlinewebcreations.com.

Organizing your eBook

One possible chapter flow:

1. State your point
2. Explain it , define it
3. Provide support material: reference, story, statistics, a study results, example, sample, demo, quotes, analogy
4. Apply it to their life or situation.

Another flow:

1. Set Up: What is this about? What is the big picture? Who says so besides you?
2. Importance: Why should I read this? What's in it for me? How does it relate to my life? Why is it important? What impact might it have?
3. Detail and Support: What can you tell me about it? What might happen? What evidence do you have? What conclusions and recommendations can you offer?
4. Action: What should I do as a result? What are the next steps? If I do those how do I win?

E-book Pricing

An e-book with a price between \$9.00 and \$27.00 is a good range to be in. Of course you can count on eBay for cheapies as low as \$0.99 but you may not want to focus on price as much as on quality. Provide an e-book that offers quality information and resources and people will pay whatever price you are asking (within reason of course) to get the information you provide. E-workbooks average \$14.00 and e-course

materials range from \$37.00 to \$395.00, with some in the \$1,000 plus range. Price your work depending on your market, expertise and the size and significance of the book. Remember that the price you can sell at will depend upon a lot of variables, so experiment for the best price point.

Other Resources

Wikipedia is a non-profit organization that is hosted by Wikipedia Foundation. They host multiple useful informational projects that are free to the public and are good resources for content. Additional Wiki resources include:

- Commons - Free media repository
- Wikinews - Free-content news
- Wiktionary - Dictionary and thesaurus
- Wikiquote - Collection of quotations
- Wikibooks - Free textbooks and manuals
- Wikisource - Free-content library
- Wikispecies - Directory of species
- Wikiversity - Free learning materials and activities
- Meta-Wiki - Wikimedia project coordination

E-book Writing Options

Labels. The labels you use to introduce topics, ideas, subheadings, instructions, etc., are important in guiding your reader. They should describe exactly what is in that section and provide a view that let's your reader find or skip that section depending on his or her needs. Begin by writing down the topics or sections related to your subject using words or phrases of things your reader needs or wants to know. Consider several of the following:

Introduction, background, overview, definition, situation, purpose, goal, examples, problems, impact, importance, keys, risks, criteria, findings, advantages, benefits, consequences, comments, solution, conclusions, recommendation, policy, description, analogy, issue, purpose, result, application, reference, action, outcome, response, requirements, next steps, deadline.

Developing Blocks of Information. Begin writing your eBook with the blocks of information that you know. You don't have to start at the beginning which prevents writer's block. Later you can do your research to fill in the remaining blocks.

Writing in blocks of information with labels that tell what's in that block provides a lot of flexibility and clarity. It makes writing easier and it's easier for your reader to follow and find the right information quickly. And it allows you to easily update individual blocks.

I like to organize my labels and then begin filling in each section. As I go along I often think of additional labels. I often cut and paste to change the logical order. At times one label followed by my block of information becomes too long and needs to be broken down into smaller pieces.

Then, if your e-book becomes lengthy, you can easily separate it into chapters and even possibly into another eBook or volume. As you can see, writing in blocks of information offers a lot of flexibility.

More Organization Hints

In a “How To” approach it is helpful to separate procedures from processes. A process is the bigger picture like building a house. Whereas there are many procedures in building the house that are more specific such as getting permits, designing the house, the plumbing, electrical, putting on the roof, etc. Processes involve stages or phases where procedures are detailed in steps. Processes require many players while a procedure is usually completed by one person.

When considering the use of bullets or numbered lists, evaluate the need for numbers. Does the list require a specific order? If not, use bullets. And, begin each of your listed items with the same grammar type for consistency. Use verbs such as list, learn, submit, write, design, or implement.

For interest and instructions try including tables that separate “When then columns” or “If this happens.... And this is the case ... Then do this...”. Or, use tables to divide similar content types into columns for clarity.

Providing Adobe Reader links. Your reader must have the Adobe Reader software to be able to read your e-book if this is the format you choose to distribute your book. If so, be sure to place a link on your site that states “Click here to download your free copy of Adobe Reader.” The link address to download the free reader software is: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

What is .pdf? Portable Document Format is an open document standard developed by Adobe Systems. It provides a file format that captures formatting information from a variety of desktop publishing platforms and presents the document as the publisher intended it with a professional appearance. One important Adobe .pdf feature is the ability to prevent people from copying and changing your materials.

