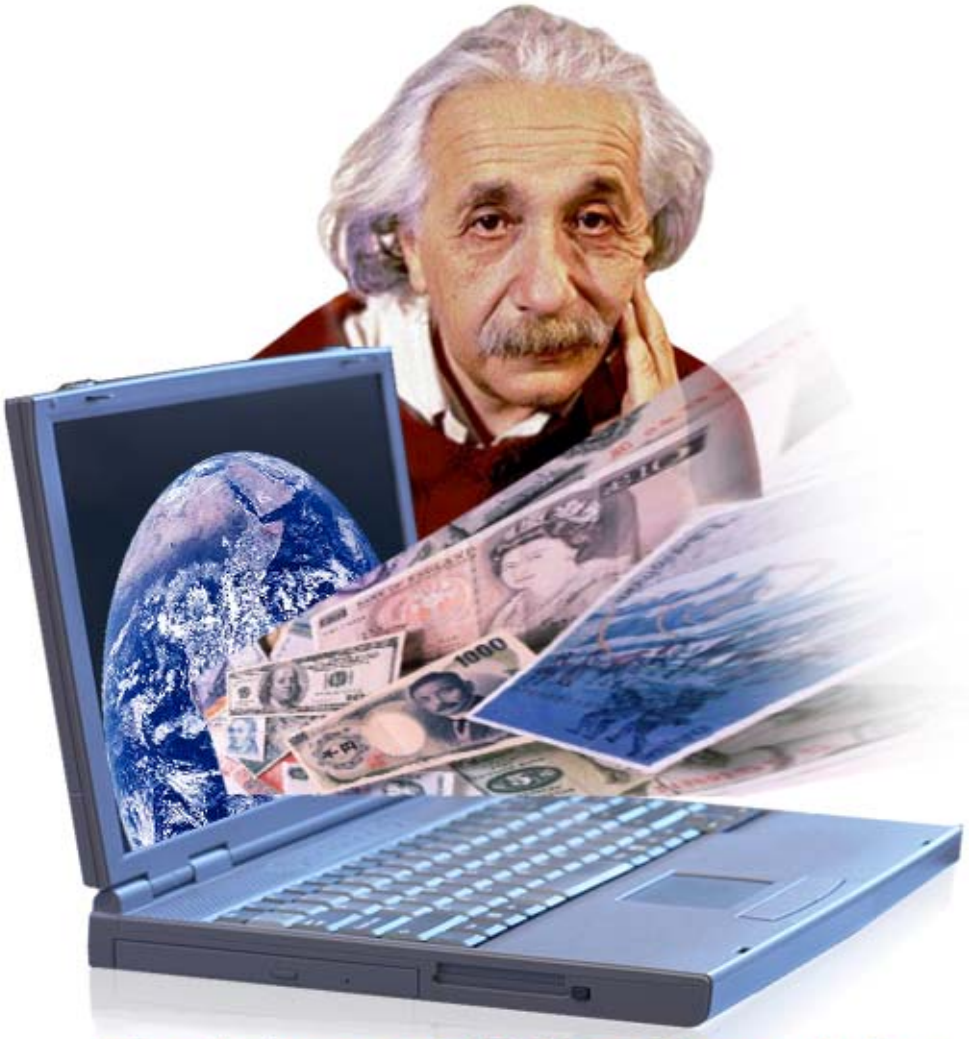
DOTCOMOLOGY

BY: STONE EVANS, THE HOME BIZ GUY



The $cience of M@king Money Online

DOTCOMOLOGY

BY: STONE EVANS, THE HOME BIZ GUY

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Instead of only reading about making money online, why don't you actually start doing it right away? I've created a simple system that you can use to get your own money making website set up within the next 24 hours. It's not just a website though… It's actually a complete turn-key home based business **system** that gives you everything you need to start pulling in profits on the Internet.

Click here to learn more about it and sign up today!

Introduction

Hello, my name is Stone Evans. A few years ago, I was a restaurant owner. Actually, you could say the restaurant owned me. I worked long hours being what is popularly called the chief cook and bottle washer — that just means I did everything from paying the bills to washing the dishes. At the end of the day, I earned barely enough money to get by and I never had the opportunity to take a vacation.

The fact is, my financial life was pretty difficult at that time. However, I was optimistic and always searching for ways to achieve true financial freedom. One day, I picked up a book called “Multiple Streams of Income” by best selling author, Robert Allen… and I didn’t put it down until I was finished reading it cover to cover.

That book changed my life.

It taught me, in very simple terms, that having money is a good thing and that not having money is a bad thing. It illustrated the point that it is essential to develop multiple streams of income. One job is not enough, one investment is not enough, one business is not enough. If you are only relying on one stream of income, you are setting yourself up to be broke one day and the fact is that 85% of the

world's population grows old and dies financially broke. That's because most people do not have multiple streams of income.

Knowing that one stream of income is not enough, I got busy finding ways to make more money through avenues other than my "day job". In the "Multiple Streams of Income" book, Robert Allen discusses different "Money Mountains" including the "Real Estate Money Mountain", the "Investment Money Mountain" and the "Marketing Money Mountain". The one that appealed to me most was marketing — specifically Internet marketing.

In the book, Robert went on to explain that ordinary people were getting on the Internet and starting small businesses that made big money from the comfort of their own homes using nothing more than a personal computer and an Internet connection. I was intrigued by this idea. Just the thought of being able to make a living using nothing more than a laptop computer and the Internet sent chills down my spine. I got started immediately.

After work and after my family went to sleep at night, I'd brew a big pot of coffee and get online for a few hours (usually between midnight and 3 AM) trying to learn how to make money online. I knew other people were doing it. I just had to figure out how to do it myself.

I'll be honest… It wasn't easy.

Everywhere I turned, somebody was promising to make me rich if I joined their business opportunity or membership site or bought their latest ebook. Before long, I had racked up thousands of dollars in credit card debt and cluttered my computer with various ebooks, membership site passwords, affiliate program welcome letters and Internet marketing guru newsletters. My head was spinning with ideas and information, but the only people making any money that I saw were the people whose stuff I was buying — or so it seemed.

However, with time things began to make more sense. I started making a little bit of money using some of the online marketing strategies I was experimenting with and gradually that little bit of money I was making grew into a full-time income.

My dream of making a living from home has come true.

The purpose of this book, “Dotcomology – The Science of Making Money Online”, is to share the information that has helped me create a successful online business so that other people who are hopeful of making money online will have a fighting chance for success.

See, you have to be careful when you get online with hopes of making money because there are literally thousands of scams and scam artists waiting behind the veil with sophisticated and highly tuned strategies for ripping you off. One of the reasons I give this

huge 300+ page content-rich ebook away for free, is because I want to help as many people as possible avoid the scams and learn the truth about what it actually takes to make money online. With the facts in hand, you can decide for yourself whether or not you've got what it takes to succeed in the Internet marketing industry.

TIP: If you want to get started quickly, I can help you get your first website set up **within 24 hours**, so that you can start applying what you learn in this book to the real world. I believe that my service is the fastest and easiest way to start making money on the Internet.

Click here to learn more about it.

Empty your cup!

There's an old Zen story that goes like this: *A young man had read all the books he could find about Zen. He heard about a great Zen master and requested and appointment with him to ask for teachings. When they were seated, the young man proceeded to tell the master everything he had understood from his reading, saying that Zen is about this and Zen is about that, on and on…*

After some time, the master suggested that they have tea. He performed the traditional tea ceremony while the student sat at attention, bowing when served, saying nothing. The master began to pour tea into the student's cup. He poured until it was full, and kept pouring. The tea ran over the edge of the cup and onto the table. The master kept pouring as the tea ran off the table and onto the floor. Finally, the student couldn't contain himself any longer. He shouted, "Stop! Stop pouring! The cup is full — no more will go in!"

The master stopped pouring and said, "Just like this cup, your mind is full of your own opinions and preconceptions. How can you learn anything unless you first empty your cup?"

And so it is with you now — if you're going to benefit from this book and all of the knowledge I reveal within the pages ahead, you must first empty your mind so that you can actually learn something.

Don't listen to the "so-called" experts...

In this book, I'm not going to give you some airy-fairy theory about what should work if everything clicks the way I think it should. That's the kind of rubbish you can read in any one of a thousand marketing books sitting on the shelves of Barnes and Noble. The fact is, most of those authors have never sold anything online except copies of their book on Amazon.

Here's my first piece of advice: don't listen to advice from someone who hasn't been there and done it themselves!

This is absolutely crucial. If you look around the web or in your local bookstore you're going to find a ton of hype about how you can become a millionaire with nothing more than a keyboard and a mouse. There are people out there who will say you can get rich with no effort, no work and no investment. There are even some who will try to sell you pyramid schemes, get-rich-quick plans and every other kind of scam you can imagine. And people actually buy them. At the first sign of a chance to pick up fast cash, people whip out their wallets and give away their life savings. You're smarter than that, right?

But it's not just the straightforward frauds you have to watch out for. The Internet changes almost every day. Unless someone is actually earning their living online day in and day out, by the time

they've finished explaining how to make money on the Internet, chances are, their advice is out of date.

Like I said, it wasn't easy when I was first getting started. But like any successful businessman, I ditched what didn't work and did more of what did. If I saw something that I thought would bring in extra cash, I gave it a try.

The fact that it's so easy to create an online business was what really did it for me. If I wanted to take advantage of an opportunity, it cost me next to nothing to try and I lost little if it failed.

It wasn't long before I knew exactly how to find the right products and bring them to the right customers.

That's what I'm going to show you in this book. I'm not going to give you any strange theories or fancy ideas. I'm just going to tell you *exactly* what I did — *and what I'm still doing!* — so that you can do the exact same thing yourself if you want to.

Of course, I can't guarantee that you'll have the exact same results as me. Heck, I bet if I were starting from scratch today I'd have different results too. I might even have better results. All I can do is reveal the information and tools that work for me. Once you have this, I'm confident that you can make this business work for you too.

Do you have what it takes to be an e-entrepreneur?

Before you even turn on your computer, the first question you have to ask yourself is whether you're cut out for this kind of work.

The fact is, building a home-based business isn't for everyone. Some people like the commute. They really do enjoy having a boss who tells them what to do, and they like the routine of working nine-to-five for an ordinary salary that can barely pay the mortgage. Personally, I think they're nuts.

More reasonably, there are people who are concerned about the risk of starting up their own business. They're not sure it's worth the investment of time and money, and they're scared of the responsibility that comes with running their own company. They wonder if there is another way to escape the rat race.

I'm sure there is. You could win the lottery or wait for your Aunt Sue to keel over and leave you her condo. Or maybe you could sit down with a pen and paper and draw the blueprint for *The Next Big Thing*. Anything can happen…

For me, what happened was creating a successful, self-running Internet marketing system. It didn't happen without effort. It didn't happen without at least some initial investment of both time and

money. Of course, it doesn't happen now without me making sure that the taxes are filed and the paperwork is done. But it happened. I'm my own boss. I work from home according to my own schedule and I get to pocket *all* the cash my business makes. If you're prepared to give an e-business the time, the work and the money it needs to get started and get growing, it can happen for you too.

The Internet — Your Business Tool

In effect, my system for making money online is built on three foundations: the Internet, marketing and the product.

In this book, we are going to look closely at each one of those. In particular, we'll spend a lot of time talking about marketing because that is really how you make money online.

Let's begin by taking a quick glance at why the Internet is the greatest business opportunity since the railroad.

The Internet actually started in 1969 as the ARPANET, a Defense Department system designed to let survivors share files after a nuclear attack. From a handful of top secret computers, it's grown to fill more than 10 million hosts and millions of domain names.

And it's still growing. According to a recent survey, the volume of Internet traffic is expected to double annually over the next five years.

Consumers are expected to account for 60 percent of all Internet traffic over that period with the rest of the market made up of business users.

What does that mean for you?

It means customers — millions of them.

No other business tool can put the products you sell to so many people so easily. Nothing even comes close.

We're talking about a potential market of hundreds of millions of people around the world who can buy your products 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you opened a store in your city, how many people would walk past your window each month? If you live in Manhattan, maybe a few thousand. If you live in Los Olivos, California, maybe a few hundred. On the Internet, there's virtually no limit to the number of people you can bring through your store front *wherever you live*.

That's the power of the Internet. That's why my online business is bringing in thousands of dollars *every day*. I attract a lot of customers for my service and I sell a lot of goods.

The Right Product Sells Itself

In fact, for some of my websites, my customers *are* my goods. When you join an affiliate program, you buy traffic from other sites

and pass them onto your partners for a profit. In this book you'll learn all about affiliate programs. I'll show you how to build them, how to select your partners and how to turn your traffic into cash.

But traffic is just one kind of product on the web. Information products are some of the greatest money-makers currently churning up dollars on the Net. And anyone can create an information product.

Imagine you know how to build a bookcase from scratch. That already makes you a lot more knowledgeable than me. The only thing I know about wood is that it looks great in my fireplace! Maybe one person in a thousand will want to know how to build the kind of bookcase you know how to build. If you're not a well-known carpenter, no publishing company is going to touch you. It's just not worth the effort. On the Internet, one person in a thousand gives you a potential market of approximately 340,000 customers (and that number is growing all the time). If you write a book and sell it online for just $10 per copy you could make as much as $3,400,000. All you have to do is tell people what you know and tell them it's out there. And that costs next to nothing. Information sells like crazy online. In fact, I sell a $47 ebook all day long. The profits from that single ebook could provide a comfortable living for me and my family all by itself. But who wants to stop at one profit stream when you can create multiple streams of

automated income on the Internet? Not me. **Click here** to discover the system I use to earn multiple streams of income on the Internet.

The Eternal, Changing Business Plan

Of course, it's communication that's the key. The more people you can bring to your websites the more money you're going to make.

You can have the greatest products in the world sold on the most beautifully designed website online, but if no-one knows where it is, you're just going to be wasting the twenty bucks or so that you're spending each month for your website hosting service.

There are a dozen different ways to bring people to your website. This book will discuss the ones that are most effective. I'm sure there are other ways too. I'm sure you'll find people who will tell you that this site is great or that method gave *them* results. Maybe they're right, and you're welcome to try them. What I can tell you is that I've tried a lot of different marketing techniques and this book will reveal all the ones that work best for me and should work for you too.

That doesn't necessarily mean that they *will* work for you. If there's one piece of advice regarding online marketing that you learn from this book, it's that *marketing has to be flexible*. Like I said, I tried dozens of different methods. If I hadn't kept a constant watch on how

those methods were working, if I hadn't dropped those that weren't worth the effort and repeated my success with those that brought in cash, I'd still be making sandwiches and washing dishes for a living.

I'll tell you about the methods that I found consistently effective. If they don't work for your product, give it a little time then switch the methods around. Remember, flexibility is the key.

In the first chapter of this book, I'm going to explain exactly what you have to do to build a website from selecting a host to creating the design. Once you've got your site up, you have to bring traffic, and that's what we'll discuss next. I'll reveal the secrets of successful search engine optimization, how to buy advertising that pays, and how to make the most of the millions of affiliate programs that will pay real dollars for your website visitors you've never met and never will.

I'll also examine the various kinds of products you can create and sell online, and finally, I'll show you how to put everything together to create a truly integrated business system that brings in real cash, hour after hour, day after day!

Making a fortune online is easy if you know what you're doing. Read this book and apply the information within. I know it can work for you because it works for me. Whether you choose to succeed or not using the information revealed in this book, is entirely up to you.

NOTE: If you like "short-cuts", **click here** to learn about my Plug-In Profit Site service which will give you everything you need to start earning multiple streams of income within the next 24 hours.

A few recent comments about the Plug-In Profit Site:

"It's the simplest, auto-pilot money making system I've seen!" -- **Marty Foley**

"This is a super quick way to get some checks coming in now." -- **Allen Says**

Click Here to Sign Up and Start Making Money Today!

1. Getting Started

The first step towards creating an online business is building a website. Now, that isn't as complicated as it sounds. When I built my first website, I thought Java was a type of coffee and HTML the name of a robot in Star Wars. That's why I didn't do it. I paid someone else to do it for me. It cost me just a few hundred bucks, but I earned it back soon enough. This chapter discusses how to begin the process of creating your first website, and where you can find someone to build your site if you don't want to do it yourself.

1.1 Making Your Website Attractive, Interesting, Engaging and Interactive

To succeed at your online business (whether you are selling your own product/service or are selling for other merchants as an affiliate), you need a website created just for that - a simple, focused site. Your website should be easy to build, maintenance-free, low cost, credible, and a powerful traffic-builder and customer-converter.

Having the right tool and the right product alone won't ensure the success of your website. There are many factors to be considered while designing a site. Unfortunately, most of these are often ignored by Internet business owners.

☑ *Build It for Speed* - It's a fact of modern life - people are in a hurry. This means that you have between 10 and 30 seconds to capture your potential customer's attention. To minimize your load time, keep graphics small. Compress them where possible. Use flashy technology (JavaScript, Flash, Streaming Audio/Video, animation) sparingly and only if it is important to your presentation.

☑ *Target your Market* - Know who your market is and make certain that your site caters to their needs. It is critical that your site reflect the values of your potential customers. Is your market mostly business professionals? If so, the site must be clean and professional. Is your product aimed mostly a teenagers and young adults? Then your site could be more informal and relaxed. The key here is to know your market and build the site to their preferences.

☑ *Focus the Site* - Make certain your website is focused on a primary goal: selling your product or service. A site offering many unrelated products is not necessarily unfocused, but this is often the case. If your business does offer many products, dedicate a unique page for each instead of trying to sell them all from one page.

☑ *Credibility Is Crucial* - The most professionally designed website won't sell if your customers don't believe in you. A clear privacy statement is one way to build your credibility. Provide a prominent link to your privacy statement from every page on the site as well as from any location that you are asking your visitors for personal information. Provide legitimate contact information online.

☑ *Navigation should be simple* - Make site navigation easy and intuitive. Simple and smooth navigation adds to the convenience of the visitors. Add powerful search and catalog features. Visitors usually don't have the patience to navigate through the whole website to find what they are looking for.