If you want to understand more about PDF click on wikipedia.pdf. For working with .pdf files click on wikihow.pdf.

Hyperlink the long URL. To hyperlink:

1. Copy the URL address (the web location where you want the link to go to) which I have provided above.

2. Then select the words Adobe Reader or other desired word or phrase. You will often see click here with it underlined.
3. Next click on the Hyperlink icon found at the top of the software program you are using such as your editor, word processor, or web creator.
4. Fill in the URL and title as instructed.
5. Hit apply and close.
6. Then test your Hyperlink.

You can use this same process for any website page that you like and imbed it into your e-books, or websites to link to affiliates or recommended sites. Just copy the URL by selecting it from the top of your browser.

The Traffic Question

Without customers there are no businesses. In the online world, without “traffic” there also are no business websites.

Experts tell us not to depend on search engines for more than 20 percent of our site's traffic. Your challenge is to do all of the recommended search engine optimization (SEO) so your site is search engine friendly, and then focus on a marketing strategy to build traffic everywhere else.

Similar to spreading out investments, it becomes important to consistently apply multiple traffic producing strategies that will improve search engine ranking yet at the same time avoiding search engine obsession.

Linking

Search engines look for relevant and quality links. As your number of quality relevant links increase, so will your traffic. And, search engines will rank you for being a more relevant site for browsers. So how do you accomplish the goal of increasing your traffic?

You will want to begin by devising a regular, on-going process of link submission, article submissions, blog writing, forum participation and other social media marketing efforts. Finding and encouraging appropriate external links to your site will also be a significant part of the process.

Finding quality links is time consuming but well worth making the effort. Find web sites with non-competitive products and/or services and send an e-mail to the site contact requesting an inbound link to your website. You will often need to promise a similar out-bound link to their website from yours. Once they agree to exchange links, be sure to provide them with a link that contains descriptive text and a logo graphic in case they decide to use that instead of text. Often times a web contact may take weeks to respond, but don't be discouraged. Just keep sending out requests and see how your inbound links will grow.

A great way to develop quality links is by regularly submitting e-zine articles to article directory sites. Also, ask bloggers for a link to your site and do deep linking by getting keyword phrases linked to a specific page within your site versus to the homepage.

Your goal is to get as many targeted visitors for as little as possible. Let's explore the following eight major traffic building strategies to entice and link those targeted visitors and buyers to your sites.

Strategy #1: Articles and press releases.

Strategy #2: Directories.

Strategy #3: Advertising.

Strategy #4: Blogging.

Strategy #5: eBay.

Strategy #6: Social media marketing.

Strategy #7: Multi media marketing.

Strategy #8: Shopping malls.

Traffic & Linking Strategy #1 - Articles and Press Releases

Two important marketing strategies are to write and submit press releases and more importantly, e-zine articles, on a regular basis.

Article marketing is an important method for pulling traffic to your site. When you submit good articles that are selected and posted on other's sites, it extends your visibility. This acts like a conduit, funneling leads to your site, especially with a free offer. Plus, search engines index these article directories, so your information is indexed multiple times, making it easier for customers to find you and expanding your online reach.

A great article marketing website where you can submit articles for free is www.ideamarketers.com/writers.cfm or www.ezinearticles.com. Learn about article marketing from these popular sites; they provide many free and paid services as well.

Don't write well or don't have time? Try www.ideamarketers.com; they provide ghost writer resource lists to save you time and effort. When you hire a ghost writer you will most always want to ensure that you won the copyright to the generated materials. This way you can put your own author name on the materials without worrying about royalties or other expenses in the future. Another site, www.YourOwnArticles.com allows you to purchase pre-written articles for your own use.

Article Marketing Guidelines.

- Write internet articles in the typical range of 300-700 words. 500 words is approximately one page.
- Submit to article directories with a page rank between four and eight.
- Use a ghost writer if you are not able to write articles yourself.
- To spin your articles try a spin writer. Evaluate www.spunwrite.com.

- Make the first three words of your title your targeted key words.
- Do a key word and competitive search on Google at <http://adwords.google.com> and write with these words in mind.
- On your site, set up your meta data for your article using key words in the title, and providing summary content that sells.
- Make each article submission 20 percent different. Do not submit the same article to multiple e-zine directories.
- Include links according to the rules. Most article directories allow two links in the body of the article, but many do not allow any links outside the author's resource box.
- End your article with a short biography and your URL link to your website. This is often referred to as an author's resource box.
- Offer a free item and send the reader directly to that URL page, not your home page.
- Use an opt-in list to capture visitor information for additional free offers. Do not force the opt-in for your article's free offer. Build rapport, trust, and expertise first.
- Submit articles often.
- Submit articles to multiple relevant e-zine directories for greater exposure.
- If you syndicate, put version one on your site and submit a second version to syndication to avoid duplication.
- Put articles on your site so that Google search engines index content-rich pages, helping you obtain a higher site rating.



BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE ARTICLE TOPICS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

TIPS:

- Search blog comments, forums, chat rooms, etc., for topics people are asking about.

- Set up a tracking spreadsheet and track your submissions and versions.
- Research, write and submit your articles.

E-zine Directories. There are 1000's of e-zine article directories; you can both submit articles and place ads on that link back to your site. One of the best resources is a comprehensive listing of e-zines from around the world found on John Labovitz' site at www.e-zine-list.com. You'll save time on this site by searching on key words and finding the types of e-zines that make sense for your niche. Also check the list at www.directoryofezines.com.

My favorite is www.ezinearticles.com. The first article takes one to two weeks to be approved for publication, then one to two days for additional new submissions. They provide valuable e-mails with marketing and writing tips along with special offers. Other popular article directories include:

- www.Isnare.com;
- www.ArticleCity.com;
- www.GoArticles.com - takes one to two days; and,
- www.ArticleDashboard.com - takes three to five days.

Fun Note: I recently submitted an article and when I tracked my links, I found it had been translated into French and German and was posted on foreign sites and linked back to mine. Unfortunately, I couldn't check them for accuracy.

Press Releases.

Press releases are an excellent linking source and usually require a fee. It is advantageous to submit a new press release every month with some significant factual news such as a new product launch. When you write your press releases make it factual, written in third person about something that is newsworthy avoiding an advertising flavor. Be sure to place your bio and link at the end. You'll find a free template at www.PRweb.com.

Additional press release sites include:

- www.PRleap.com
- www.PRnewswire.com
- www.PRbuzz.com
- www.PRFree.com
- www.24-7PressRelease.com

- <http://news.google.com>
- www.free-press-release.com

If writing is a challenge for you, use www.guru.com and www.getafreelancer.com or www.elance.com to hire a freelance writer. Place a request for quotes for several articles and press releases to be released weekly and or monthly. Your bidders will provide samples of their work and you can check satisfaction ratings from other customers. Then once you find a great resource, hang on to them.



BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE PRESS RELEASE TOPICS

News-worthy Topics

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What is your goal for submitting your first press release?.

Tracking. Be sure to track all of your article and press release submissions and versions. And, search your links on Google which will include your article links. Type in “links” “your domain name” into the Google search bar.

Article and Press Release Tracking (Sample)

Article or Press Release, Version & Site Linked To	Ezine or Publication & Category Listed In	Date Submitted Date Accepted	Free or Paid	Results & Comments
Article 1 v. 1				
Article 1 v. 2				
Article 1 v. 3				
Article 2				

Refer to the Addendum for blank forms

Traffic & Linking Strategy #2 - Free & Paid Directories

Directories are a great source for generating referrals. A web directory is a website that specializes in providing links to other websites and groups them in topical categories.

Types of directories include free and paid directories, multiple link directories, ILQ and Niche directories and local directories. The ILQ directories have been around for a long time. See www.seocompany.ca/directory/top-web-directories.html for a list of older, trusted sites.

Find and research categories that match your audience and then join multiple related directories to build your link base and drive traffic to your site.

There is a spectrum from many *free* directories and, at the other extreme, *costly* ones. Evaluate the long term investment benefits of joining a fee-based directory and add a few paid directories to the many free submissions.

To determine the best place to submit your site in a directory, type the name of the directory and your top key word phrases into Google. Sample: “abilogic.com” “hobby tools”. Place a space between the two quotes. Analyze the results. You may find one or two of the best places to choose from this way.

Some popular Directories

- www.addURL.nu - Provides a free list of SEO friendly directories.
- www.valuedirectories.info/e-free.html - A list of free directories.
- www.FreeTrafficDirectory.com - A website directory with links to free traffic resources.