☑ *Consistency is the key* - Make sure the site is consistent in look, feel and design. Nothing is more jarring and disturbing to a customer than feeling as if they have just gone to another site. Keep colors and themes constant throughout your website.

☑ *Make your website interactive and personalized* – Add feedback forms as well as email forms that allow your prospective customers to ask you any questions they might have pertaining to a product. Personalization of your

website is another key element that can build your visitor's trust and increase your sales. Personalization technology provides you the analytic tools to facilitate cross-selling and up-selling when the customer is buying online. It would give you an idea of what products to cross-sell and up-sell. For example, when a person buys a CD player, a disc cleaner can also be offered.

☑ *Content is King* - Good content sells a product. Ask yourself the following questions. Does your copy convey the message you wish to get across to your visitors? Is it compelling? Does it lead your visitor through the sales process? Have others review, critique and edit your copy to insure it is delivering the intended message. Always double check your spelling and grammar.

1.2 Navigation

The aim of a website's navigation is simply to allow users to get to the content they require. For sites that have a large number of sections and web pages (and information sites can be one of these) the navigation plan has to be properly researched and designed. You have to consider different types of visitors and simulate the most common steps they would take to find what they want on your site,

and the navigation plan has to optimize this movement. For example, the steps required from searching a catalog of items, selecting from the catalog, adding them to a shopping cart, proceeding to check out, to entering the payment particulars is a specific sequence that should be facilitated by the navigation system. If the sequence is haphazard, it could lead to frustration or the user may miss an important step and you would have an aborted sale.

To find their way about, users need to know two things:

- Where they are now

- How to go elsewhere

Navigation does not exist in isolation; good site organization is a prerequisite for a coherent navigation system.

Objectives of a Navigation System

Navigation can be broken into two primary types: Location Indicators and Navigation Controls.

Location Indicators

Location indicators let users know where they are in the site at the moment. You need to keep in mind that users coming from outside

your site can enter at any page, not necessarily on a main page. They need to be able to orientate themselves quickly.

Equally, it is important that users navigating around your site have a clear idea of where they are both in absolute terms and in relation to other content.

Location information should appear on every page of the site, in the same place and in the same style. Location indicators should tell the user precisely where they are and this should be clear even to a user who has entered the site at an internal page. The location indicator should be identifiable for what it is and make sense in the context of other navigation.

In simple sites a page banner - text or graphic - naming the page will be sufficient. For this to work the page name should also appear in the main navigation so that it is relevant within the overall structure of the site.

Color can be used. For example a different color background, contrast color or sidebar in each part of the site. To be really effective the color change should be reflected in the navigation.

Using “breadcrumbs” on every page is a good idea. Breadcrumbs show you a series of hierarchical links that you have used to go from

page to page within a section. Using breadcrumbs is like leaving a trail of the path you have followed. The breadcrumbs appear at the top of the content section, just below the main navigation template. Each element in the breadcrumb is a link to that section or subsection. This helps in avoiding a series of back buttons allowing the user to directly go back to the main section page or another sub section. More importantly, it always shows the context of the page that is being viewed and how it belongs to a section or sub-section.

Navigation Controls

Navigation controls are the main navigation links; they allow users to move around the site. Whether they comprise images or text they should be predictably located in the same place, and with the same appearance, on each page.

These have several purposes

- ☑ To allow users to move about within the site
- ☑ To tell users what information is available at the link
- ☑ To work with location indicators to orientate users

A good navigation control:

- ☑ Is clear: it looks like navigation

- ☑ Leads to obvious content - users have a good idea what they will find if they click
- ☑ Is consistent with other navigation controls
- ☑ Is predictable in its style and location on the page

There is no mystery to usability. It simply involves creating a site, which is accessible to the majority of people, is easy to use and get around and delivers on its promises. You can have a site that meets the most important standards of usability by planning it well and always keeping the end user in mind. Remember that websites should not be designed for their owners - they should be designed for their users.

Problems with usability could be said to stem from just two sources: the site itself and the user. In fact, the site is always at fault if a visitor (however experienced or inexperienced) has problems navigating, getting information or understanding the site.

While websites have become far more complex, web users have become less experienced because more and more new people go online every day. It is a mistake to think that the majority of users will be web or even computer savvy and will understand subtle clues about content. Many won't, so make your site as easy to use as possible.

1.3 Defining a Usable Site

A usable site will:

- ☑ Help users achieve a goal, usually to find something, such as information, or obtain something, such as a book.
- ☑ Make it easy for them to achieve that goal
- ☑ Make it possible to achieve the goal quickly
- ☑ Make achieving that goal a pleasant experience

A site will be generally usable if:

- ☑ The content is good and relevant
- ☑ The content is easy to find
- ☑ The content can be found quickly
- ☑ The page is pleasant to look at and cleanly designed

1.3.1 Good Content is Critical

A site with good content, regardless of its subject, is one that provides products or information that is useful or beneficial to users. A good usable site will make it clear what information or content is available and at what price AND what is not available. A good usable site should define clearly all subscription packages offered.

1.3.2 Ease of Access to Information

Good navigation, precise location indicators, secondary navigation, clear linked text and a well-organized structure all contribute to making information easy to find for a wide range of different users.

Bearing in mind that many users are inexperienced, it may be necessary to include explanations of things you consider self-explanatory. For example, an inexperienced user may need an explanation of how to use a drop down menu. Remember, make it as easy as possible for people to use your website.

1.3.3 Quick Access to Information

This is the aim of the majority of web users. It can be broken into two important aspects:

Speed of Page Loading

This requires, in particular, attention to images to ensure they are properly optimized and do not excessively delay load time. It may also mean breaking up long articles and ensuring that important content is at the top of the page where it will load first.

Speed of Access to Content

This is where the **3-click rule** comes in - no important content should be more than 3 clicks from the home page. Some standards even say that it should be no more than two clicks.

One helpful way to speed access to content is to consider each type of user, select the content that they are most likely to be interested in and create links from the home page to one piece of content for each group. This will get them quickly to the appropriate part of the site.

1.3.4 Cleanly Designed Pages

Cleanly designed pages are pleasant to look at and easy to read. It is almost impossible to make a site with an image shown as a tiled background usable - the whole thing is too distracting and confusing. It takes no great design skills to create clean pages; it just requires thought and adherence to the principle that when it comes to design, less usually is more.

1.3.5 Download Status

Most paid membership websites are limited to online access and information download rather than selling products. There should be clear download instructions provided. Your website should also state

the size of the file in kilobytes and the estimated time of download for a user having a 56K modem, DSL, Cable and so on.

1.3.6 Usability Problems

While for large commercial sites investment in full-scale usability studies may be essential, few small sites can afford such luxuries.

However, identifying problems with usability for your site need be no more complicated than asking a few (honest) friends to act as guinea pigs on your site and, if possible, watching them silently as they do this. Watching users try to find information at your site can be both instructive and quite surprising.

Remember that if at any stage you feel the urge to intervene and explain, then you have identified a usability problem.

List of the Most Common Usability Problems

- ☑ The site does not state its purpose clearly
- ☑ Java applets, huge images, banner ads or flashy elements slow down loading; 10 seconds is about as long as the average user will wait for a page.

- ☑ The site requires specific software to be used. Have you ever actually changed browsers or downloaded a piece of software just to see a site?
- ☑ Poor navigation, too little navigation, too much navigation and, not uncommonly, no navigation at all
- ☑ Bad design leading to poor readability
- ☑ Discomfort due to ugly design or inconsistent design. Almost always because a designer overestimated their skills.
- ☑ Irrelevance of content - for example the business site that includes biographies and photos of each of the board members. Happy egos on the board; bored website visitors!
- ☑ Complexity or excessive originality of design, which requires users to learn how it works in order to use it.
- ☑ Inaccessibility because the site cannot be used by browsers for people with disabilities.

1.4 Building Interactivity and Personalization

Make your website interactive. Add feedback forms as well as email forms that allow your prospective customers to ask you any questions they might have pertaining to a product. Personalization of

your website is another key element that can build a visitor's trust and increase your sales. Personalization technology provides you the analytic tools to facilitate cross-selling and up-selling when the customer is buying online.

Personalization tries to restore to the online business the magic of personalized attention which is one of the chief reasons why many people still prefer in-store purchase. You can use personalization to match your customer with the right products through either rules-based or customer analytics-based processing. Thus as your software stores customer information and preferences, it can help categorize them into groups. At the same time, observations over time can suggest products to cross-sell and up-sell. Thus when a person buys a subscription to a fitness site, exercise equipment is also offered. Amazon pioneered personalization on the net – when you a buy a book, it shows you other books in the similar genre saying "people who bought this book also bought these", inducing you to buy more.

A consumer survey from the Personalization Consortium found that 56 percent of respondents say they are more likely to purchase from a site that allows personalization, and 63 percent are more likely to register at a site that allows it.

1.5 Graphics

Your site has to be aesthetically attractive with visually appealing organization and enticing images. Fashions change fast on the Internet, so when you come to choose a designer, make sure you take a good look at their portfolio. You want the user to just glance at your homepage and understand immediately who you are and what you can do for them.

1.6 Web Copy

Your website content should convince visitors that your service is either unique or superior to that of your competitors in terms of quality, and is competitively priced. It should show your potential clients that you can provide the solution they are seeking. Your product or service will solve their problems, answer a dream, enrich their lives, and/or improve their businesses. You are the dependable expert that they want and need!

Your website copy plays a major role in establishing and growing your customer base. Website copy creates the “voice” of a company, just as the look and feel of a site put a “face” on the company and on otherwise intangible products and services. On an ecommerce site, the copy plays a key role in closing sales as well as in up-selling and cross-selling products and services. Good website copy delights first-time

visitors, encourages return visits and propels both customer acquisition and retention.

People read a web page differently than they do a brochure or a newspaper. They scan, scroll, click, hit the back button, and hit the forward button. “Reading” is about moving around and being in control. You have one chance to make a first impression – to quickly convey the benefit of staying on your website. I can’t overstate the importance of first impressions, which in web-time are measured in milliseconds. The layout, functionality, message and overall look and feel of your web page determine who stays – and who clicks away.

Your story should be clear and to the point. The goal of any web page should be to get the visitor to DO something: to move on to the next step in a purchase sequence or to click for more information about a product or service. Without readable, compelling copy and clearly organized hypertext links, visitors are much less likely to complete a transaction – and return to your site again.

Writing for your web page should always start from your visitor’s perspective. What is your website visitor looking for? Why is she here? How can you make her visit as quick and efficient and positive as possible? You should take the time to clarify the goal of each page before starting to write. If the page is part of a transaction sequence,

identify what may be hindering the buying process. Be sure instructions are clear and easy to read.

If you are selling a service on your website, your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is your service's most powerful benefit, in combination with a strong, unique feature of your business. It answers that most difficult question:

Why should someone do business with you?

Tell your customers what service you are selling and explain what your service provides. What is the key benefit(s) to your customers? What pain does it cure, what solution does it provide? Compare your service with that of your competitors and highlight what makes you stand out from the competition? Keep working on this until you can clearly separate yourself from the field. As stated earlier there must be a convincing reason for doing business with you, instead of your competitor.

Summarize the above into one tight, powerful, motivating phrase that will persuade your customer to do business with you and to trade their money for the benefits delivered by your service.

As you start to work through the above four steps, you may find this to be a lot harder than it looks. Don't blow it off and give up! You

must have a USP. If it was easy, everyone would have a great USP! Come up with a tight, sharp USP that sells your service to your customer.

Write tight, get right to the point, be keenly aware of the audience for the page, and don't use a three-syllable word when a one or two-syllable word will do. Use call-to-action language and be interesting. The page should be so clearly organized that, in seconds, visitors can understand and get convinced to buy your product and be able to anticipate where a hypertext link – or a "Continue" button – will take them. Studies show that "ease of use" is the winning factor on an ecommerce site.

If you're going to promote your service and expand your customer base using your website, potential clients have to be able to trust you. Their confidence in you and your products has to be boosted. Endorsements on your website from a valued friend or colleague, or a referral from a strategic partner are the types of "leads" that boost your credibility. You and your service must be perceived as being trust-worthy before your visitor will be confident enough to contact you or even buy your product.

Show prospects that you have their best interests at heart and that you can adapt or customize your service to meet their individual

needs. Foster an ongoing relationship that steadily increases their trust levels and cements a view that you are an “authority” in your field.

Another important aspect of convincing prospective customers is to keep abreast of recent developments in your field. Check on what your competitors are writing about, and watch for new trends. This will keep your website current, razor-sharp and unique**.** By keeping your eyes open, you will be able to grab an angle or niche that hasn’t been well covered yet by your competitors. Portray this angle or niche on your website.

Finally, be wary of broadening the theme of your site too much. Try not to dilute your product or service’s targeted niche simply to expand your base of merchant partners. Remember; focus on your selling your service. That’s where the “meat and potatoes” of your business will come from.

1.7 Choosing a Domain Name

In the physical world, you can distinguish a business because of its structure, window displays, or signs. You can tell that a bank is a bank, or a clothing store is indeed a clothing store.

In the Internet, however, it is an entirely different story altogether. Your domain name is the only clue to your online business.

You do not have visual clues: no location, no look, and no store design. Instead, users have to type in a word or a set of words to reach your site. Your prospective visitor has no way of knowing what your site is all about until she finds it and reads its contents. Who can ever tell that Amazon.com sells books? Or that Excite is a search engine?

Your domain name can spell your success on the Internet. A good domain name is the best asset you can ever have. It can make your business stand out in the crowd, or just float aimlessly in space.

The need to provide immediate clues to an online business led to the prevalence of generic domain names. Generic names instantly provide the user with an idea of what a business is all about, what to expect and look for in a site. For instance, Etoys.com is a toy store.

The temptation of the generic name has been so powerful; that some companies even paid ridiculously high prices to get the name they want. The domains Loans.com and Wines.com were both bought for $3 million each. Telephone.com was acquired for $1.75 million, while Bingo.com sold for $1.1 million.

However, generic names do not necessarily create the “buzz” that you’d like surrounding your website. Branding has always been about proper names: McDonald's did not name their store Hamburger. Hertz

is not called Car Rental. FedEx is not Mail Carrier. Kodak is not Photographs. Google is not Search Engine. Microsoft is not Computer Software.

For better branding results, your domain name should stand out and be easy to remember. Consider the following tips when creating a domain name:

- ☑ The domain name should be short
- ☑ The domain name should be simple
- ☑ It should be suggestive of your business category
- ☑ It should be unique
- ☑ It should be easy to interpret and pronounce
- ☑ It should be personalized
- ☑ It should not be difficult to spell
- ☑ It should not be difficult to remember

Domain names can be registered through many different companies (known as "registrars") - a listing of these companies is available at **ICANN.org**. You can register for domain names from 1 to 10 years in advance and prices can vary anywhere from $8 to $30 per

year for each registered domain. Most website hosting companies, as explained later, will handle the registration process for you, but make sure that you are properly listed as the owner of the domain when it is registered. If you have registered a domain name for a specific period, make sure you renew it in time. You'd be surprised at the number of cases, where website owners have lost their domain name to a competitor by not renewing it in time.

1.7.1 Using Expired Domains to Skyrocket Your Traffic

Domain names provide a great opportunity to make easy money.

I'm not talking about Internet real estate, where you buy up good names and sell them on for a profit. If you didn't get positioned in that market early on, you can forget about it. The bottom's fallen out of the market and the best domains are long gone.

I'm talking about expiring domains.

Thousands of webmasters invest time, effort and money to promote their site and build up traffic. Many of them then lose interest and move on, leaving their site active. That means that although they still own the domain, they're not actively promoting it. But they don't need to. All the automatic marketing systems they've put in place are still bringing in traffic. The site runs itself.

Now, at some point the ownership of those domains is going to expire. If you snap up those domains once they come back onto the market, you've got a pre-built stream of customers. You can either rebuild the site, or redirect the traffic to your domain.

It's that easy. In fact, websites like **DeletedDomains.com** actually do all the legwork and let you reap all the rewards.

Do be careful when using other sites though. There are some swindlers out there that will sell you subscriptions, provide you with outdated lists, take your money and keep the good domains for themselves. It happens, and there's little point in taking a risk with other companies when **DeletedDomains.com** does such a great job.

1.8 The Host

Let's start where the Internet starts: with a host. A host is a server that provides a home for your website on the World Wide Web. Just as your computer contains all your files, so a host contains all the files needed to run your website. Why can't you just keep all those files on your own computer? Because that would mean visitors would have to connect directly to your computer to see your website and that's not a good idea. It wouldn't be secure and it would make your machine run like a tired snail. With a host, you can simply upload everything you need to the server and your users can then connect

there to see your site. It lets the site run faster and allows it to have all the security and extras it needs.

Selecting a host is the first important step towards building your Internet business.

Hosting services and companies vary from totally free, shared servers to large-scale dedicated machines. You'll have to decide which is right for you and your business.

Your choice of server will depend on how much money you have available at the beginning and how much you plan to grow in the future. In my opinion, for commercial sites, free hosting is a waste of time. Your users are going to get blasted with annoying pop-ups every time they surf to your page, it's going to be impossible to get a decent position in a search engine, and you don't even get a real business URL. No one's going to remember your web address if they have to type: **FreeWebsiteHosting.com/my_site**. However, it is possible to choose a cheaper host at the beginning and move up as your business begins to bring in money.

NOTE: One of the most important factors in choosing a website host is the **customer service** you receive once you've signed up. There are many technical issues that can come up once you have your own website, and if you don't have a truly dedicated hosting company

to support you and help you resolve these issues when necessary, you could, quite simply, lose your business. Trust me, I've seen many thriving online businesses fall apart because they chose the wrong hosting company. **When hosting is cheap, there is a reason for it**. With website hosting, you get exactly what you pay for and you should never compromise when it comes to who to host your website with. **Click here** to learn about my service and the website hosting company I highly recommend to everyone who does business online.

1.9 Testing and Performance

You have designed a very usable website, you have hosted it using a very reliable web hosting company, and you have integrated a safe and trusted payment processing system with your website. However, all these can prove to be useless until you know your site is actually working and accessible. If you want to create an accessible website, you will need to test, test and test again.