- www.trackback.com - A directory for housing, cars, and travel.
- www.Furl.com - A website Directory with about a dozen categories such as entertainment, electronics, business, and education.
- www.blogpulse.com - An aggregation service by Nielsen BuzzMetrics, providing stats, top news stories, and tools.
- www.bridgerentals.com - A Directory with categories in dating, credit cards, education, technical, insurance.
- www.thomsondirectories.com - Get listed in regional directories
- www.UScity.net - City guides and white pages
- www.directories.yahoo.com - Multi category directories
- www.business.com - Technology and money solutions.
- www.dmoz.org - Human edited open directory project.
- www.abilogic.com - A free business directory



DEVELOP A DIRECTORY LINKING PLAN

Your goal for how many Directories to join:

of Paid Directories:

Budget per month:

of Free Directories:

Goal per week:

Research and list Directories to join.

Paid Directories Prioritized:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

Free Directories

Begin with the list found at <http://addURL.nu> and join higher ranked directories

Traffic & Linking Strategy #3 - Online Advertising

There are several advertising programs with the largest ones from Google and Yahoo. The following terms are frequently used to describe the popular types of advertising.

Pay Per Click (PPC). PPC, is a type of online search engine advertising technique where the advertising account bids a price for keywords. When the bid is established, the account pays that amount every time someone clicks on their ad until their set budget is used up. The ads are called Sponsored links or sponsored ads. They are displayed in the shaded area at the top of the search page or in the right hand column. 'Pay someone Per Click'.

Cost-Per-Click (CPC). CPC, the minimum price per click thru varies by search engine. The more popular the key words are, the higher the cost per click will be. CCP can be as low as 1¢. This term is interchangeable with PPC.

Pay-Per-Performance (PPP). PPP, requires the affiliate grantor to pay a pre-established commission whenever the visitor generated from the affiliate's site purchases something.

AdWords. AdWords is Google's advertising product that offers Pay Per Click, plus text and banner ad programs. You pay only when someone clicks on your ad. For a more complete description go to Adwords on [Wikipedia](#). See also <http://adwords.google.com>.

When bidding, you can bid differently for each type, for example, bid

- \$.20 for [mountain bike], [] for the exact word(s) match
- \$.15 for “mountain bike”, “” a phrase match with the words in any order
- \$.05 for mountain bike – a broad match using these and any additional words

AdSense. AdSense is Google's marketing program that displays relevant ads on your website. PPC is the same concept. AdSense offers three products for content, for search, and for feeds. When a visitor clicks through the ad, Google pays you a small fee. For a more complete description go to AdSense on Wikipedia or see <http://adsense.google.com> and <http://adsense.blogspot.com>.

Researching Ads. There are many creative marketers to learn from. By conducting market research in magazines you can model a combination of the best ideas. If a niche is popular, it probably has a related magazine where you might consider both analyzing and posting ads. To find a magazine that caters to your audience research www.mediafinder.com which has the largest database with 70,000 U.S. and Canadian periodicals. Another good source for a list of offline magazines is www.magazines.com.

Once you have located copies of related magazines look at what ads are selling for. What needs are they satisfying? Where is the greatest competition? What are the buzz words and marketing campaign messages? To expand on these messages and product needs consider joining news group conversations to narrow down questions and answers that your audience may need and want.



IMPORTANT AD RESEARCH TIPS

- Determine the cost of each visitor so that you know how much to pay for PPC. A rule of thumb is to not pay more than 50 percent of the value of each visitor per click. You will need to track your traffic and conversion rates and

divide that into the average sale price and cost of doing business. For example, if you convert 5 percent of all visitors (2 to 3 percent is more typical) and your average net sale is \$50.00, each visitor is worth \$2.50. Then your PPC bid should never exceed \$1.25.

- Do not go over your bid price.
- Manage your advertising budget weekly and track the results.
- The search engines will teach you how to use their advertising programs. Beware, they want you to spend money so their strategies may not always be in your best interest.

Ad Campaign Tracking

Once you have your ad campaign designed and bid you'll want to track its results so that you can tweak it, expand it or stop it. Develop a marketing campaign tracking system using excel or a table. Test each campaign with a controlled budget and use a bid rule of thumb not to bid higher than 50 percent of your cost per visitor. This assumes you know how much each visitor costs. Notice I did not say average sale amount. How many visitors does it take to make a sale?

A tracking chart might look similar to this sample:

Campaign & Budget	Dates run	Bid Amount	Resulting clicks	Conversion rate	Cost analysis	Comments
1. Nail Traffic - \$200/week NT1	mm/dd/yy- mm/dd	1.00				(Tweak it by...)
2. Sea Salt Spa 100/wk SS1						
1. Nail Traffic - \$200/week NT2						(__% improvement over 1 st campaign)
3.						