A recent Forrester Research report reported that failure to ensure website quality will cost the average small or mid-size company thousands of dollars in wasted expenditures on website redesigns, forfeited revenue, and lost customers. Testing a website is a long and tedious task, but it's perhaps the most important task of all. There are

numerous stages to testing, all of which are very important. Ranging from browser testing to content testing, none should be excluded.

Visual Acceptance Testing

Visual Acceptance Testing is the first port-of-call for all webmasters. This type of testing generally ensures that the site looks as it is intended to. This includes checking the graphic integration, and simply confirming that the site looks good. In this stage you should assess every page carefully to ensure that each looks the same. The site should be tested under different screen resolutions and color depths.

Functionality Testing

Functionality testing is perhaps the most vital area of testing, and one which should never be missed. Functionality testing involves an assessment of every aspect of the site where scripting or code is involved, from searching for dead links, to testing forms and scripts.

You should also test your payment processing system completely and thoroughly. After all, you wouldn't want a potential customer to get stuck at the last stage and eventually leave the site just because there is something wrong with payment processing.

Content Proofing

This stage of testing removes any errors in your content, and ensures that your site has a professional appearance. In this phase, you should reread each page on your site, and check for spelling and grammatical errors.

System and Browser Compatibility Testing

This test phase is completed in order to ensure that your website renders correctly on a user's screen. To begin with, you should test several pages from your site on different browsers such as Internet Explorer 4, 5, 6, Netscape 4 and 6, and Opera. This can be extremely important - if your site does not work properly with the Netscape browser, Netscape users will end up annoyed, and they'll go elsewhere.

1.9.1 Monitoring and Tracking

Understanding what your visitors do on your site is crucial information, not to mention interesting. If a large majority of your visitors who proceed to purchase a product leave the site when they get to a specific page in the order process, you need to know about it. It could be that the page in question is confusing or hard to use. Fixing it could increase your sales exponentially. In fact, it is not uncommon

for small website changes in headlines and order processes to result in a 200%-300% increase in sales. This is just an example; there are many reasons why you want a detailed analysis of your site visitors.

Most website hosting services offer a stats package that you can study. If you're not sure where this is, call up your hosting service and ask them. Statistics are a vital part of tracking your marketing progress. If you don't have access to website statistics get a package that can help you in this area. Do not get a counter that just shows how many visitors you've had. You'll be missing out on vital information that can help strengthen weaknesses in your site.

A good website hosting service would offer traffic logs that provide an invaluable insight into the traffic being referred to a web site from various sources such as search engines, directories and other links.

Unfortunately, traffic tracking provided by web hosting services is often in the form of raw traffic log files or other hard-to-comprehend, cryptic formats. These log files are basically text files that describe actions on the site. It is literally impossible to use the raw log files to understand what your visitors are doing. If you do not have the patience to go through these huge traffic logs, opting for a traffic-logging package would be a good idea.

Basically two options are available to you and these are: using a log analysis package or subscribing to a remotely hosted traffic-logging service. A remotely hosted traffic logging service may be easy to use and is generally the cheaper option of the two. In fact, you can get a powerful free tracking tool at: **StatCounter.com**. Other reliable tracking programs include **WebTrends.com** and **HitsLink.com**.

These services do not use your log files. Typically a small section of code is placed on any page you want to track. When the page is viewed, information is stored on the remote server and available in real time to view in charts and tables form.

A good traffic logging service provides detailed statistics pertaining to the following:

- ☑ How many people visit your site?
- ☑ Where are they from?
- ☑ How are visitors finding your site?
- ☑ What traffic is coming from search engines, links from other sites, and other sources?
- ☑ What keyword search phrases are they using to find your site?

- ☑ What pages are frequented the most - what information are visitors most interested in?
- ☑ How do visitors navigate within your web site?

Knowing the answers to these and other fundamental questions is essential for making informed decisions that maximize the return on investment (ROI) of your website investment.

The most important aspect of tracking visitors to your website is analyzing all the statistics you get from your tracking software. The three main statistics that will show your overall progress are hits, visitors and page views. Hits are tracked when any picture or page loads from your server on to a visitor's browser. Hits, however, can be very misleading. It is quite an irrelevant statistic for your website.

The statistic that is probably the most important for a website is Page Views/Visitors. This gives you a good indication of two things. First, how many people are coming to your site, and secondly how long are they staying on your site. If you have 250 visitors and 300 page views you can figure that most visitors view one page on your site and then leave. Generally, if you're not getting 2 page views per visitor then you should consider upgrading your site's content so your visitors will stay around longer.

If you see the number of visitors you have increasing as well as the number of page views per visitor increasing then keep up the good work! Always look for this stat as an overall barometer of how your site design is going and if your marketing campaigns are taking hold.

Also, a good stat to look for is unique visitors. Once a person visits your site they will not be added to the unique visitors category if they visit again. This is a good way to track new visitors to your website.

Page views are a good indication of how "sticky" your website is. A good statistic to keep is Page Views divided by the number of Visitors you have. This statistic will give you a good idea if your content is interesting and if your visitors are staying on your site for a long time and surfing.

Some people are intimidated by web traffic statistics (mostly because of the sheer volume of data available), but they shouldn't be. While there are many highly specialized statistics that can be used for more in-depth web traffic analysis, the above areas alone can provide invaluable information on your visitors and your website performance. Remember, this data is available for a reason. It's up to you to use it.

1.9.2 Tracking Your Sales

Like any business, it is absolutely vital to track and maintain your sales records. You should have a clear understanding of your income and expenditures.

There are many ways to keep track of your sales. Using orthodox methods such as keeping a paper journal is time consuming. Simple spreadsheet programs as well as basic accounting software are available at minimum or no cost. However, it is advisable to install advanced accounting software such as QuickBooks, Quicken, or Microsoft Money to keep track of your accounting.

Such advanced programs save you time by sorting your register transactions by date, transaction amount, document number (e.g. check number), order entered, or cleared status. The tracking feature included in such software tracks, by user, changes made to each transaction. Daily, weekly, monthly as well as yearly sales reports can be generated with a few clicks. These reports help you analyze the sales of each and every product. Logs and reports can be generated to keep track of all your customers.

NOTE: Affiliate marketing solves many of the aforementioned tracking problems for you automatically. When you become an affiliate and resell other company's products for a profit, the company you are

affiliated with keeps track of your traffic and sales automatically and presents all this information to you in easy to read charts and graphs. **Click here** to learn about a turn-key affiliate marketing system that you can use to earn multiple streams of income on the Internet.

1.10 Building Credibility and Maintaining it

Finally, make sure that you build trust and credibility for your business. We discussed earlier the importance of credibility. Credibility is a key ingredient for any successful business venture. Building and enhancing the credibility of the products and services you offer is an ongoing and full-time effort.

Why not make sure the website you use works as hard as you do to establish credibility? Let's look at elements that can be built into a well-designed website to enhance credibility in the eyes of your potential customers.

Offer a Guarantee

Nothing beats a solid, believable guarantee for building credibility online. It may be hard to believe, but buying via the Internet is still unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory for many people. It is up to you, the business owner, to put their minds at ease. One way to do this would be to offer an unconditional, 100% money back guarantee.

By assuming all of the risk, you will earn instant credibility points with most potential customers.

Provide Contact Information

Even the best guarantee won't help establish credibility if the potential customer cannot contact you. Post accurate contact information on your website and make it easy to find. Provide as many methods of contact as possible; do not simply post a link to an email address. For maximum credibility, post the complete mailing address, phone number (preferably a toll free number), and email addresses for customers to use if they feel the need to contact you.

Provide a Brief Bio

Familiarity is one of the most effective tools for building credibility on the Internet. How do you establish familiarity in a faceless, impersonal medium like the Internet? Simple, tell people about yourself. Post a page that provides a thumbnail sketch that describes who you are. Be sure to include personal data as well as professional credentials. Place your photo on the page so people can put a face with your name. Creating familiarity will impart another level of credibility for you and, by extension, for the product you represent.

In this chapter, we looked at how to build your website and explained many of the elements your website must contain to be effective. We discussed web hosting and domain names and even

talked about how to use expiring domain names to get free traffic flowing to your website. And we're only getting started! In the next chapter, we're going to look more closely at some of the more popular and successful Internet business ideas.

NOTE: Would you like an easy way to start making money online? I've created a simple, turn-key, 3-step system that you can use to launch your very own money-making website on the Internet within the next 24 hours. **Click here** to learn more about it and enroll today.

2. Internet Business Ideas

2.1 Leverage the Advantages of the Net

The Internet is a vehicle that has been used to enable higher levels of communication between people, companies and countries throughout the world. It means your online business does not just have to concentrate on local markets – and almost no place is out of reach! If your business has a website, this in itself means it is accessible by the global market, and it is vital that your business take advantage of this.

Internet selling is on the rise. There are many research studies and statistics that support this statement. A study conducted by the Ipsos Reid market research firm in February 2003 concludes that in the year 1999 only 28% of worldwide Internet users purchased a product or service online, whereas this figure rose to 62% in the year 2002 and about 70% in the year 2005. And these numbers continue to climb. Nielsen/NetRatings supports this finding with its own research.

The Internet is a huge marketplace that has attracted businesses with its potential for big-time revenues. Dizzying success stories of ventures started in a basement that grew to become stock market darlings are constantly celebrated in the media. Small businesses

came to the Internet, tentative at first, and then in droves - eager to sell everything from fake jewelry to handcrafted tapestries.

You can sell just about anything from soup to nuts, as long as you have a product that has a market.

2.2 What Businesses Are Succeeding on the Net?

After the settling down of the dot-com bubble, sanity checks have brought realistic expectations to the fore. Initially, a backlash was seen, forecasting the doom of the Internet. Finally, merits have made the Internet gain its rightful place. In breakthroughs that show the promise of ecommerce wasn't all smoke and mirrors, many dot-coms including eBay Inc., Amazon.com Inc., Yahoo! Inc., Expedia Inc., FindWhat.com Inc., E-Trade Group Inc., Google Inc. and others have successfully re-defined the landscape of Wall Street.

There is a growing tendency amongst Internet users to pay for valuable content along with quality products and services offered online. Hundreds of paid content and product-oriented websites have already proven this unmistakable trend. The discerning buyer values her time and is willing to pay for access to quality information and the convenience of purchasing products and services online.

However, not all products can be sold on the Internet. Some products may be better suited for online sales than others; others simply will not work online. According to an Ernst and Young study, the most popular online purchases are computer related products (40%), books (20%), travel (16%), clothing (10%), recorded music (6%), subscriptions (6%), gifts (5%) and investments (4%).

Businesses offering paid services have also prospered enormously. The top three categories (Business Content/Investment, Entertainment/Lifestyles and Personals/Dating) consistently account for 62% of all paid content revenue. One statistic indicates that 85% of all money spent by U.S. Consumers for online content goes to the top 50 sites in most categories.

In terms of "stickiness" of different categories, Business sites - especially finance and investment rank the highest. In other words, users are more likely to spend more time surfing through a business website compared to other categories as illustrated below.

Category	Time per person (hr:min:sec)	Audience
Business – Finance and Investment	0:21:33	51,586
General News	0:15:47	64,822
Entertainment	0:14:32	45,922

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings

According to the above figures a person spends about 22 minutes on a finance website on average.

Do statistics bore you? **Click here** to start using a *proven* Internet money making system that has already been "figured out". No thinking… Just follow the 3 steps and launch your e-business today.

2.3 Should you be selling a product or a service?

The Internet is primarily used to communicate, entertain, educate and research. It is thus no wonder that nonperishable, information-intensive products - including computers and software, books, travel, consumer electronics, magazine subscriptions - are the most popular online products at present. Content-rich sites, subscription-based sites to advertiser-supported sites focusing on a wide range of topics, have been sprouting up all over the Internet.

Services such as hotel reservation, air travel and investments have successfully transitioned themselves to the Internet. Unique services such as online driving schools have been prospering too. In fact, many states in the US have already set up online payment sites for Government services. Residents can now get online to pay most of their bills and other expenses including parking tickets to local courts.

However, all kinds of services cannot be run entirely on the Internet. The Internet is less effective when face-to-face selling is needed to close a deal. The Internet can give lots of preliminary information that's useful in setting the scene for the closing. But the actual closing takes place offline - i.e., not on the Internet.

Products can also be marketed and sold successfully on the Internet. The kinds of products and services that sell best on the Internet are those that take advantage of the convenience of the Net. Remember that convenience is the primary reason consumers flock to the Internet in the first place. People can shop at any hour of the day at most sites. They can avoid crowded stores, irritating sales clerks, and even avoid pickpockets.

Offbeat or unusual products and services often attract online attention and sell strongly. You would generally not try to sell items people can get at the corner store. Thus, few toothbrushes are sold on the Net; the same thing with daily food and beverage purchases. But special cheeses, rare cigars, Turkish plates, long-aged wines, even diamonds, can and do sell well on the Internet.

Most products sold by catalog and mail order also sell well on the Net. However, people tend to buy only those products that can be shipped at a reasonable price. Higher shipping costs diminish the price

competitiveness of online products and turns-off a lot of potential buyers. In fact, high shipping costs is the primary factor that discourages some people from buying online more than any other given reason. An Ernst and Young report shows that 53 percent of online shoppers are concerned with shipping costs that are too high, compared to only 19 percent who are concerned with credit card information being stolen.

As an online merchant, you have to work out the advantages as well as disadvantages of selling either products or services online. If you choose to sell a product or service online, you must evaluate your offering to ensure that the total costs of the product or service including shipping are not much higher than what is offered elsewhere.

2.4 Importance of Back-end Selling

Considerable effort is required to get customers for your products. You might design stunning web pages, work hard for high search engine rankings (or pay for them), submit classified ads, etc. but still not manage to sell enough to make the kind of profits you desire. This is where the concept of back-end sales is useful.

Most marketers are successful because they apply back-end selling into their marketing efforts. Back-end selling is when you sell

other products or services to your existing customers after they have purchased an initial product.

It is always easier to sell products or services to your existing customers because you have developed a relationship with them when you sold your first product or service to them. You will find it less expensive to sell to old customers as compared to selling to new customers.

Your conversion ratio will be dramatically higher with existing customers. In fact, to increase your online profits dramatically, you should continually locate or create new back-end products and services to recommend (sell) to your existing customers.

Many businesses sell their front-end products (initial products) at almost zero profit in order to generate back-end profits. These businesses do not care even if they lose money on the front-end products or services; they want the back-end profits.

How do you make backend sales? There are several ways. When you order a product from a mail-order company, they'll send you a catalog along with your order, or put you on a mailing list and send you new catalogs from time to time. They might also send you a sales letter for another product. This may be related to the first product in some way. Many companies implement such a strategy.

To implement this technique online, you can put the sales pitch for your backend item in the email to the customer that confirms their order. If you have an online catalog, you could include a link to it, or even include a coupon or special offer "for all valued customers".

For a faster response, you should put the backend offer on the "Thank You" page that is generated by a credit-card sale. The customer just bought something from you and has a credit card in his or her hot little hand! Why not ask for another purchase while they are in the mood to buy. In case you do not sell more than one product or service, affiliate programs might come in handy.

Back-end selling can also be integrated with “Up-Selling” wherein you introduce more expensive products or services to your existing customers in similar ways as those mentioned above. This will almost instantly raise your sales and profits.

TIP: With the Plug-In Profit Site service, you get an automated back-end sales campaign built directly into the website I build for you. **Click here** to learn all about it and start earning back-end sales today.

2.5 Cross-Selling

Another successful strategy similar to the ones discussed above is cross-selling. One of the best examples of cross-selling via the web is

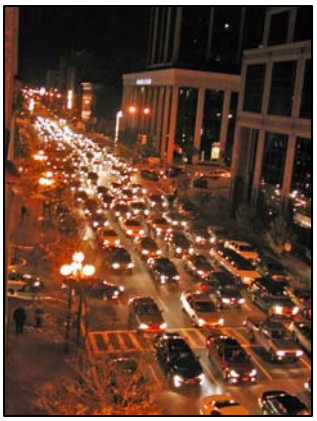
on Amazon.com. If you search for a book on the Amazon site, a message will appear on the same page, saying “Customers who bought this book also bought…” and will list half-dozen other books for your consideration. This is an excellent way to cross-sell additional services or content to your members.

You can also direct visitors to other parts of the site to consider products and services that they hadn't previously considered. Successful cross-selling is the result of recognizing a customer need and meeting that need with a useful product or service. Customers benefit from needs-based cross-selling efforts because they receive the services they need and want.

Cross-selling can help your business realize its objectives: providing useful services, retaining customers, attracting new customers, and staying competitive with other websites.

In conclusion, you can offer a range of products and services on the Internet. The key is proper research and a great marketing plan. We’ll be talking about marketing strategies for your product or service in the upcoming chapters. In fact, in the next chapter, we will discuss one of the most important Internet marketing strategies – search engine optimization.

3. Secrets of Winning Traffic through Search Engines



It doesn't matter how great your website is, if no one sees it, you're not going to make a penny. You can spend days producing the perfect design, weeks tweaking the copy, and months writing the code and uploading the pages, but if no one knows where you are, how are they going to know they should buy from you?

When I first started selling online, the first major problem I ran into was bringing customers to my door. I put banner ads on other sites, organized reciprocal links and joined web rings. Those methods all worked to some extent, but what really did it for me, what turned my business from a small earner into a major money-grabber, was figuring out how to use search engines.

Sure, I'd submitted my sites to the major search engines as soon as I'd finished building them, but I didn't really pay them much attention. After all, I figured search engines are just for people who are looking for information; they're not really good for commercial sites.

Boy, was I wrong!

One day, I sat down and checked out which sites were popping up first in the categories that suited my businesses. I found that all the top-ranked sites were my biggest competitors. And when I say biggest, I mean these guys were in a whole other league. They had incomes that were ten or twenty times the size of mine. No wonder they had top billing at Yahoo! and Google! And then it clicked. Search engines don't list sites by size, they list them by relevance. These sites weren't listed first because they were big; they were big because they were listed first!