Campaign Name	Product Focus	Key words & Phrases	Cost per visitor	Description & Advertiser
1. Nail Traffic	Traffic Navigator e-book	"Increase website traffic"	\$2.00	This Adword campaign points to my mini-site www.name of site.com. It is a pre-sell strategy for my affiliate grantor 'web traffic'. I am offering my 3 free products and an opt-in option.
2.				
3.				
4.				

Blank copies of these forms can be found in the Addendum

Traffic and Linking Strategy #4 – Blogging

Creating & Marketing with a Blog. So what is a blog? A blog is a flexible non-static website where text, graphics, links, news, articles and other media related to the blog's topic is displayed. It is a continuous read with the most recent entries displayed first in. Older entries can then be archived and accessed through a menu.

Blog owners typically post to their blogs several times a week to create interest, traffic, and community. And, an effective blog creates a sense of community by inviting and interacting with visitor's comments.

Create a blog at www.blogger.com or www.journalhome.com and start posting your thoughts. In a day or two make a post that pertains to the same topic as your website. So if your website is about organic gardening then make the post in your new blogger blog about organic gardening or perhaps organic pest control or harvesting if that is the current stage of gardening they need help in.

Somewhere within the post put a link to your website using the main keyword that you're trying to target. This is an easy first step to getting your site indexed fast because the search engines like blogs and spider them often.

Similar to the search engine functions of Google and Yahoo for websites, Technorati is the major blog search engine that tracks more than 112 million blogs. At the end of 2007 one source stated there were over 726 million blogs registered and quickly growing. PEW Internet's research finds there are over 80,000 blogs created every day.

Because a blog is an important marketing strategy to link to and drive traffic to your website, it is important to learn more about and begin to blog. Below are several great resources to learn more about what is working and new in blogging.

Popular free blog sites

- www.blogger.com - Google's blog software
- www.thoughts.com
- www.blogster.com
- www.vox.com
- www.wordpress.com - is more technical
- wordpress.org/download
- wordpress.org/support
- wordpress.org/extend/themes
- www.clearblogs.com
- www.wordpress.com
- www.bloglines.com

Popular blog resources

- www.squarespace.com - Provides a hosting service with a publishing system for managing websites and blogs.
- www.js-kit.com - Offers a free program that allows you to add interaction for comments, reviews, ratings and polls on your website.
- www.voicebubble.com - Allows you to record a message and send the link of your voice message to your identified emails.
- www.probblogger.net - A blog to help other bloggers learn the skills of blogging.
- www.blog.makezine.com - A blog of DIY projects, Maker magazine, Maker Store, Videos and a Forum for the backyard DIY.
- www.copyblogger.com - Provides articles, ebooks, and courses that teach the art and science of writing in a strategic, persuasive, compelling manner.
- www.toprankblog.com - Provides resources and information on Internet marketing strategies and tactics such as Search Engine Optimization, Blog Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and Online PR.
- www.technorati.com - This blog search engine also provides Headlines, Rising Blog Posts, and Stories in the areas of business, politics, technology, sports, entertainment and lifestyle.
- www.slashdot.org - For the latest development in technology this blog provides news for nerds in areas like IT, LINUX, PC's, Developers, and Science.
- www.portal.eatonweb.com - A Blog directory.
- www.marketingtips.com - An excellent Marketing Center by Dereck Gehl full of marketing tips, courses, workshops, and tools.
- www.marketingwithpostcards.com - Offers a postcard mailing program to increase traffic.
- www.FreeTrafficTip.com - Articles with many traffic tips and nuggets.
- www.bloggingfordollars.com - A blogging directory of blogging tools, affiliate and marketing resources, and more.



BLOGGING TIPS

- Your host may provide blogging functionality.
- Attach a blog to your website to help build community and traffic for your website.
- If writing is difficult for you or you don't have time, hire a writer to add content two to three times per week.
- When you use a free blogging host, your URL will be a sub-domain such as www.yourblog.blogspot.com.

Traffic & Linking Strategy #5 – eBay

eBay – Another Marketing Arm. eBay is a web auction marketplace phenomenon that began in 1995. Today the site boasts over 212 million members worldwide with 128 million of those in the U.S.