That was when I began to optimize my pages and think about meta-tags and keywords. As my sites rose through the listings, my traffic went through the roof. And not just any old traffic! The people that came to my sites from search engines hadn't just clicked on a banner by accident or followed a link from curiosity, they'd actually been looking for a site like mine. My sales ratio went up like a rocket. I'd created my own big break.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss all proven strategies of search engine optimization. We will discuss how to optimize your site, submit your pages and pick up the targeted traffic you need to make cash. This chapter is one of the most important chapters in the whole book. It's crucial that you read it carefully.

Let's start with search engines.

3.1 How Search Engines Work

Internet search engines are special sites on the Internet that are designed to help people find information stored on other sites. There are differences in the ways various search engines work, but they all perform three basic tasks:

- ☑ They search the Internet -- or select pieces of the Internet -- based on important words.
- ☑ They keep an index of the words they find, and where they find them.
- ☑ They allow users to look for words or combinations of words found in that index.

Early search engines held an index of a few hundred thousand pages and documents, and received maybe one or two thousand inquiries each day. Today, a top search engine will index hundreds of millions of pages, and respond to tens of millions of queries per day.

Spidering

Before a search engine can tell you where a file or document is, it must be found. To find information on the hundreds of millions of web

pages that exist, a search engine employs special software robots, called spiders, to build lists of the words found on websites.

When a spider is building its lists, the process is called *crawling*.

In order to build and maintain a useful list of words, a search engine's spiders have to look at a lot of pages. How does any spider start its travels over the web? The usual starting points are lists of heavily used servers and very popular pages. The spider will begin with a popular site, indexing the words on its pages and following every link found within the site. In this way, the spidering system quickly begins to travel, spreading out across the most widely used portions of the web.

Indexing

Once the spiders have completed the task of finding information on web pages, the search engine must store the information in a way that makes it useful. There are two key components involved in making the gathered data accessible to users:

- ☑ The information stored with the data
- ☑ The method by which the information is indexed

In the simplest case, a search engine could just store the word and the URL where it was found. In reality, this would make for an engine of limited use, since there would be no way of telling whether the word was used in an important or a trivial way on the page, whether the word was used once or many times or whether the page contained links to other pages containing the word. In other words, there would be no way of building the ranking list that tries to present the most useful pages at the top of the list of search results.

To make for more useful results, most search engines store more than just the word and URL. An engine might store the number of times that the word appears on a page. The engine might assign a weight to each entry, with increasing values assigned to words as they appear near the top of the document, in sub-headings, in links, in the meta tags or in the title of the page. Each commercial search engine has a different formula for assigning weight to the words in its index. This is one of the reasons that a search for the same word on different search engines will produce different lists, with the pages presented in different orders.

An index has a single purpose: It allows information to be found as quickly as possible. There are quite a few ways for an index to be built, but one of the most effective ways is to build a hash table. In

hashing, a formula is applied to attach a numerical value to each word. The formula is designed to evenly distribute the entries across a predetermined number of divisions. This numerical distribution is different from the distribution of words across the alphabet, and that is the key to a hash table's effectiveness.

The Search Engine Program

The search engine software or program is the final part. When a person requests a search on a keyword or phrase, the search engine software searches the index for relevant information. The software then provides a report back to the searcher with the most relevant web pages listed first.

3.2 Top Search Engines

I've studied how search engines work. An integral part of any Internet marketing or search engine optimization campaign is to know exactly which search engines to target. This section discusses some of the top search engines today.

Google

Google has increased in popularity tenfold the past several years. They went from beta testing to becoming the Internet's largest index of web pages in a very short time. Their spider, affectionately named

"Googlebot", crawls the web and provides updates to Google's index about once a month.

Google.com began as an academic search engine. Google, by far, has a very good algorithm of ranking pages returned from a result, probably one of the main reasons it has become so popular over the years. Google has several methods which determine page rank in returned searches.

Yahoo!

Yahoo! is one of the oldest web directories and portals on the Internet today, and the site went live in August of 1994.

Yahoo! is also one of the largest traffic generators around, as far as web directories and search engines go. Unfortunately, however, it is also one of the most difficult to get listed in, unless of course you pay to submit your site. Even if you pay it doesn't guarantee you will get listed.

Either way, if you suggest a URL, it is "reviewed" by a Yahoo! editor and, if approved, it will appear in the next index update.

AltaVista

Many who have access to web logs may have seen a spider named “scooter” accessing their pages. Scooter used to be AltaVista's

robot. However, since the Feb 2001 site update, a newer form of Scooter is now crawling the web.

It will usually take several months for AltaVista to index your entire site. Unlike Google, AltaVista will only crawl and index 1 link deep, so it can take a long time to index your entire site, depending on how large your site is.

Inktomi

Inktomi's popularity grew years ago as they powered the secondary search database that had driven Yahoo. Their spiders are named "Slurp", and different versions of Slurp crawls the web many different times throughout the month, as Inktomi powers many sites' search results. There isn't much more to Inktomi than that. Slurp puts heavy weight on title and description tags, and will rarely deep-crawl a site. Slurp usually only spiders pages that are submitted to its index.

Inktomi provides results to a number of sites. Some of these are America Online, MSN, Hotbot, Looksmart, About, Goto, CNet, Geocities, NBCi, ICQ and many more.

Lycos

Lycos is one of the oldest search engines on the Internet today, next to Altavista and Yahoo. Their spider, named "T-Rex", crawls the

web and provides updates to the Lycos index from time to time. The FAST crawler provides results for Lycos in addition to its own database.

The Lycos crawler does not weigh META tags too heavily. Instead, it relies on its own ranking algorithm to rank pages returned in results. The URL, META title, text headings, and word frequency are just a few of the methods Lycos uses to rank pages. Lycos does support pages with Frame content. However, any page that isn't at least 75 words in content is not indexed.

Excite

Excite has been around the web for many years now. Much more of a portal than just simply a search engine, Excite used to be a fairly popular search engine, until companies such as Google started dominating the search engine market. As of recently, Excite no longer accepts submissions of URL's, and appears to no longer spider. To get into the Excite search results, you need to be either listed with Yahoo! or Inktomi.

Looksmart

Getting listed with Looksmart could mean getting a good amount of traffic to your site. Looksmart's results appear in many search engines, including AltaVista, MSN, CNN, and many others.

Looksmart has two options to submit your site. If your site is generally non-business related, you can submit your site to Zeal (Looksmart's sister site), or if you are a business, you can pay a fee to have your site listed. Either method will get you listed in Looksmart and its partner sites if you are approved.

Once your site is submitted and approved, it will take up to about 7 days for your site to be listed on Looksmart and its partner sites.

3.3 Search Engine Page-Ranking Algorithms

A search engine's main job is to provide results which most satisfy a user's query. If they present a result that the user visits and doesn't agree that the document is about their query, there is a very good chance that the user may not use that search engine again. Most search engines pay no attention at all to the Meta description tags. Meta description and keyword tags are hidden attributes that you can add to the front of your document which are supposed to annotate and describe the document. Since the users will never see this information,

they will be disappointed if you stick in invalid keywords or fail to keep the description in line with the document's contents which usually is the case.

Most Search Engine page-ranking algorithms rank pages based on the following aspects:

- ☑ Content of the website
- ☑ Representation of content, keywords, and links on websites
- ☑ Location and number of inward and outward links on websites
- ☑ Relevancy of search terms as compared to the websites

Given below is a brief description of the page-ranking algorithms of some of the most popular search engines.

Google

You can submit your website to Google at the following URL: **www.google.com/addurl.html**. Submitting your site will only make Google aware that your page exists; it is quite possible that your pages may get crawled even if you have not submitted. It is advisable to submit the home page and some inside pages. Inside pages are added to the submission, just in case the home page is found too slow

to load or crawl. The pages that are submitted should link to the rest of the pages. Google indexes the full text that is visible on any page that it crawls. It generally does not index the metatags – keywords or descriptions.

When Google lists your page in the search results, the description that is displayed is the extract of text that is around the first line where the search word appears on the page. It may thus be a good idea to write a good description of the page and build it around the most likely search term(s) and place that near the top of your page. You should remember that one sure way of getting your site listed and indexed is if there are several links that point to your site and such links appear on web pages that in turn have several other links pointing to them. The term “link popularity” is used for this. It analyzes links of the pages that it has visited and this “link analysis” helps to determine the ranking of the page.

Google uses a proprietary PageRank algorithm for determining relevance and ranking of pages in the search results. Location and frequency of the search term on your web page are no doubt factors in ranking; however, off-the-page factors such as link analysis are more important. Generally, Google provides search results based on relevancy, meaning that it returns a list of pages ranked by the

number of other web pages linking to each page, as well as other mathematical algorithms

Yahoo!

Yahoo! offers a human-powered directory and offers its results to visitors. The directory is supplemented by a web page index created by crawling. The directory is an important channel in the area of search engine marketing. It is popular and is used extensively by people to locate sources of information. Moreover, the directory is a valuable boost to your site for crawling and ranking in other search engines, as the directory provides a high-quality link to your website.

When a visitor is looking for information on relevant sites, she could either browse through the hierarchy of directories and sub-directories or search for an appropriate directory through a search interface. As your site can be listed in just one category, generally, the choice of category is an important step. Choose the top category that your target visitor who is making a search may select out of the different categories offered to him/her.

Select your target keywords and find out which categories relate to those keywords. For submission of non-commercial sites, the Yahoo! Express submission is recommended rather than the Standard submission option.

The results page in your chosen category will list your site in two possible sections (for most categories). One section is called "Most Popular Sites" and this is on top, while the second section contains the remaining listings in Alphabetical order.

Yahoo! does not reveal how it includes certain sites in the “Most Popular Sites” list. However, link analysis and click-throughs are likely to be factors. You cannot pay to be included in this section. Certain sites with sunglasses shown next to their name or an “@” symbol shown at the end of the name reflect that Yahoo! considers those sites to be excellent.

Inktomi (MSN Search, AOL Search, Hotbot)

Inktomi is a search engine that does not offer its search services through its own site, but through Partner sites – prominent ones being MSN Search, AOL Search, HotBot and others.

Inktomi, through its crawler, creates three different indexes. “Best of the Web” index has around 110 million pages that it indexes on the web and considers high in link analysis. The next set of around 390 million pages is indexed as “Rest of the Web”, considered as lower in link analysis. The third index is of paid inclusion. It also offers specialized regional indexes as well as targeted news, multimedia and directory indexes. It avoids duplication of the same page in more than

one index. Link crawling and paid inclusion are the two most effective ways to get covered by crawling. For bulk submissions to its paid program, it offers IndexConnect (for 1000 or more pages). Again, there is a cost-per-click basis with a monthly minimum.

Ranking at Inktomi is determined by a combination of factors including HTML links, keywords and description tags near the top of the page or in the title tag. If the search string matches with what is found at these places on the page, the ranking is higher. Link analysis and analysis of clickthroughs are other important criteria that it adopts.

AltaVista

AltaVista will accept free listings through its “addurl” link, but it also has paid inclusion features. Generally, their crawler may visit every four weeks. Paid inclusion may be desirable if you have a new website or web pages or if you alter your web pages frequently, and you do not wish to wait until the next cycle of crawling. There is an “Express Paid” inclusion service of self-service type for up to 500 pages at a time. This service will enable weekly crawling. Their bulk program called “Trusted Feed” will enable the pages to be directly linked to their index. Pricing for “Trusted Feed” is on a cost-per-click model with a monthly minimum. In this program you can submit the

Meta data, descriptions and keywords directly to the index. Nevertheless, the engine will check whether the destination page has the same Meta data or not and could levy a penalty for spam.

AltaVista's ranking policies are a combination of various factors. The frequency and positioning of keywords and descriptions is important, as are title tags or words that appear near the top of the page. AltaVista applies link analysis to determine relevancy and page ranking. It levies penalty on spamming and does not recognize invisible or tiny text, keyword stuffing, identical pages, mirror sites, or quick meta refresh tags.

3.4 Keywords — Optimizing Your Site to Get Top Billing at Search Engines

When a user enters a search term, also known as a "keyword", into a search engine, the engine runs through the billions of pages in the database and awards each one a "relevancy score". The higher your score, the higher your listing. If your site doesn't contain the keyword used by the searcher, the only score it's going to get is a big, fat zero. Your first task then is to make sure you know which keywords are most relevant for each of your sites.

There are three ways to figure out your keywords:

Ask Your Competitors

This is the cheapest way to find many of the most important keywords. Simply log on to a search engine (AltaVista is good, Google is better) and carry out a search for sites like yours. Open the top site, and once the home page has downloaded, click on “View” in your browser, and then “Source”. That will reveal all the HTML used to build the web page, including all the keywords that have been specially inserted.

Some of those keywords will be relevant to your site. Others, of course, won’t be relevant and there will be lots of other keywords that aren’t obviously listed, such as “vitamins” for example. You can repeat the process on other sites, using different keywords, and build up a pretty long list.

Ask the Pay-Per-Clicks

Pay-per-click sites actually let you see how popular a keyword is. They’re not being kind; they’re trying to make money. The more webmasters bid on those keywords, the higher the bids are going to rise — and the more money the pay-per-clicks are going to make. FindWhat, for example, has a Keyword Center. Other pay-per-click sites offer similar features. One of the most popular key word discovery tools, however, was provided by former PPC giant Overture.

You can play around with this free keyword selector tool at: **www.inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/**

Use a Specialized Tool

Not too surprisingly, a number of companies have popped up to supply specific keyword services for a fee. The best of these is **WordTracker.com**. They're not bargain basement, but you get what you pay for. They'll give you all the keywords you need and in my experience, they're a sound investment.

GoogleFight.com is another useful tool to see whether one keyword is more popular than another. The site compares two keywords and tells you which is more popular. It's free and has a limited use, but it's fun to play with.

As you make up your list of keywords, bear in mind that it's also worth looking at key phrases. It's quite possible that a user looking to buy flowers online might search for "red roses" or "cheap bouquets" as well as just "flowers". Key phrases are often overlooked by competitors, so you've got a pretty good chance of getting a high placement with the right combination.

Don't worry too much about the competition though. Some people will tell you that you're better off trying to find keywords that no one

else has thought of and others will tell you to throw in keywords that are only slightly relevant to your businesses.

In my experience, that's a waste of time. If your competitors are using certain keywords, it's because they know they work. And if any of your visitors found your site using irrelevant keywords, you're not going to sell them anything. Don't try to reinvent the wheel here: just try to figure out the most popular keywords and the best key phrases to put on your site.

Whichever of these methods you use — and I tend to use more than one — you should end up with a pretty comprehensive list of keywords that you can stick into your website. The next question then, is how do you use them? When a search engine assigns relevancy to a site, it looks for the keywords in a number of specific areas.

Title Tag

The title tag is written in the <HEAD> section of the web page and after the <TITLE> tags. It's usually the line listed in the search results as well. For example, the New York Times' title tag at the time of this writing is "The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia". Of course, they will change this tag from time to time.

The title tag is usually between 50 and 80 characters including spaces. Different search engines have different limits so you want to make sure that your most important words are near the beginning of the title.

The rest of the title is made up of keywords and phrases but in fact, you don't want to put in too many keywords here. Just place one keyword as the second or third word in the title. Too many, and your site could be seen as spamming.

You can also list more keywords in the <META Keywords> and <META description> sections of the <HEAD> area, but because these areas have been so abused in the past, a number of search engines today will skip right past the title tag and go straight to the web copy.

3.5 Web Copy for SEO

The search engines will scan the text on a web page to see if your site is relevant to the search term. That means that in effect, your web copy is going to have to do two things: persuade a customer to buy, and persuade a search engine it's relevant.

When you write your copy aim for about 500 words a page, but throw in 4-8 keywords. You'll have to try to balance a smooth text flow against getting in all the keywords you need to be listed.

You can also consider adding text-only pages such as how-to articles, tips or tutorials to your site. Throw in some keywords and they can turn up in search engines and create opportunities for link exchanges.

So there's a few ways you can try to improve the position of your site in a search engine. More important than where you put the keywords is choosing the right keywords. That's not really a huge challenge as your competitors are likely to have done the job for you.

Of course, even if you do get everything right, it doesn't mean you're going to shoot straight to the top of Google. One of the criteria for relevancy is how long you've been online, so success on the search engines won't come overnight. The sooner you start submitting though, the sooner you can start to rise.

3.6 Submitting to Search Engines

Submitting sites to search engines is much easier than submitting them to directories or pay-per-clicks. In fact, you only have to submit the home page. The search engine's "spider" (a neat little software program) will then follow all the links from the home page and include your other pages. Spidering actually increases your relevancy score more than hand-submitting your internal pages yourself.

The disadvantage of spidering is that it can be slow. Google has the best spider but even they can take up to a month to index all your pages. For other search engines you can wait three times as long.

Say What?! Is all of this search engine talk confusing to you? Do you want to make money online, but don't want to figure it all out by yourself? You're not alone. **Click here** for a turn-key money-making system that you can start earning from within the next 24 hours.

3.7 Search Directories – The Benefits of Browsing

Search directories differ from search engines by providing a range of categories for users to browse. Rather than enter a keyword into a search box, users click through categories and sub-categories narrowing down their options.

You could say that search engines are like going straight up to the sales assistant and asking what they have in evening wear; search directories are like browsing through the store and seeing what catches the eye.

How you make your site catch the eye in a directory is actually pretty similar to standing out in a search engine. It's all about relevancy — a mixture of keywords and links.

3.7.1 Submitting to Search Directories

Submitting your site to a search directory is a little tougher than submitting to a search engine. Directories don't have spiders. They rely on humans. When you submit your site to Yahoo! or any of the other directories, you'll have to complete a form that will include your "URL", "Page Title", "Keywords" and a "Page Description".

Your keywords and title will play some role in your ranking, but for the description, it's much better to put a hard sell that will attract users. There's no point having a link at the top of a category if no one wants to click on it.

Bear in mind that because each submission to a directory is checked by a human editor, it can take quite a while for your site to be approved and listed. Some sites do have express services but these are pretty pricey (Yahoo! wants $299 and $600 for adult sites!), and if they decide your site isn't suitable for a category, you don't get your money back. It's usually worth the wait.