Last year 724,000 Americans reported that eBay was their primary or secondary source of income. Alone, eBay Motors is the largest auction style marketplace, a real opportunity to market higher priced items. Back in 2006 eBay still provided \$711 billion in auto sales and continues to be a driving force, pardon the pun, in used auto, truck, motorcycle, RV, and boat and motor sales.

An interesting study was done by ACNielsen. They did a sampling of 3,500 products across all categories and found that there were *no bids on 54 percent* of all eBay items. There were only single bids on 23 percent of the auctions listings, 5 percent of the listings had two bids, and only four percent had ten or more bids.

With no bids on 54 percent of auction bid products it is easy to see that the majority of products on eBay do not attract competitive bidding. So, it will be important for you to research product popularity and final bid prices for your product niche using eBay tools.

So why mention eBay? Because it is an important entrance into your web business driving visitors and satisfied customers for repeat business. Many successful eBay businesses do only 20 to 25 percent of their sales on eBay. They use an eBay storefront as a direct link to their products and services.

One e-book strategy is to sell a mini version of your e-book on eBay for \$2.00 to \$3.00 with a Buy It Now offer. You embed your URL in the mini e-book, marketing the longer version (version 2.0 or volume II) with some free add-ons to draw them to your site.

As you make sales, then be sure to include your website address and information in product packaging for add-on sales and traffic. Be careful in following the eBay rules for advertising your website on eBay, however. Violations could get you banned.

Traffic & Linking Strategy #6 – Social Media Marketing

Think of social media as a friendly informative neighborhood. Perhaps it is a young neighborhood with a lot of pre-school children binding mothers and families together with common interests. They share and exchange ideas, opinions, doctor referrals, recipes, child rearing know how and other information of interest to the group.

Social media is a combination of technology and practices where people can share their know-how, experiences, and opinions with one another much like a community

neighborhood does. Once you begin to establish a presence, ask others to add you to their community and the results will expand exponentially.

Blogs, websites and forums offer a starting point for larger conversations where interested parties can connect. You as a participant can post, rate, or comment on what has been communicated and are often allowed to provide your website address which is an obvious draw for participation.

From a marketing standpoint these conversations connect people with quality products, issues, and activities. The product provider can get a feel for what people need and want and then tailor their product offering to meet that need.

Your social media marketing strategy needs to include more than one social media site that fits your target audience. For example, Facebook appeals to an older more mature audience, while MySpace is usually a younger audience.

As you might expect, this all takes time and effort, organization and a clear strategy as to how, when, and where to spend your time.

Explore several of the following Social Media sites.

- www.Facebook.com
- www.MySpaceBook.com
- www.Squido.com
- www.Flicker.com
- www.del.icio.us.com
- www.Twister.com
- www.Slideshare.com
- www.StumbleUpon.com
- www.Linkdlnk.com
- www.YouTube.com
- www.Twitter.com

Join several conversations in your area of interest. Frequently show yourself to be authoritative in a friendly way. Offer free information and help. Add videos. Be a problem solver. Give out many of the resources or tips provided in this e-book for example. Add an attractive bio and links to your site(s).

Traffic & Linking Strategy #7 – Multi-Media Marketing Options

Getting face to face with your audience on live broadcasts can be exciting and very lucrative. When your audience can interact with you and listen to a real person, the trust factor can soar, and persuasiveness builds an urgency to buy.

Tele-communications. Telecommunications enables two or more locations to interact both ways with video and audio transmissions. Conducting meetings on line, web conferencing, webinars, and tele-classes have become increasingly popular. These are excellent sources for promoting or delivering products to potential audiences.

Video Conferencing. A simple free video conference can be done on Skype using a webcam. For information on free video calls, click on SKYPE. Skype also allows group calls with up to 6 parties simultaneously.

For a more professional web meeting solution go to www.megameeting.com.

Tele-Classes. Imagine! You host a webinar and invite all of your customers and prospects to join in. They call in with a designated phone number and pin number which your hosting company provides. Your audience also goes online to follow along with your PowerPoint presentation.

You welcome them all to the seminar, ask where they are from and then mute their lines to avoid noise feedback. They can hear you but no one can hear them. You do your intro and then introduce and interview a guru in your arena and/or conduct training on how to do something or solve a problem for your audience. You coordinate your talk with your PowerPoint presentation for visual impact.

All along you are selling your offering as you provide valuable information and build trust, excitement and urgency. At the end you introduce your full product offering with benefits and tell them how they can purchase. You even open it for Q&A to increase the rush and engage your community of potential customers. Viola, a windfall launch of your new product.