3.8 Pay-Per-Click — Buying Status

Pay-per-click programs (PPC's) allow you to buy a prime position in a search engine by selecting the price you wish to pay for each visitor you receive. This can place you exactly where you want to be in

the listing, or let you decide precisely how much you want to spend on advertising.

The big advantage of PPC's is that you don't have to worry about messing with keywords or links or any of that. You can just figure out how much you want to pay for a keyword and buy your position. In addition, you only pay for people who actually click on your link (for banner ads, you often have to pay when someone sees it.) And you can also get cheap visitors. Bids usually start at around five cents per click. The top three bids though are often promoted across a network of sites so there can be big bonuses for bidding high.

This is how most pay-per-click programs work:

- ☑ You create your page title, description and link as you want it to appear in the search results.
- ☑ You enter the keywords and phrases that will prompt your listing to appear.
- ☑ You enter your keyword bid (the amount you are willing to pay for each click to your site).
- ☑ Your keyword bid is compared to that of other bidders for the same keyword. The results are returned to the user with the highest bid appearing first.

3.8.1 Show Me the Money!

With PPC's, the name of the game is profit. You need to be careful not to get carried away with the ranking so that your promotion doesn't cut into your revenues.

This is essential! There's no point in being top if you're out of business in a month. You have to figure out what you can afford and keep to it. Base your decision on your visitor-to-sales-ratio (the number of visitors on average that it takes to generate a sale) and your net profit per sale.

So for example, if you get a sale from every tenth visitor, and you net a profit of $20 from each sale, then you can't pay more than $2 for each click without operating at a loss (unless you have an effective back-end sales campaign setup as discussed earlier). In practice, you might make one sale for every 100 or so clicks and pay perhaps 15 or 20 cents for each visitor, depending on your market.

It's absolutely crucial for you to know your visitor-to-sales-ratio.

It's also important to keep that ratio as high as possible, and that means only bidding on relevant keywords. If you pay for visitors who are looking for something completely different than the services you're offering, you're just throwing your money away. They aren't going to buy, and even at five cents a shot, those wasted nickels soon add up.

On the other hand, because you can pay so little, it *is* worth bidding on as many **relevant** keywords as possible.

The key is to balance high payments for top keywords with low payments that bring in less traffic.

You should also consider the quality of visitors the site will send you. The more targeted a directory, the better your visitor to sale ratio will be and that might make it worth increasing your bid price.

3.8.2 Submitting to Pay-Per-Clicks

Submitting your site to a PPC is certainly a lot faster than submitting to a search engine or a directory. You must, however, make sure you consider the following:

> ☑ The maximum amount you can bid (I can't stress that enough!)
>
> ☑ The keywords you wish to bid on.
>
> ☑ The titles and descriptions of the site.

That last point is very important for making the most of PPC's. Just because you don't have to worry about putting keywords in your title and descriptions to please the search engines, that doesn't mean relevance isn't important. On the contrary, relevance still matters. You need to let the *user* know that your site is exactly what they're looking

for. That means putting the keyword in the title and having a catchy, informative description. Remember, the more good clicks you get, the more money you are likely to make.

3.8.3 Google AdWords

If you do a search at Google, you'll notice that not only do you get a list of all the sites that return your keyword, you also get a list of other relevant ads on the right of the page and at the top of the listing. These are part of Google's AdWords program. Advertising like this can certainly be an important part of your marketing plan. Well developed ads with clever wording can prompt an immediate response from the reader to visit your site. Google makes a lot of money with this kind of advertising, and if they're making money, you can be sure their advertisers are too. You can learn more about Google's AdWords program here: **www.adwords.google.com/select/**

Buying AdWords advertising on Google is a relatively simple and cost-effective way to promote your website. In effect, Google has combined the Pay-per-Click system with their own relevancy calculations. To get started, you'll need to select a keyword and write a short description. You will also have to choose how much you wish to pay for each click, but that won't guarantee your position.

Google advertisers enter a maximum bid per click and this is multiplied by the click-through rate (the percentage of users who click on the ad). That's the score Google uses to allocate position.

So for example, if you were prepared to pay a dollar per click, and one user in a hundred who saw your ad clicked on it, you would get a rank number of ($)1 x 1% = 0.01.

Let's say that gives you top position. You might then get even more users and a higher click-through rate of 2%. That higher rate would reduce your price to 50 cents (0.01 divided by 2%).

All very nice, and it's always fun to pay less than you've said you can afford, but how it works is less important than the fact that it does work. All you have to do is figure out how much you're prepared to pay for each click, how much you can afford to pay each month, and write a great description.

And once again, it's the description that's key.

Like the PPC's, your description has to persuade users that you're relevant; it doesn't have to play to the search engine's software. By all means repeat the keyword, but also make sure you have good, call-to-action copy like "Grab a great deal on DVD's today!" or "Buy now, while stocks last!" Remember, the more clicks you get, the more sales you'll make and the less you'll pay.

Always place your AdWords ad in the most appropriate category and track the responses you receive from it. Be proactive in redefining your strategy if you receive minimal response. You will probably need to experiment with the wording of your ads and your keyword selection for a while until you get the results you want.

TIP: The Plug-In Profit Site service provides you with pre-written Google AdWords ads to promote your website and start making money online in as little as 24 hours. **Click here** to learn more about it today.

3.9 Link Popularity and Link Analysis

The majority of the major search engines use link popularity as an important factor in ranking relevancy. As search engines have become more sophisticated, so too has link popularity. Link popularity simply is the number of links from other websites that point to your website. This strategy has gained immense success due to the crawling nature of most search engines. Spiders crawl from link to link and store pages into their database. Link popularity is generally gained through reciprocal linking. Other websites would usually link to your website only if you have a link to their website from yours first.

Years ago, the number of websites linking to your site gauged link popularity; little emphasis was placed on the "content relevancy" of the linking site. In an effort to gain more link popularity, "link farms"

began sprouting up across the web. For a nominal fee, a website owner could join link farms and enjoy increased link popularity overnight.

Search engines caught onto this tactic and created better tools for detecting legitimate links. Websites that have links from websites with "similar" or "relevant" content score higher, thus earn better placement in search engines.

This being said, you should avoid joining "link farms" because most search engines consider them a form of spam. Many engines will actually penalize sites for maintaining an abundance of links from non-related websites. It is more important than ever to develop a solid "link-popularity" strategy. One excellent, although time consuming, method is to simply contact complimentary websites via email or telephone requesting a link exchange with the webmaster.

Link analysis is somewhat different than measuring link popularity. While link popularity is generally used to measure the number of pages that link to a particular site, link analysis will go beyond this and analyze the popularity of the pages that link to your pages. In a way, link analysis is a chain analysis system that accords weighting to every page that links to the target site, with weights determined by the popularity of those pages. Search engines use link

analysis in their page-ranking algorithm. Search engines also try to determine the context of those links, in other words, how closely those links relate to the search string. For example if the search string was “toys”, and if there were links from other sites that either had the word toys within the link or in close proximity of the link, the ranking algorithm determines that this is a higher priority link and ranks the page, that this is linked to, higher.

3.9.1 Reciprocal Links and Partner Sites

Keywords and AdWords aren’t the only way that search engines score relevancy; links to other similar sites are another important factor. Keywords have been so abused by some webmasters that links are winning much more relevancy points. Google is said to love them.

It might sound strange to suggest that your users should check out your competitors, but they probably know about them anyway. If your competitors have a higher ranking than you, linking to them can often give you a higher relevancy score with the search engines and the subsequent increase in traffic will make it worth your while.

Alternatively, you can link to your own site by creating a sub-directory. This is like building another web page, but the URL will include your keyword. So if you were selling stuffed toys, the new URL would be **YourDomain.com/stuffed-toys/stuffed-toys.html**. You

could then write a short paragraph on the home page, describing the new page and including a link. You'll get big relevancy points for this!

Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal linking means forming partnerships with other sites who place a link from their web pages to yours. You give them a similar link in return.

When you look for people to swap links with, make sure that you don't reduce the quality or content of your own site. You don't want users to click straight through without reading your content; you want them to buy first. One way to stop them from running away too quickly is to create a "Resources Page" and link to that page from your homepage. This doesn't take away from the content on your homepage and the links are just one click away rather than being buried deep within the site, giving value to your partners.

In any case, you want to be sure that your site is more than just a page full of links. If your site contains more links than content, it will not be attractive to webmasters, search engines or users.

3.9.2 Picking Your Partner

Your link partners should be sites your target market will visit. Think about your product and its subject area and brainstorm to

determine where people interested in your product might be looking online. For example, if you're trying to sell a book about blackjack strategy, it makes sense that the people visiting online casinos would make great customers. Online casinos then could be good partners. Identify top-ranked, high quality casino sites and find the email address of their webmasters. You can also identify your competitors, see where they trade links and then follow suit.

Tips for Talking to Webmasters

Before you contact webmasters, place a link to their site on your home page or resource page to assure them that you will actually provide a high quality link.

Create a subject line that will encourage them to read your message rather than deleting it. You don't want them to think you're message is spam. (Something about *their* site or product is sure to capture their attention; they will probably open and read it, thinking that you're a potential customer.)

Begin your message by talking about your visit to their site and what you found interesting about it. Detail your product or service in one line and ask them to exchange links with you.

Tell them in detail where you have placed their link and emphasize that it is only one click away from your homepage.

Tell them that if you don't hear back from them within 2 weeks, you will consider that to be a negative response and that you will remove their link from your site.

3.9.3 Inward Link Analysis

Like reciprocal linking, inward links to your website can be an effective strategy to increase your website's visibility. Inward links are links pointing to your websites from other websites without providing a reciprocal link from your website.

There are many techniques to improve inward linking. Many of these have enjoyed success. The most proven technique for inward linking is writing and distributing free reprint articles. You simply write (or hire a ghostwriter) a few 500-700 word articles related to the theme of your website. You also include an "About the Author" resource box at the end of your article that includes a link back to your website. Then you visit article directories (websites that accept article submissions) and submit your article giving full permission for other websites to reprint your article on their site as long as they include your resource box and a link back to your website along with the article. This is a win-win scenario. Webmasters get needed content to

make their sites “sticky” and useful to visitors and you get free inward links pointing back to your website.

Other techniques include posting free ebooks, newsletters, news stories and press releases at other websites, particularly industry specific and general portals. All of these would contain a free link pointing to your website, thus, promoting your website.

3.10 Optimizing Your Website

To get listed correctly in the search engines each page of your site that you want listed needs to be optimized to the best of your ability. Since the keywords that you decide to target will be used throughout the optimization process, choosing the right keywords is essential. If you choose the wrong keywords you will not be found in the search engines. Since the keywords you choose to optimize your pages with are so important I’ve put together a few tips to help you make sure that you make the right choices. You should utilize these tips when selecting keywords for each page that you want listed in the search engines.

Think "specific keyword phrases" not "keywords". Due to the extreme amount of competition for general terms in the search engines, if your keyword phrases are too general it is very unlikely you will rank well in the search engines. You stand a far better chance to

rank well for specific phrases where there is less competition. The resulting traffic, since it is more highly targeted, should also be much higher quality too.

You should try to come up with as many keyword phrases as you can think of that relate to the page you are optimizing. Try asking a few friends and family what they would search for when searching for a site like yours. Check out your competition for ideas. Do a search using keywords that you already know you want to target and click through on the top sites that come up. Once on the site, view the source HTML code and view the keywords they have in their Meta tags. Searching competitive sites' Meta tags will give you many more ideas.

Make sure to only use keywords that relate to YOUR site or page. To view the HTML code, simply click the "View" at the top of your web browser then select "Source", or "Page Source". You should develop a list of keyword phrases, using these tips, for each page that you optimize for the search engines.

Apart from these, there are certain aspects that should be avoided. These are:

- ☑ Dead Links - As search engines index your entire site by crawling through hypertext links, you must make sure you check for dead links before submitting.

- ☑ Graphics and Image Maps - Search engines cannot read images; be sure to include Alternative Text tags.
- ☑ Frames - Many Search engines aren't frames compatible. Meta tags and the <no frames> tags are important in this instance.
- ☑ Spamming - Avoid resubmitting your pages repeatedly to search engines if your site does not get listed in the first few weeks. Allow at least 6 weeks before resubmission. Continual resubmission (such as those caused by automatic submission software) can cause your site to be penalized.

3.11 Monitoring Your Progress

Okay, so you've decided on your keywords, inserted your links and submitted your sites. Now all you have to do is wait for the cash to start pouring in, right?

Well, not quite. You might get lucky with your first shot, but it has never happened to me that way. Once you've submitted all your links, you need to keep a close eye on them, and see which need improving and which can be dropped.

The crucial factor here is to keep track of your Search Engine Statistics. These will tell you how many people have come from the various search engines and how many of those become customers.

But it's not enough to know how much traffic you're receiving. You also want to know how you're doing in the rankings. There are two ways to do that:

Manual Searches

Dead easy, simply log on and look. First enter your URL to make sure your site has been approved and listed. That can take a little while. Once you can see that you're online though, you want to see how you're ranked in each keyword. To do that, you can simply enter each keyword into the search engine and browse the pages until you find your listing. This works, but it takes a while.

Computerized Searches

It's been a long time since I did a manual search. If you've got ten sites and you want to check ten keywords for each once a week, you're going to lose at least a day's work a month. That's too much for me. To automate this task, I suggest using a software program found at **WebPositionGold.com**. You tell the software all the keywords you want checked and it gives you an automated report.

When you look at your statistics, pay attention to which keywords are bringing in the most traffic. In general, the higher you are, the more traffic you'll receive and the more sales you'll make. But that isn't always true. It might pay more to be fifteenth on a keyword that gets a million searches a month than first on a keyword that gets just a thousand. And if you're fifteenth, you've still got room for improvement.

It's the improvement that's the key. If you see that your link is stuck at the bottom of a list somewhere, try adding more links, putting that keyword in more pages or adding keyword-rich content.

3.12 Three Words About Spam

Don't do it.

You can spam search engines by stuffing your site with keywords, submitting them numerous times or filling your pages with links. And they'll just get you blacklisted.

Don't do it. It's just not worth it.

It used be accepted practice to create doorway pages (duplicates of a home page filled with different keywords) but search engines won't accept these anymore.

They will accept smart pages though. If you want to use more keywords than you can fit on your site, create a second page that is totally different from your homepage but which is still based upon your product or service. Here, you can expand upon a topic you merely touched on in your homepage. A great example of a smart page is to write articles on the benefits of your services using a different set of keywords to those on your home page. You can do that.

To sum it up, this chapter gave you a detailed view of many of the proven and effective search engine optimization techniques. SEO is one of the most important traffic generating mechanisms, and when done correctly it can do wonders for your website and your profits.

Click here to make money online with the Plug-In Profit Site.

4. Buying Advertising and Keeping Customers!

In my experience, search engines and directories are the easiest and probably the most effective methods to bring users to a site. But it's never a good idea to use one tactic exclusively. In this chapter we're going to look at three other methods: banners, text links and classified ads.

4.1 Banners

When the Internet first started, banners were all the rage. Today, they're pretty much passé. They're no longer a novelty and unless they're super-clever, users pretty much ignore them. Conversion rates have dropped through the floor and many advertisers have found other ways to promote their products.

And yet, every website still contains a whopping great banner ad splashed along the top or running up the side. In part, that's because they've become more sophisticated with better targeting and improved graphics. But in practice, banner ads tend to be used for one of two reasons: to attract traffic to one's website; or as a way of visually branding your business in the mind of the public.

The key with banner advertising is always to make sure the economics make sense. We'll look closely at the math in this chapter, but before we go on to talk about the math of banner ads and how to tell whether your banner campaign is worthwhile, let's just take a look at the terms involved. You're going to see these words whenever you join an affiliate program or take part in any other kind of online marketing plan. You should definitely be familiar with them.

4.1.1 Banner Glossary

- ☑ **Banner Ad** — A graphic ad linked to an advertiser's website. These usually run across the top of the page but can also run up the page ("skyscrapers"). Banners are usually limited by size.

- ☑ **Banner Views** — The number of times a banner is seen by users. This is usually the same as "page views", but counts the number of times the banner is actually downloaded rather than the number of times the *page* is downloaded. Some users click away before the banner finishes loading.

- ☑ **Clicks / Click Throughs** — Banners are operated by clicking the cursor over them. Not too surprisingly these responses are called "clicks" or "click throughs".

☑ **Click Through Rate (CTR)** — The percentage of users who see the banner and click on it.

☑ **Conversion Rate** — The percentage of people who visit your site and actually give you money. The higher the better!

☑ **Cookies** — Small files placed on a user's computer. They're used for all sorts of reasons and by all sorts of sites. Banner ads use them to make sure the user hasn't seen the banner recently, which banner brought them to the advertiser's site, and even which ads they've seen recently.

☑ **CPM** — "Cost Per 1000 Impressions" The amount you pay for every thousand times a banner is shown. This is the most common way of charging for banners.

☑ **Hits** — The number of times a server receives a request for a web page or an image. Not a great way to measure interest. One page can have lots of images and get lots of hits, even if it's only seen once. Often, people will say "hits" when they really mean "page views" or "impressions".

☑ **Page Impressions or Page Views** — The number of times a web page has been requested by the server. Much more

accurate than hits: each view is a potential customer looking at a page of your site, but not necessarily a different customer.

☑ **Unique Users** — The people who download a web page, counted by IP address. You want to bring lots of users to your site so that you can create a broad customer base. The same user clicking on a banner a dozen times could cost you money without increasing your sales. Most reputable sites will check the IP address of the person clicking on a link and only count it once in a 24-hour period. If a site doesn't do this, don't advertise with them.

4.1.2 Banner Economics

Business online, like business offline, always boils down to math: the difference between cost and revenue. If your banner campaign is costing more than it's earning, you won't be in business for very long. To figure out how your campaign is doing, you're going to need to know your CPM, your Click Through Rate and your Conversion Rate. These are your basic tools. If you don't know them, find out!