Now, you have videotaped that live interview or session and offer it later in another product offering. You keep growing your portfolio library and use this as a tool to get people to opt-in. It's another great strategy for growing your site popularity and traffic.

To continue building your branding, add portions of your videos to YouTube or other video sites and get quickly indexed or spidered. Since the actual video does not get spidered - be sure to use your prime keywords in your title and tags.

Multi-Media Resources

- www.internetmarketingvoodoo.com
- www.Technorati.com - blogging video how to
- www.upstreamnetworks.com

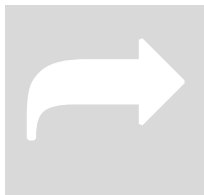
- www.adobe.com
- Camstasia Studio is a screen capture video program
- www.easyFLV.com - streaming video software
- www.gotomeeting.com for online meetings and large webinars
- FIREwire is a fast webcam driver. Record directly to your computer.
- winDV is a small and easy to use Windows application for capturing videos from a camcorder into AVI-files.
- www.videohelp.com to help make your DVD's and CD's.
- www.YouTube.com
- video.google.com
- Traffic Geysers will submit videos to over 40 sites.
- www.ifilm.com
- www.podcasttengoldenrules.com

Traffic & Linking Strategy #8 – Shopping Malls

Shopping malls provide a resource much like the concept of a brick-and-mortar mall. Essentially these sites link together communities of shops and stores that meet the needs of customers. A shopping mall may incorporate specialty shops only, or may be more like a typical department store, just an online version.

Participating in these sites varies depending upon the site. Generally though you will want to choose sites with a page ranking of at least four. This indicates that the site receives enough traffic to make it worth your advertising dollars and efforts, and that it has been around for a while.

You will likely not want to delve into the shopping mall world until after you have successfully completed other elements of this guide book. These sites will require yet another learning curve, as you figure out how to add your products to the site with their particular site interface, and you work out good price points for your products.



General Traffic & Link Building Tips.

- Avoid link farms, web rings, and reciprocal link programs.
- SEs love good content. Submit e-zine articles and add your new articles to your sites.
- Write a blog and link it with your website.
- Write valued posts on relevant blogs that allow links back to you.
- Find quality relevant forums and post regular valuable comments.
- Link a video recording on your YouTube account.
- Be sure to add a site map for both the SE's and your visitors.

- Fill your site map with your keywords and use deep linking to them.
- Add press releases with new additions.
- Research www.seomoz.org for the links of your competitors.
- Place inexpensive ads on www.Partneron.com, a database of Networks and Supply chains.
- Research offers for \$2 ads on www.Twodollarads.com.
- Do some offline advertising in related magazines.
- Advertise on several free advertising sites.
- Frequent chat rooms often and leave good comments.
- Formulate and schedule your linking plan and tactics.
- Set a budget and implement a paid advertising campaign.
- Regularly submit articles and press releases.
- Blog for dollars and SE ranking.

Traffic Generating Resources

- For Internet marketing try www.websitehere.com
- A free link popularity site is found at <http://linkpopularity.com/>.
- For a free course on marketing try: www.williecrawford.com.

Free Traffic sites

- www.USFreeAds.com
- www.DesktopLighting.com
- www.WebmasterQuest.com
- www.TrafficSwarm.com
- www.Linkmetro.com

Cheap classified ad services

- www.topezineads.com
- www.directoryofezines.com
- www.parteon.com
- www.twodollarads.com
- www.sponsorshipads.com

Good chat room sites

- www.yack.com
- www.peoplelink.com

- www.chatspot.com
- www.ivillage.com

Link Planning Activities

Build Your Traffic and Linking Plans. To maximize your success and stay focused, it is important to develop a linking and traffic building plan. One tactic includes listing ongoing daily tasks, focusing on one traffic building aspect each day of the week for a 2-4 hour work session. A sample daily plan is included below.

Now let's build your traffic and link building plan.

1. Select the traffic and linking strategies you plan to implement from the list below.
2. Develop your daily activity plan with realistic, measurable expected results using the form below. Review the sample for ideas.