Let's say your CPM is $20, your CTR is 1%, and your Conversion Rate is 4%. (So you're paying $20 every 1,000 times your banner is shown, it brings you 10 new visitors, and you make one sale for every

25 visitors the ad brings). The question you need to ask yourself is how much are you wasting on the 24 users who *don't* buy.

Cost per visitor = $20 / 10 = $2 So each visitor costs you $2, but you need 25 visitors to make one sale, so...

Cost per sale = $2 * 25 = $50 ...if your product is worth less than $50, you're losing money.

That's pretty simple, and as you can see, there's not a lot of room to maneuver here. Margins are tight on banner advertising, and that applies to both the site selling the advertising space and the webmaster buying it.

Of course, hard cash isn't the only way to measure the success of a banner ad, and one reason they're still popular is that they're a pretty effective branding tool. After all, advertisers spend millions on billboards without expecting motorists to drive straight through them and make a purchase! On the Internet, those advertisers can even be reasonably sure that the people who see their ads will be interested in them. But branding costs money — lots of it — with no guarantee of results. It's usually best left to the big boys.

The banner ads on my sites usually send users to my affiliate partners, and the banner ads I place on other people's sites usually come *from* my affiliate programs. They don't cost me anything and as long I'm making the sales to pay my affiliate partners, everybody's happy.

If you do decide to purchase banner advertisements though, and if you have a *very specific* market in mind, make sure they are strategically placed on sites where the traffic will most definitely be interested in your product or service. Find a site that suits exactly your specific product and you're going to be appealing directly to your target market.

4.2 Text Links

Text links are much simpler than banner ads. They're also less eye-catching and less sexy. There's no funky animation, no neat Flash, just a few well chosen words often stuck at the side of a web page. But that doesn't mean they're not effective.

In fact, to some extent, text links are the unsung heroes of online marketing. They don't get half the attention they deserve, but they can do an excellent job bringing visitors to a site.

The first point to bear in mind about text links is that they're tough to write. You might have just 50 characters to make your sales pitch. That's about the length of that sentence, so you're going to have to be pretty creative in what you say. That's the downer. On the plus side though, text links are amongst the most popular form of promotion amongst Internet users. They don't get in the way like pop-ups, and they're often mistaken for content so they're actually read. And because they're written into the site's HTML, you know that each page view means a real exposure.

They're also cheap. You might have to pay a flat-fee or a cost-per-click, but there's much less risk than with banner ads. If you know how much traffic the site's getting, you can figure out in advance if it's worth your while.

Best of all though, you can sometimes arrange for free links with partners in return for a similar placement on your own site. That doesn't just give you free advertising… It also helps your search engine placements.

I use a lot of text links to promote my sites, but I wouldn't rely completely on them alone. But, in terms of effectiveness and cost, text links are very powerful.

4.3 Classified Ads

Offline, classified ads are relatively cheap little ads that appear at the back of newspapers or magazines. They work well if you're trying to sell your old Ford Escort or you're looking for a new home for your old sofa. Offline classified ads can even work well promoting a variety of online products and services.

Online, things are a little different. But not hugely different.

I post ads on classified sites online, but I don't expect to make a lot of money from them. What I do expect though is an opportunity to test my headlines and ad copy before I start spending hard cash on AdWords, other PPC's and text links.

That's why I don't bother with the dollar ads. If I'm going to spend marketing money, I'd rather give it to a search engine than a classified ad site. You'll typically get a much better return with PPC advertising and you know exactly what you are paying for each visitor.

But there are places where you can place free ads online, and you can actually do this on some of the really big sites like AOL and Yahoo. Even if I don't make many sales, the fact that I'm getting my product in front of so many people for free certainly doesn't do me any harm.

4.4 Cultivating New Customers

Search engines, banner ads, text links and classified ads are all ways to attract clients and build a customer base. It should also be noted that some of the old traditional methods like word-of-mouth referrals still work just as well online. In fact, word of mouth advertising brings me a lot of new business every month.

In addition to the aforementioned techniques, here are some tips to help you grab as many customers as you can while you're setting up your business and getting your online marketing programs in place.

Know Your Market

Whatever your line of business, you've got to know your market. You have to know who your clients are, what they want and what makes them buy. Do the market research, check out your competitors, create a formal marketing plan and be sure to take the effort to **put yourself in the shoes of your buyers**. *Otherwise you won't get any!*

Bring Out Your Benefits

You might think you know what your product's sales points are. You might even be very proud of them. But, the fact is, your buyers don't care about all the wonderful gizmos you've packed into your

product. They just want you to answer one question: *what's it going to do for me?*

That's what all your marketing has to be about: explaining to your buyers how you're going to improve their life.

Update Your Site Frequently

It can take a lot of effort and time to create a website that works. But you can't stop there. You're going to have to keep updating it, checking it and making sure all the links and addresses work. That's the first place to look when you notice your sales starting to drop, and it's crucial to keep them coming in.

Be Alert for New Marketing Opportunities

You must always be alert for opportunities to make new business contacts and not allow yourself to be caught off guard when opportunities arise. It doesn't matter if you're out shopping or at a Chamber of Commerce meeting; make sure that you have professional business cards, brochures, etc. on hand and pass them out.

Don't Keep Your Business a Secret

Tell everyone about your business and your product. You might even consider sending out a mass mailing to everyone you know, telling them what you're doing. Chances are, someone knows someone

who wants what you've got, and friendly referrals usually bring the best business!

Find Repeat Customers

When it comes to building customers, there are clients who buy once, and clients who buy lots of times. It's the latter that you want to pack into your customer list; they're worth their weight in gold. Big companies are good places to prospect for repeat business (they have big demands and budgets) but *always* treat your repeat customers well. That might mean giving occasional discounts and freebies, but the extra business and customer loyalty you gain will make up for it.

4.5 Creating Effective Ads

Online advertising leaves a lot to be desired. There are ads that emulate Windows-warning boxes, pop-ups and pop-unders and a whole variety of "interruption" style ads. All of these ad mediums are developed with the intent to make people notice them. However, most of them only end up irritating people. Advertisers, especially those with small budgets, can't afford to waste money on ineffective advertising. In order to optimize your advertising purchases, consider the following steps:

Step 1: Define your target market and specify clear goals of your advertising campaign.

The most important aspect of any advertising campaign is to have a clear objective in mind. You need to know what group of people you are targeting with your ad campaign and what specific results you want to achieve from your advertising. Do you want to make 1 sale per day or 100? It may seem silly, but defining your outcome in advance will make a dramatic impact on what you actually achieve.

Step 2: Identify the most effective sites for reaching your target market.

Sites that are most relevant to your product or service will, more than likely, be your best bet, but also consider larger sites or networks that can target the audience you're trying to reach. They can be very cost-effective. If you have multiple products or services that appeal to various target markets, you'll have to consider sites that reach all those various segments.

Step 3: Craft your message to fit the needs of the audience you're targeting.

This comes down to understanding the audience of the sites you're advertising on. The message you use on a technology site to

appeal to technologically savvy customers won't have the same appeal for visitors on a small-business site. Focus your campaign accordingly.

Step 4: Develop the content of your ad.

Pay particular attention to the content of the ad. The content should be such that it clearly distinguishes your product or service from your competitor's. Have a catchy headline. The headline is probably the most important part of the ad – It is the attention getter.

Step 5: Formulate the specific promotional messages that correspond to your goals.

The promotional messages should concentrate on the major selling points of your product or service and have a strong call-to-action. Example: "Lose 10 pounds in 2 weeks and add years to your life by taking the new breakthrough Healthy Life Vitamin. Click here to get your free bottle today while supplies last!"

Step 6: Make the desired action clearly visible.

This certainly doesn't mean the desired action should necessarily blink, bounce or do flips, but it should be visible within an accepted format for the media you're using. In the case of the Internet, underlined text links, "click here" text entry boxes, and pull-down menus are all ways you can make the desired action clearly visible.

Step 7: Design the ad so it looks like it belongs on the sites where you're advertising.

For instance, you may want to use the site's font faces in your text, color schemes in your background, font color choices overall, and emulate images where appropriate. Try to conform to the environment you're in so potential customers feel at home when they see your ad.

Step 8: Produce multiple versions of each ad.

Create three or four versions of each ad, changing the promotional message, call-to-action, font faces and color schemes. This is especially important if you're doing price testing or gauging reaction to specific promotions. By splitting your advertising buy among the various versions of your ad, you can then start to optimize your results based on the message that works best.

4.6 Advanced Ad Tracking

The Need for an Ad Tracking Program

There are two main factors that make an ad effective – Content of the ad and the sites where it is advertised. Most experts would agree that constant testing and experimenting is the only way to ensure that you get the right combination. However, the question arises – How do you test your ads? An integral part of any advertising campaign is

knowing which ads bring you the most visitors. After all, you may have banner ads, newsgroups ads, ads in newsletters and articles, ads in autoresponders, or a simple classified ad on a website.

Every marketer needs to know:

- ☑ which of the ads received the best response
- ☑ whether free classified sites are worth the effort
- ☑ which newsletters are the most profitable
- ☑ how a sponsored newsletter ad compares to the standard one
- ☑ whether animated banners are better than static ones
- ☑ how effective email ads are
- ☑ whether an ad at the beginning of a newsletter or article outperforms the one at the end

Ad tracking programs would answer all of these questions. They can help you analyze the effectiveness of every single ad, and hence they should be an integral part of every marketing campaign. At the basic level, an ad tracking program records when your URL has been clicked. It can detect where your visitor came from (the referring URL), the browser and operating system used and the exact time the

visitor arrived. It can also record total hits and unique hits (i.e. where one visitor may click several times). This data is kept in the system so you can then pull reports on any ad campaign over any period, e.g. by month, day or even by hour.

Types of Ad Tracking Tools

There are two types of Ad Tracking programs. However, the operation of both these types is the same.

CGI Script

You purchase these programs outright and it is installed on your site. If you have some technical knowledge, you should be able to install it yourself; otherwise the supplier will charge an installation fee. There are certain minimum software requirements for programs which run on your site, including access to the cgi-bin. Hence, most free sites would not allow you to install CGI scripts. With CGI scripts, your tracking URLs will carry your own domain name.

Online Services

These programs operate completely independently from your site - no software installation or use of your system resources (such as disk space) is required. However, such programs run at the supplier site. You pay a rental (monthly or yearly) for the program. Thus, you are dependent on the supplier's website for your ad tracking. With an

online tracking service, your tracking URLs usually carry the online service's domain name.

The main difference between these types of ad tracking tools is the installation. For some businesses, running CGI scripts may be more advantageous, whereas for others, online services would be more useful and easier to manage.

There are many ad tracking tools available at reasonable rates. Two of the most popular tools are discussed below:

AdMinder.com

This is an online ad tracking tool. AdMinder provides an ad tracking service that can be used with multiple websites. It provides the capability to track clicks, actions and sales. AdMinder provides reporting as well as the ability to export your data in CSV format, which you can use in MS Excel for additional analysis.

Some of its key features are:

- ☑ Browser-based-service, so no installation required
- ☑ Works with all major web browsers
- ☑ Provides key financial stats
- ☑ Allow for grouped reports

☑ Unlimited campaigns

ProAnalyzer.com

ProAnalyzer Ad Tracking System is a CGI program that installs on your website's cgi-bin directory and tracks your ad click-throughs and sales without paying a monthly fee. When a visitor enters your website from an ad URL, a cookie is placed on his web browser and a click-through is recorded. If the visitor purchases a product, that cookie is read on the Thank You page with the purchase total, and the sale is recorded for the ad that generated it.

You can track sales or results either by the campaign name, the revenue generated by a sale, or the action accomplished (lead generated, etc.). The Administration Area allows you to monitor each of your campaigns showing hits, sales, and the conversion rate for each. You can configure how the program calculates the conversion rate (by raw hits or unique hits) and how results are sorted.

There are lots of different ways to bring customers to your site. So far we've discussed search engines, banner ads, text links, classified ads and some "old-fashioned" offline marketing strategies.

As you learn these methods and begin to put them in practice, it's important to remember that no single method has all the answers. **The best marketing campaigns are a combination of them all**.

In the next chapter, we're going to look at another exclusively online method of building a customer base and making money: **affiliate programs**. Of course, the best way to learn about affiliate programs is simply to sign up for a few of them yourself and do some marketing. The Plug-In Profit Site makes it very easy to get started in the exciting and profitable world of affiliate marketing. **Click here** to launch your own automated affiliate marketing system today.

5. Getting Rich from Affiliate Programs

Affiliate programs (also called Referral Programs or Partnership Programs) are essentially commission-based income opportunities. With an affiliate program, you get paid for sending customers to other company's websites. Affiliate programs are widely believed to be the easiest way to start making money online.

Here's how it works: When you sign up to become an affiliate for a company, you receive a special link with your own unique affiliate ID embedded into it to promote that company's product(s). Example: **AffiliateCompanyWebsite.com/YOUR-AFFILIATE-ID**. Next, you simply add your new affiliate link to your website, newsletter or anywhere else. Then when people use your link to get to the other company's website and subsequently buy a product from them, YOU earn a commission.

You benefit from the commission earned and the affiliate company benefits from sales it would NOT have otherwise made without your promotional efforts. For example, if you've ever gone to a website and seen links to Amazon, those were affiliate links. If you click those links

and end up buying the product on the next page, the webmaster whose website you originated at will earn a commission from Amazon.

5.1 Joining an Affiliate Program

As with any marketing venture, you need to be careful in the selection of an affiliate program. The benefit of an affiliate program is that it gives you another way to make money from your website visitors. Instead of selling them a product yourself, you send them to a partner and take a cut.

On the downside though, your affiliate ads will take the place of a different ad that you could have put in that same spot. You have to make sure that each advertising position on your site is bringing in the maximum revenue possible. If you're not getting the most from your site, you're throwing money away.

The key to success is to choose the right program, right from the beginning. **Click here** to learn about 5 affiliate programs I belong to who pay out big commissions every month to myself and many others.

Now, a lot of commercial sites run affiliate programs. That's because they know that they only have to pay a commission if a sale is actually made; it's a proven way to generate revenue without risk. What that means for you is that when it comes to choosing an affiliate

program, you're going to have a huge range to choose from. What it all boils down to though is product and price.

While it might be tempting to go for the program that pays the highest commissions, the program won't pay you a penny if your visitors won't go there or won't buy once they get there. You have to be certain that the service you're promoting is of genuine interest to the kind of visitors you get to your website, whether you're buying them from search engines or anywhere else.

Sure, you can work backwards: You find a high-paying affiliate program and create a small site to send users to it, but do you know where to buy traffic for a program like that? You're going to have to research the field, check out the most popular sites, and negotiate banner campaigns and link exchanges.

That's fine if you want to invest the time and the effort. But it's much easier to find an affiliate program operating in a field you're familiar with, and use that program to earn extra cash.

For example, suppose you had set up a dating site. You might make some money selling subscriptions, but you might make even more by joining Match.com's affiliate program and referring your visitors to them. Unless you're planning to be the Internet's biggest

dating site, you're not going to be able to compete directly and beat them, but you can help them — and make money doing it.

Or rather than sell your users directly to a competitor, you can look for services that complement your own. Visitors to your dating site, for example, might be interested in buying flowers, books on relationships or tickets on singles cruises. Instead of selling just one product such as membership subscriptions, you'd be selling a whole range of different goods to the same people and increasing the sources of your income.

Here are some tips to selecting an affiliate program that is lucrative and right for you:

Don't accept less than 25% commission. You can find affiliate programs with great payment structures and high percentages of the purchase price in just about every field. In fact, many affiliate programs pay out 50%-75% depending on the type of product.

Look for comprehensive statistics pages that list the number of click-throughs, sales and earnings so you can see how you're doing. The information should be broken down by month.

Look for programs that offer a wide variety of promotional tools to put on your web page, including text links, banners, articles, brandable ebooks, etc.

Find out how often you will be paid and make sure that the payment schedule meets your expectations. Some programs pay bi-weekly, many pay monthly, others quarterly; which is best for you?

Look for examples of marketing methods that successful affiliates are using to get the best results.

Make sure that top level support is given. If they can't answer your questions promptly and intelligently, you don't want to work with them.

5.2 Launching Your Own Affiliate Program

Joining an affiliate program and promoting it on your site is an easy way to make extra money from the traffic you get to your site. But just as you can join someone else's affiliate program, so you can also set up your own program and invite webmasters to sign up as long as you have YOUR OWN product to sell.

What would that bring you? The same as what you bring your affiliate partners: sales. Every time someone sends you a visitor who

buys your product or service, you give a portion of that money to your affiliate. It's an easy way to generate free traffic and earn extra cash.

And you don't need to be a programming genius to set up an affiliate program. There are a whole bunch of companies out there that offer entire affiliate kits right off the shelf.

AssocTRAC.com lets you run a fully featured affiliate program from your website. It integrates with virtually every payment method, awards down-line commissions, and can handle high-traffic websites. You can edit the sign-up form to match the "look and feel" of your site as well as delete some of the optional fields. The administration area allows you to edit affiliates and commissions, create printable reports of money due, export the data to a text file, view the traffic through your affiliate program, and much more. Your affiliates can log in at any time and see their traffic and commission statistics as well as change their information and get links banner codes and all other promotional materials you provide.

Once the program is set up you'll only need to log in once a month to print out a list of the affiliates, their addresses, and the money owed. You can do this quarterly if you wish. You can export the payments owed to a text file in PayPal's "mass pay" format and then just upload it to your PayPal account to pay everyone automatically.

Or, you can simply write your own checks. If you have to pay a lot of commissions, there is a check printing service called **Qchex.com** that works well. Simply upload the file and they'll print and mail your checks for a relatively small fee.

Alternatively, you can run your affiliate program without installing any software on your own server using powerful server-based affiliate tracking systems like **1ShoppingCart.com** or **ClickBank.com**.

5.3 Cooking Off the Spam

Any time you run a program where your affiliates rely on sending you visitors to make money, you will eventually have a problem with spam. One of your affiliates will inevitably get it into their head to blast the web with unwanted garbage.