Traffic and Linking Strategy Check List

Strategy #1 - Article & Press Releases

- Submit monthly Press Releases
- Publish articles
- Provide RSS articles
- Develop RSS Syndication
-

Strategy #2 - Free & Paid Directories

- Join Free Directories
- Join Paid Directories
-

Strategy #3 - Advertising

- Implement Pay Per Click Campaigns
- Sign up for Google AdSense
- Place Classified ads in Ezines and in Directories
-

Strategy #4 - Blogging

- Develop a related Blog

- Comment on blogs that allow your link

-

Strategy #5 – eBay

- Set up an eBay supporting strategy
- Set up an eBay front end store
-

Strategy #6 – Social Media Marketing

- Join several Social Media Sites
-

Strategy #7 – Multi-Media Marketing

- Video conferencing
- Teleseminars
- Podcasts
- Telecast for product launch

Strategy #8 – Shopping Malls

- Research mall reputation and page ranks.
- Find malls that meet your specialty niche.
- Check site traffic to analyze overall cost-worthiness.

Miscellaneous Marketing Activities

- Become an Affiliate Grantor
- Develop an Opt-In campaign for list building
- Market to your Opt In list by adding value and pre-selling products
- Develop a newsletter and syndicate it
- Offer Referral Incentives
- Partner with a complimentary provider
- Implement a joint venture project
- Join Shopping Malls to offer your products
- Conduct Off line marketing: TV, Post Cards, Magazines, Newspapers...
- Others



WEEKLY TRAFFIC GENERATING PLAN

Activity

Measurable Results

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5



WEEKLY TRAFFIC GENERATING PLAN - SAMPLE

Day 1 Blogging 1/2 day

Add your own blog posts

Comment on 5-10 other relevant blogs that allow linking to your site.

Day 2 Write and submit 2 e-zine articles per week.

Submit 1-2 press releases per month.

Day 3 Find and write to 15 websites to request a link. Then follow up.

Day 4 Social Marketing day

Set up bios and Input into del.icio.us, Digg, Reddit, Squido, StumbleUpon, etc.

Closing Remarks

Now that you are at the end, your work has just begun! Hopefully these chapters have helped you to begin your journey and have provided you with the information you need for a successful online business start-up.

E Commerce was relatively new to me before my first web business, although I sold large computer systems in the 1980's and 90's. In 2007 I signed up for a year's training program and researched and read until I got it. For newbies out there, the process is logical and exciting, even if it just seems like information overload right now. Although there is still much to learn, the possibilities should become clearer to you as you begin to work with your own online business. If I can do it in my 60's, you certainly can do it as well!

Once you figure it out you will be in a position in which you can keep replicating and repeating ideas that work, and making improvements on those that do not. Whatever you do, don't let age or novice understanding today, stop you learning and building your dream web business.

There are many excellent websites and training programs to help you keep advancing your marketing efforts. Keep searching as I do. Take advantage of all of the free podcasts and tele-seminars available over the internet. Although they are designed to sell you product, they can provide great tips in the process as they entice you to purchase.

Keep a log so that you can find the nuggets. I pulled this resource book together for that very purpose. It took too long to search my notes so I put them in a resource book where I could easily find them.

Be careful in getting caught up in the next best thing. I too often have to remind myself to apply all that I have learned before buying one more product or e-book. So many of the products I purchased were nice stories but offered little content and resources to get the job done.

I heard something recently that I have adopted. "Never get old. Die young at an old age!" That is what I want to do. So, watch for the next e-book and Multi-HeathStrategies, MarriageProsperity and affiliate websites to see if the cliché "you can't

teach old dogs new tricks” is true or not. If you are a hobbyist, try out my first fun website at www.hobbytoolshed.com.

So, that's it. Follow the steps outlined; add key pieces and strategies for enhanced success. Keep searching and reading and discovering new methods and techniques. Remember the old adage, “When you're green you're growing and when you're ripe you rot”. And we all know that green is in.

Bless you as you endeavor toward your own success and begin to make your visions realities.

P.S. On the following pages you will find resource lists, checklists, planning, and tracking sheets to help you manage your e-commerce business. I found them very helpful in keeping me on track with all of the possibilities, opportunities, and steps required for building a successful web business. Also refer to the flowchart found at the front of this e-book. Print it out to have a handy reference to all the materials found in this book.

Worksheet Addenda

1. Planning Worksheet
 2. Key word Research Tracking Spreadsheet
 3. Customer Profile
 4. Competitive Profile and Modeling Worksheet
 5. Domain and Hosting Company Worksheet
 6. Important Records
 7. Website Design Worksheet
 8. Advertising Tracking
 9. Article & Press Release Tracking sheet
 10. Traffic Plan and Tracking
 11. Weekly Linking Plan & Tracking
-