When this happens you need to be ready to take action. Otherwise, it will cost you! Your website hosting company can boot you off your server and you can find yourself blacklisted. If you get an email from someone claiming they received spam with your URL, then take it as an early warning. I am not advising you to immediately terminate the affiliate's account, but be sure to contact them to follow up on the complaint. Let your affiliate know you received a complaint and advise them to remove this person from their list immediately.

If you only get one or two complaints, it's probably not spam. The complainants might simply have signed up for an email list and forgotten all about it. You will know when one of your affiliates is spamming, because you will get anywhere from 10 to 100 complaints in the same day all regarding the same URL. The best thing to do in this case is to immediately terminate or disable the account of the affiliate URL that has spammed.

5.4 Managing and Tracking Your Affiliate Programs

The key to any business is to promote your products and services to people who need them. Your affiliate business is no different. In order to earn commissions you must put your products in front of the people who need them. The beauty of marketing affiliate programs is that it is anybody's ball game. This is the one place you can burrow deep into your own niche and stick it to the so-called "big wigs".

Staying Organized

There are many affiliate networks that provide multiple affiliate programs and merchants. Keeping track of all affiliate programs in a single network is easy. You would generally be given one username and password as well as a single interface that controls all the programs. However, if you have many of your own affiliate programs

or you promote several stand-alone affiliate programs from your website, the task of staying organized becomes a bit more complex.

There are many software programs available on the Internet that organize and keep track of all data associated with affiliate programs. These programs maintain databases pertaining to information about all your affiliate programs such as:

- ☑ Program Name
- ☑ Date joined or created
- ☑ Contact Name
- ☑ URL
- ☑ Email Address
- ☑ ID
- ☑ Password
- ☑ 1st Tier Percent
- ☑ 1st Tier Sale
- ☑ 2nd Tier Percent
- ☑ 2nd Tier Sale

☑ Total Income

☑ Additional comments

Once the program information has been entered, you can add information about individual sales made and checks received. The program then keeps track of sales to date, amount collected and receivables. Some of the advanced software programs also provide analysis and comparison tools for all affiliate programs. If you take the time to input collected data about clicks, sales, page views, impressions, emails sent, etc. from your various campaigns and enter all of it into the program, it will show you:

☑ Click-to-Sale Ratios

☑ Impression to Sale Ratios

☑ Amount Earned Per Impression

☑ Amount Earned Per Click

Of course, the best affiliate programs will provide these kind of detailed statistics for you at no extra charge.

Here's a few additional tips for managing your affiliate programs:

Always ensure that your website is up and running. On a daily basis type your URL into your browser's address bar, refresh the page

and find out. The danger in not knowing that your site is down comes when you are running a pay-per-click advertising campaign. The click costs add up whether your site is functional or not. If your site is down, you are paying for advertising, but no one is buying.

Check your statistics daily, maybe even twice a day. This will give you a better idea of your income trends and highlight affiliate programs that bring your business. Visit the statistics interface for each network and individual affiliate partner and input your total revenues into any accounting software. Using such software frequently will also keep you informed about any overdue checks.

Be prompt in answering any queries from affiliate partners or customers, especially when these are about your products or services. This probably means that the customer trusts your site and is thinking of buying your product.

One of the main benefits of many affiliate programs is residual income. You've got to make the most of each and every customer you receive. The best way to do this is by promoting affiliate programs that offer residual commission.

Residual income affiliate programs pay you repeatedly for a sale you make one time. For example, if a visitor arrives at your site and purchases auto responder services, newsletter subscriptions,

ISP/hosting services, you will collect a portion of the monthly fees for as long as they remain a paying customer. Membership sites are a good way to collect residual commissions and are steadily growing in popularity. There are many affiliate programs that offer residual commission. **Click here** to learn about the top residual income affiliate programs that I personally belong to and highly recommend to others.

Finally, track all your affiliate links. The best way to accomplish this is by setting up tracking software for your affiliate links. There are a number of scripts that will do the job. Most tracking programs typically allow you to setup tracking links for any product you promote, telling you how many hits each product has received, and where the hits are coming from. A more detailed view of tracking and analysis is given in the section below.

If you have your own affiliate program, it is not enough to provide just a few banners and classified ads for your affiliates. You must provide as much help as possible for your affiliates if you want them to be successful. You should offer tested and proven endorsements, testimonials, signature files, ezine ads, and other unique tools and techniques including individualized training for your affiliates. You must also make yourself available, either through email, phone or a

member's support forum, to help your affiliates implement these tools and to answer any questions they might have.

Whether you run your own or participate in an affiliate program, you must be able to determine what methods work best in a particular medium. For instance, which ezine ads work best and in what ezine, which banner ads produce the greatest click-throughs and from which sites or banner exchanges, and the most effective spot on your website to include a testimonial are all important factors to address.

Some affiliate programs have implemented unique payment procedures to get affiliates their commission checks on a timely basis. Some of these procedures include: online electronic payment services, direct bank deposits and checks by fax. If you can solidify your payment procedures from the start you will save yourself an administrative headache, and more importantly, keep your affiliates happy and working to promote your program.

5.5 Evaluating Your Website's Performance

Website statistics and affiliate sales figures are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of your affiliate programs. Before you start recording and analyzing data, it's worthwhile to know what statistics you're trying to calculate - and why. Following are some of

the key questions that need to be answered periodically to ensure the success of affiliate programs.

- ☑ What percentage of the website visitors become customers through affiliate programs?
- ☑ What percentages of sales are new or renewals?
- ☑ What is the average revenue per visitor?
- ☑ What is the average revenue per sale?

The most important figure you need to keep track of is the visitor-to-customer conversion. It tells you exactly how well you convince your visitors to buy your affiliate products. Average conversion ratios for affiliate programs range between .5 and 1.5 percent. Anything above 1.5% is really good. This figure, however, indicates the total conversion for all the affiliate programs. If you promote more than one affiliate program you need to also calculate the conversion rate for each of the programs.

Knowing how conversion rates compare between programs is useful when deciding how to direct your promotional efforts. For example, if you discover that Program A converts at 1% and Program B converts at 2%, it might be time to spend more time and effort promoting Program B. Most tracking software would give you detailed

information about each of the affiliate programs promoted on your website.

All affiliate programs that have a low conversion rate should be dropped. While this may seem like a lot of work to go through to track your site's performance, it really is a worthwhile endeavor. Once your tracking mechanism is set, and you've done the inputs a few times, you'll be surprised at how simple it becomes. In fact, you may find that eventually you look forward to adding things up at the end of the month to get a clear picture of where your affiliate business stands.

5.6 How to Attract Affiliates

One of the biggest fears new Affiliate managers have is in finding new affiliates. This fear is a stumbling block that stops many site owners from getting started with affiliate marketing. Interestingly, with a proper marketing strategy, getting affiliates is not very difficult. Given below are some tips that will help in attracting new affiliates.

Find complimentary sites - "Complementary" sites are sites that sell products or services that compliment your offerings. If you sell "gardening tools", a site that sells books on "gardening tips" would be a perfect affiliate. If you sell software, try looking for sites that sell computers or computer parts. Finding sites that already attract your

target market and can benefit from recommending your product or service to their visitors is the goal.

Find content sites – There are many sites that do not sell any kind of product or service but are mainly content-oriented sites. Such sites promote an idea, concept, study or belief. Content sites that are used as a resource for your target market are ideal affiliates.

Finally, there are several sites on the Internet dedicated to listing affiliate programs. Get your program listed in these directories.

5.6.1 Classifying Affiliates for Better Management

The hardest part of administrating an affiliate program is deciding what your affiliates need to help make the sale. But by carefully categorizing your affiliates, you can easily determine what their needs are and how to accurately meet them. The plan given below helps in categorizing affiliates in order to manage your affiliate program better.

The **first step** is to pick at least three types of affiliates. Take a look at your affiliates and try to determine one outstanding characteristic that can easily be compared across the board. Here are some examples:

Level of Sales - You may find that your affiliates are so completely different that it's hard to find something to classify them by. Try

classifying them by the level of sales they've reached with you. You'll most likely find that you have a few forerunners that lead the pack with a number of sales, quite a few affiliates that have sporadically made a sale or two and some that have yet to make a sale. This will help you classify them based on sales.

Products - If you sell a wide variety of products for specific interests/needs you may be able to classify your affiliates by product. For instance, a financial site could classify types like Personal Finance, Small Business Finance, and Corporate Finance.

Industry - If you market commodities like office supplies, health and beauty products, house-wares and so on, you may find that your affiliates come from a wide variety of industries. You can most likely classify your affiliates according to their industry.

The **second step** is to determine the needs of each type. Each of your affiliate types will have different needs; some of their needs will overlap, but you should find a distinct difference in many of their needs. If you find that all of them have the same needs, go back to step one and re-think your types.

Here are some basic things to look for:

Linking Methods - Different types of affiliates will need different linking methods. Let's use the example above where we had different groups based on sales. Your low-sales group may be satisfied with a banner or two to place on their site. Your medium-sales type may be interested in an article or two for added content on their site. Your high-sales group will probably pass up banners for articles, email ads and signature files.

Capturing visitors is what you want. In order to do so -- you have to know what they want. Visit your affiliates' sites to see what visitors are looking at and looking for. Ask yourself, "How does my product relate to what I am seeing?"

Different types of affiliates may expect different commissions. You'll have some affiliates that have joined your program "on the side" and others that plan on earning a substantial income from the program. Determine what effort they are putting into advertising, how much other programs in your industry are paying, and the amount of time they devote to your program.

The **third step** involves the process of creating and compiling linking methods for each group of affiliates. Based on the needs you identified in Step Two, create and compile linking methods for each type. Here are a few linking methods to think about:

☑ Banners - Though they aren't as effective as other linking methods, banners are still widely used and expected. Make banners in a variety of sizes to fit tops of pages, bottoms, toolbars, sidebars and other miscellaneous areas.

☑ Articles - These are great for affiliates that need content for their websites and newsletters. Be sure that your articles are articles and not ads.

☑ Email Ads - Your active affiliates may be interested in placing ads in e-zines or their own newsletters. Try writing a few ads in different lengths.

☑ Signature Files - Dedicated affiliates may even add your tag to their signature line. Give them a few witty lines to choose from.

☑ Guestbooks: - Let your affiliates help you build your opt-in email lists with guestbooks. Offer them a commission for each email address they send you, or each resulting sale from the subscribers they send you.

☑ Product Images - Give your affiliates images that show and link directly to specific products. They'll be able to choose

> an image specific to their site, or choose several images to display.

Review each affiliate type and match them up with your new linking methods. You may have some linking methods that overlap types -- this is okay. Just be sure you are concentrating on the affiliates' needs.

The **fourth step** is to decide commission levels. Your first decision will be to determine whether you want to pay a flat rate or percentage of each sale. Based on the needs you identified above for each of the affiliate types, decide on a commission amount for each type. If you have a two-tier program, consider the possibility of different second tier rates as well.

The **fifth step** is to devise promotions for affiliate groups. Give them special incentives to sell more during a certain time frame, move seasonal products, or increase business during your slow months. Offer them additional commissions or even bonuses for reaching a specific amount of sales.

My affiliate program gives you all the marketing tools you'll need to make money online. **Click here** to learn more and sign up today.

5.6.2 A Few Avoidable Errors

Many affiliate marketers make a huge mistake of posting their ads on forums. Forums can be used to promote your affiliate programs and your website but in a proper manner like using your forum sig file for advertising your wares and making valuable contributions to forum discussions in progress. Posting blatant ads in most forums is considered spamming and will easily upset the forum administrators and possibly get you banned.

Always do your research before promoting your affiliate program to a potential customer. Do not offer affiliate programs to visitors who are not at all interested in the products associated with the program. This is a futile endeavor.

If you promote affiliate programs offered by other merchants, try developing some of your own advertising copy. Many websites commit a common mistake of using the same advertising copy as used by the merchant themselves. You will usually experience greater success recommending other company's products in your own voice rather than the voice of the company whose products you are promoting.

Avoid copyright infringement in all cases. Always use original content or ask permission to use graphic images or text found on other websites.

Avoid using ALL CAPS on your web page or email ad. Using caps is symbolic to shouting, which will turn off many potential customers. A few words may be written in capital text to give them additional emphasis. However, such practice should be limited.

Always respond to all queries sent by visitors as soon as possible. A slight delay in your response could easily result in losing the sale.

Do not host your website on a free server or use free email accounts. This gives a negative impression to visitors. Using free hosts and email accounts looks cheesy and loses sales.

Many websites do not have an opt-in list. Create an opt-in and opt-out list for your visitors. Without these, there is no way of following-up with potential customers. Visitors should be allowed to opt-in at any time as well as opt-out at any time.

Most sites have a poor tracking mechanism. It is essential that you track all business activities. Accurate record keeping is crucial. There are several software tools discussed earlier in this chapter that can automate your record-keeping process with minimal error.

A “mall” site is best used as a central hub to send visitors to your other domains. As a main or only site, unfocused mall sites don't get

traffic from the engines, and they don't convert well to sales. Highly focused theme sites attract traffic and sales.

Offline advertising may not be effective. A lot of money and effort should not be wasted on offline advertising. Most people rarely check websites that are advertised in local magazines or newspapers. Of course, this depends on your product. If you are promoting a direct response sales website, there are times that offline advertising will work very well. The key, of course, is to test and track your ads.

Avoid focus on animated banner ads. These simply use up bandwidth, thus making web pages load slower.

When advertising, do not degrade other competitors. It is recommended that you highlight your products' uniqueness and superiority but never mortify other products.

Banners or text links that expire are guaranteed to eventually send your visitor to a broken link or show a broken graphic on your page. Time-sensitive advertising is best used only in email campaigns.

Be cautious about putting affiliate links prominently on your home page. Instead, give your visitors a chance to browse first, sign up for your newsletter and decide that they'd like to come back to your website before introducing them to your affiliates.

Technology changes with amazing speed. To keep up with this rapidly evolving industry, you must invest time and money in research. Remember, the investment is a tax write-off, and will pay you back many times over in additional revenue.

Finally, persist with your plan. It might take you time to get established even if you have a solid marketing plan. Persistence is the single most important factor in determining success online or off.

Click here to make money with affiliate programs even if you have no previous experience. It's the easiest way to get started now.

5.7 LinkShare – Affiliate Network that Works

LinkShare.com offers affiliates a choice of hundreds of merchant programs. On the site, affiliates can join new programs, get links to put on their sites, and then see reports about how their links are performing and how much they have earned.

When a visitor from an affiliate's site clicks on a link and goes to a merchant's site, LinkShare keeps track of all of the transactions that the visitor makes. If that visitor buys something on the merchant's site, you get a commission. In some cases, affiliates are compensated even if the visitor doesn't buy anything, just for having driven traffic to the merchant's site.

LinkShare also provides affiliates with customer service, notifies affiliates about new programs and opportunities, and offers resources for affiliates to learn about how to get the most out of their programs.

5.8 The Leading Digital Products Affiliate Management System – ClickBank

ClickBank.com is the premier affiliate management solution for selling digital products online. You can sell your own digitally downloadable products through ClickBank or promote products from thousands of other ClickBank merchants from one easy affiliate administration panel. Best of all, there is no need to install any expensive scripts on your website and you can start receiving payments and signing up affiliates for your own product or promoting other people's products within hours of opening an account.

The beauty of ClickBank is that it integrates the affiliate management program with an in-built payment gateway. ClickBank is one of the most popular and easiest services to use for payment processing online. Sign-up is quick and you get approved and running, usually within one business day.

The ClickBank Control Panel is easy to use. You can get familiar with the whole system in no time. It costs $49 to open a ClickBank account to sell your own products. This is pretty cheap when compared

with other payment processing systems. Once you open an account, all your transaction money gets deposited into your account. You are paid the full balance every two weeks. Of course, it's free to sign up and promote other people's products as a ClickBank affiliate.

I'm a member of more than a dozen different affiliate programs, and have literally thousands of webmasters signed up in the programs I run myself. If you're serious about earning serious money online, then you're going to be spending a lot of time checking out affiliate programs and tracking your responses. Remember, affiliate programs are one of the easiest and most reliable ways to make money online.

So far, we've talked about several different marketing strategies that can work to bring you traffic and sales on the Internet including banners, text links, affiliate programs etc. But your website isn't the only way to get the traffic you need. In the next chapter, we're going to begin discussing how you can use email to drum up business.

QUESTION: Are you just reading this book for the fun of it or do you plan to start making real money online? **Information is useless without action**. You already know everything you need to know to make money on the Internet. The key is to **act** on your knowledge. **Click here** to launch your own money making website immediately!

6. Exploding Your Profits through Email Marketing

Offline, mail marketing is generally hated by customers. It's unwanted, uninvited and stuffs mail boxes. But it's pretty clear that it's also incredibly popular with advertisers. Why? Because, while most potential customers toss away their junk mail with barely a glance, enough take action to make it all worthwhile. They do buy in high enough numbers to make money for those doing it.

Email marketing is pretty similar, but with one important difference: online, you can only send marketing emails to people who have already requested to receive them. And, because those people have already chosen to receive your emails, you can be a lot more confident that they will read your offers and buy from you.

6.1 Collecting Opt-In Email Addresses

Email is still the most popular and most used communication medium on the Internet. It's also an efficient way to distribute your message to large numbers of people who have *requested* that information. As a form of marketing, it generates high response rates and gives you measurable results with instant feedback.

Just keep in mind, it is never acceptable to send commercial email to people who haven't requested to receive email from you. Bust that rule, and there's a good chance you'll be out of business. That gives you the challenge of building up a list of willing subscribers.

When you're first starting out, there's often a temptation to simply purchase an opt-in email list. Lots of people sell them and you can easily pick up a million or so addresses for just a few bucks. But while that may appear to be a fast, easy way to build up customers, the names on the list may not be up to date and they are not even opt-in contacts at all. To say it bluntly, emailing people from a list like that is called spamming.

Similarly, there are also programs that automatically crawl the web, recording every email address they find. These will let you quickly build up a huge list of email addresses. But, nobody will thank you when you stuff their inboxes with marketing material. Forget about them; they're not worth the effort. It's much safer, and much more effective, to take the time to build your own **real** opt-in list.

TIP: I'll teach you how to build your own opt-in list the right way and give you all the tools you need to make money with your list. **Click here** to learn how I can help you make money online.

6.2 Double Opt-in

Marketing by email can attract new customers, keep existing ones, up-sell, cross-sell, and cut costs. E-merchant Wine.com, for example, found email campaigns drove twice as many "best prospects" to their site compared to banner ads or other Internet marketing activities.

If executed improperly though, email campaigns can backfire with disastrous business consequences. How to minimize the risk and maximize the return? Part of the answer is a common sense approach called "permission" or "opt-in" marketing, in which customers or prospects volunteer to receive email.

The odds of users joining a list can be improved by providing three opt-in opportunities, all with low entry barriers. First, there should be minimal sign-up work. Many sites require only an email address; all other personal information is optional. Second, there should be several sign-up opportunities on a site, including on the inquiry, order, and feedback forms. These forms may use a checkbox asking prospects if they would like to receive occasional special offers/newsletters by email. If so, it must be placed conspicuously on the form. Third, a privacy policy that addresses what will be done with user information should be posted in an obvious place.

Continuing on the lines of “opt-in” marketing, one of the most successful methods is the double opt-in technique. In double opt-in a user elects to receive email newsletters or standalone commercial messages. A confirmation email is sent to that user, who is now required to take one more action to be included on the list. The person must click the link within the confirmation email to affirm their intent to join your mailing list.

Although, the double opt-in techniques runs the risk of losing subscribers during the confirmation process, it gives the subscribers more control and thus, has proven to be more successful. That said, here are some measures emailers who practice double opt-in can take to reduce confirmation drop-offs.

When a user enters his address, mention an email will be sent to him and include its estimated arrival time. Indicate the user is required to respond to that message to receive subsequent mailings. With transactional customers, consider placing this information on the page with order confirmation.

Ideally, a confirmation message is sent immediately. It should be sent while the subscription is fresh in subscribers' minds and they're still engaged in an online session. If you indicate it will be within a day or two, make sure you follow through on that promise. If your systems

are slower, then requirements related to message content are even more relevant.

If you need a confirmation, that's the only thing you should ask for. Explain to users they will not be added to the list until they take the necessary action. Most desirable is a one-click confirmation link embedded in the message. Giving users a reply option with subject line intact is another good approach. Requiring them to write something in the subject line or body of the message or asking them to forward the email on to another address is not nearly as effective. Ensure that your contact information is included in the confirmation message and, if possible, include a link to your privacy policy.

6.3 Intelligent Targeting Through Tailor Made Research

As with any other marketing campaign, careful planning and proven techniques are the best way to deploy the most effective campaigns and to realize the highest response rates. The key: putting the right offer in front of the right person at the right time. Targeting your emails is crucial for any email marketing campaign. No product or service can be all things to all people. Acknowledging this reality, targeting is simply focusing your marketing onto a specific niche. The two factors that you alter to target your email campaigns are targeting the message, and targeting the list.

Targeting your message means tailoring your message to the expected audience. For example, you may have two pitches for your product: one that concentrates on the radical new features of the product, and another that details the tremendous cost and time savings from using it. You can also target the ad used for the email campaign. You might have two versions, one that uses a clean list of bullet points, and another that features highly stylized text that flies across the screen.

You also need to target (i.e. subdivide) your email lists. Targeted messages will be more effective when sent to an appropriate group of recipients. Continuing the example above, you would send the product feature pitch and technical information to technical people, and send the cost savings information to finance people.

The primary rule of effective targeting is deceptively simple: figure out what your target groups wants, and then offer it to them. How do you go about doing that? Simple, try asking some of your existing customers. Another way to know what actually works is to send a test campaign to a sample of your targeted group. Once you have the attention of the recipient, for an all too brief moment, the biggest factor in obtaining a positive response is usually how valuable

the offer is perceived to be. Providing something of actual value that really speaks to the target is a requirement.

Tell a story to each targeted group over a series of messages. This will help lead to increasing the permission level with each recipient. As you learn more about each other you will be able to utilize more sophisticated targeting. Once you begin to establish a dialog with your target, eventually a true one-to-one marketing relationship can develop.

Unless you have an unlimited budget for your marketing efforts, you need to make sure that every dollar invested counts. You need to target your email campaigns, or else much of your efforts are being wasted. Be careful to target accurately, or your campaign might miss the target or even work against you. Deliver the correct message to the correct group of recipients, and the results from your campaigns will "hit the bull's-eye" and deliver a great boost to your profits.

6.4 Renting or Buying Lists

Many marketers peg acquisition-based email response rates at historically low levels, primarily due to the high volume of messages in everyone's inboxes these days. Some believe that allocating any percentage of a marketing budget to acquisition-based email is waste. However, this is not true. Although the true response rates for

acquisition are typically lower than those for retention-based email, renting lists to win over prospects and grow a customer base can work wonders, if you do your homework.

Here are some guidelines that can help in buying or renting lists for achieving high ROI.

- ☑ With email, just like direct mail, how precisely the list is targeted to the marketer's offer is critical to the success of the email campaign. The marketer will need to test a variety of email lists in order to find the most responsive names for their offer. Recency, Frequency, and Monetary Value are important within email lists. Thus, where applicable, focus on lists of recent online buyers or registered users.

- ☑ More importantly, when researching email lists, focus on the origin of the list to ensure compatibility with your offer. Make sure you obtain names from branded, well-recognized sites or sources. Since an outbound email announces to the recipient, in the form of a header, exactly where they gave permission, a well-recognized source would lend more credibility to the message.

A frequency cap can ensure lists aren't over mailed. If a list manager can't provide the details on mailing frequency, look

elsewhere. That organization probably lacks the control, technical expertise, and reporting basics. Also ask about recency selections. Newer names offer access to new subscribers.

Frequent uploads of new names and instant suppression of unsubscribes are a must. Your brand will be associated with spam by those who unsubscribed but still receive mailings before their request is processed. Lists that are housed and resold by multiple managers are probably mailed more frequently. This negatively impacts performance, brand equity and deliverability.

As email filtering becomes dominant, you must make sure list managers are up to speed on delivery techniques and processes. ISP relations and white listing are critical. Check all available blacklists for the list manager's IP addresses. List managers should be able to monitor delivery of their campaigns and ensure messages are delivered to the inbox, not a bulk mail folder.

Finally, the best-performing lists provide the most ability to slice and dice the file to find the right people for your offer. Sorting based on demographics, psychographics, and even specific stages of the buying cycle will almost always outperform untargeted mailings.

6.5 Creating Unblockable DHTML Pop-Ups

Pop-ups are mini windows that open when a user takes a particular action. That action could be anything from reaching the site, clicking onto a particular page, or even leaving the site. The problem with using a traditional pop-up on your site is that it will probably be blocked by one of various pop-up blocking tools on the market.

However, there are some types of pop-ups that do get around most of the pop-up blockers on the market and many online marketers use these “unblockable” DHTML pop-ups quite successfully.

In fact, many businesses use DHTML pop-ups in collaboration with joint venture partners as a way of sharing traffic, but they’re also great ways to collect visitors’ email addresses so that you can keep them informed and send them marketing material. It’s very effective.

So how do you add DHTML pop-ups to your site?

The easiest way to employ this technique is using software to build your DHTML pop-ups. You can download a software program for free that will creates DHTML pop-ups for you in a few easy clicks at: **www.antssoft.com/wisepopup/** One of the best things about DHTML pop-ups is that they’re very easy to produce. It takes just a few lines of script inserted into the <HEAD> and <BODY> parts of

your website and, using the software listed above, you don't even need to hire a programmer to do it for you.

Anyone can do it. But there's no point in having a working pop-up if the pop-up itself doesn't have text that is persuasive enough to sell. There are a few sales tactics that you can use on your pop-up to make sure the visitor actually fills in the form and sends you his details:

1. Give Them a Reason to Play

If you really want to make sure your visitors hand over their email addresses, offer them something in return. Free reports are good, ebooks are fine too. In fact, anything that's free and relevant is likely to get results. You don't have to go overboard here; if you can find a goody that won't cost you anything, fantastic.

2. Make the Title Tell

The title tag of your pop-up isn't going to push it up the search engine listings, but it's still important. If you leave it out, or worse, write something daft, like "mypopup", no one's going to take you seriously. Be professional and you'll achieve professional results. Use a real title and make it interesting.

3. Use a Hard-Hitting Headline

I'll talk about headlines in more detail later in this chapter. That being said, I can't stress how important headlines are. You've got about two seconds to grab a reader's attention and make them read. That's the job of your headline. It's got to focus on the benefits the user can expect by signing up:

"Increase Your Sales By 127%!"

"Learn How To Speak Swahili In Three Weeks Or Less!"

"FREE Marketing Newsletter! Sign Up Here!"

Use a boring headline and you'll get a boring bottom line.

4. Keep it Slim

If your users have to wait more than a few seconds for the pop-up to download, the chances are they'll close the window before it's finished. Use minimal graphics and make sure everything's optimized before you put it on the server.

5. Make it Sexy!

Slim doesn't mean the same as dull. You can still use cool colors and attractive fonts, but make sure the pop-up looks professional. The

copy has to be easy to read, and the whole page has to be good on the eye. Simplicity is key when it comes to effective pop-up design.

6. Offer a Close Button

You might think it's a good idea to keep the pop-up open until the user signs up. But if they're not going to register to get the benefits you're offering, are they likely to opt-in just to get rid of the pop-up box? And if they do, are they likely to buy from you? Keep your users happy; let them close the box easily if they want it out of the way. They might just buy something instead.

6.6 Email Marketing Tactics

All right, so you've got the addresses. Now what are you going to do with them? Obviously, what you're going to do is send your users marketing messages via email so that they'll know all about the great products and services you offer.

There are two ways you can do that: you can send them a newsletter every couple of weeks or so; or you can send them a sales letter. Newsletters are very important for building trust with your subscribers and warming them up to your sales offers. In the next chapter, I'll discuss newsletters in detail.

In the rest of this chapter, I'm going to explain how to write simple sales material that gets results. I'll do that by concentrating on the two most important parts of any sales material: the headline and the call to action. Get those two right, and any piece of marketing material you produce — online or off — will get the results you want.

6.6.1 Writing Headlines That Grab Your Customers and Sell Your Goods!

Headlines are absolutely vital for all your marketing efforts. Whether you plan to use them on your website, your emails, your newsletters or anywhere else, they're the hook that grabs your readers, reels them in and turns them into customers. There are dozens of different kinds of headlines that you can use and some of them are better than others. Below are the type of headlines that I use, and that I've found to be the most effective.

The No-Nonsense Headline

The first type of headline you can use is the simplest. No frills, no tricks, no hooks, just a straightforward description of the contents of your message. Your headline could be something like:

Tips to Save Money on Your Weekly Shopping

The Best Way to Choose Your Next Car

Real Estate Agents That Sell Properties Fast

Notice that you can still use explanations and powerful adjectives to get your point across, but these headlines do little more than tell the reader what to expect.

The advantages of these headlines is that they're easy to write and easy to read. You don't have to try to come up with some hard-hitting sales message and customers aren't put off by a document that looks like a piece of promotional material. On the other hand, they are a bit weak and that makes them hard to turn into cash.

You can use no-nonsense headlines when you don't need to work hard to make the sale. If you're sending information that you know your customer will read, either because it's free or they've specifically requested it, these are the kind of headlines to use.

The Question Headline

Question headlines work by asking customers a question that plays on their worries and promises a solution. These are great when you really want to grab a customer and drive your message home.

Want To Save Thousands On Your Home Insurance Bills? Learn How To Cut Your Costs In Half!

Where Do You Look For Love? Discover The Best Places To Meet Your Match!

Suffering From Termites? Drive Them Out With The Extermite-Ator!

To write these headlines, think first of what problem your product is actually going to solve. (If it's not going to solve a problem, then you're going to have a problem selling it!) In the first half of the headline, you ask your customers if they're suffering from the problem. Just by asking, you're suggesting that they do. In the second half of the headline, you tell them that you have the solution. It's very easy and extremely effective.

This is a really simple formula to follow: all you have to do is state the question and promise the answer. And it sells too; you've put the problem in the reader's mind, now you're offering the solution.

Of course, these kinds of headlines depend on the reader empathizing with the problem. If they don't, or if they decide that the headlines look too long to read, they're not likely to buy.

Question headlines are most effective when your product is going to clearly solve someone's problem *and* when you know your customers are going to empathize with that problem. If they don't say yes to the question, they're going to say no to the sale.

The How Headline

This is pretty similar to the question headline, but only offers the solution. It makes for a shorter read than question headlines so you get your point across faster, but you lose the empathy.

How To Fix Up Your Home Without Breaking The Bank!

How I Made $3,000,000 With One Phone Call!

How I Lost 33 Pounds On A High Fiber Diet And A Revolutionary New Exercise Plan!

These kinds of headlines cut straight to the problem-solving aspect of your product. They're short and to the point and can be easily absorbed with just a glance.

How Headlines are great when the rest of the document is going to reveal information. That information might just be details about your product, but the focus should always be on telling customers how they can solve a problem. These work best when you're selling information products like books or newsletters.

The Numbered Headline

There's a good reason that magazines like Cosmopolitan use headlines like "6 Ways To Drive Your Man Wild!" They work. Most

people are put off by the sight of a giant slab of text. They want their information in bite-sized chunks. When you put a number in your headline, you let your reader know that the information you're offering them is going to be easy to read:

7 Ways To Make Your Computer Run Faster

15 Proven Ways To Make Money From Home

23 Sales Tools That Guarantee Success

The advantage of these headlines is that they promise easy reading, increasing the chances that your text will actually be read. It's also easy to slip a call-to-action sales message into these kind of documents: one of the promised solutions can be: "buy my product"!

On the other hand, easy reading isn't the same as interesting reading. The headline still has to grab your readers to make them *want* to read it.

Numbered Headlines are most effective when you're confident your readers will find your message interesting and you don't have to fight to make them read on. They're best used when you're competing against other articles or sales letters. I use them a lot in newsletters, especially when I know it's going to be published in a joint venture partner's newsletter.

The Testimonial Headline

These are some of the toughest headlines to write. You take a chunk of text from a letter written by a satisfied customer and use that as the headline for a sales letter:

"Last Year, I Was Working 12 Hours A Day And Making Just $36,000. Last Month, I Made $32,000 And Worked Three Days — All Due To The Amazing Techniques Revealed Below!"

"I'd Tried Every Weight Loss Program Ever. I'd Tried Dieting, Exercise, High-Fiber, Low Fat, High-Carbs... You Name It, I'd Done It And Nothing Worked. Then I Tried The Lose Fat Fast Program. I Lost 33 Pounds In The First Two Months And I've Never Felt Better!"

"Within A Week Of Sending Out My Resume, I'd Got Three Interviews And A Fantastic Job Offer. I Couldn't Have Done It Without You!"

These headlines put your reliability right at the top, increasing the customers' confidence to buy. They explain in detail precisely what you're offering and what you can do for the reader. They also create massively long headlines that are difficult to absorb at a glance and can put a reader off.

Testimonial headlines are best used in industries where reliability is a bit of a problem. If you're selling weight loss products for example, or any other life-changing service, then a headline like this goes some way towards proving to the buyer that you're trustworthy.

Those are just five kinds of headlines that I use in my businesses every day. There are dozens more, but these are the ones that I've found the most effective. There's certainly enough here for you to get started. Play around with them, figure out which ones would work best for your business and try them out.

But even the best headline will only grab a reader's eye and get him reading. They won't close the sale. After the headline you'll need to describe all the wonderful benefits of your product in order to get the reader to actually take the action you want.

TIP: If you can't write killer headlines, but you still want to make money online with direct marketing, I encourage you to sign up for the Plug-In Profit Site service at **this site**. You'll gain access to hundreds of profit pulling headlines I've already tested that you can use immediately to earn multiple streams of profit on the Internet!

6.6.2 Tips for Building Your Email Lists

A popular Internet battle cry states that “the money is in your list”. It’s true that you can make a lot of money by building a list of opt-in subscribers, establishing trust with those subscribers and sending those subscribers special offers promoting your products.

But you must do it correctly. Here’s a few tips that will help you get the most bang for your buck out of your list-building activities:

Collect Only Relevant Information

While requesting a visitor to sign up, collect information that is relevant to your business. A recent study lamented that most of the corporate probing was unnecessary, given that most companies never act on the information they extract from their customers. It is crucial that you know exactly what you intend to do with the information you’re going to collect. Moreover, you should also be able to prove to your visitors that information you would be collecting from them is actually vital for your business.

Don’t Make Your Customers Repeat Information

Most customers don’t mind telling their banks the ages of their children if they think the bank will use the information to help them sort through the myriad of college savings plans or make them aware of estate planning issues. But nothing irritates customers more than

having to repeat the same information to each channel as if it's the first time they've ever heard the information. This is especially true in the case of email lists on websites.

Focus Your List

We've discussed the importance of focusing or targeting customers earlier as well. Current customers are the most important email addresses to collect, much more so than prospects. They'll be more receptive to your communications and likely to respond, since they're familiar with your company and its products. Don't waste your time running campaigns that attract a high number of visitors who have no interest in your products or services.

Special Offers and Discounts

Special offers like coupons and discounts are classic direct marketing techniques that translate extremely well to email. In order for an offer to be effective, it must provide something of real value to the recipient. Minimal discounts are not enough to get the reader's attention; you have to offer something of substance. Of course, don't discount lower than your profit on the transaction. Having a time limit on discounted offers is also very important in order for the call to action to work effectively.

Apart from using the Internet, there are also ways you can use your marketing efforts in the real world to help build your email lists.

Networking Meetings

From your local chamber of commerce, to specialized industry groups, the meetings of many organizations are great opportunities to make contact with new people. You are exchanging business cards with interested prospects or possible referral sources, so make sure that you send appropriate email communications to these people. Start with a personal email recapping your conversation with them, and ask them if they would like to be added to your monthly email list. Don't just start sending a barrage of email to every person that you come in contact with. Make sure that the person indicated their interest in what you have to offer first, or your contact will become quickly unwanted.

Trade Shows

Whether you have a booth, are one of the presenters, or are simply attending a trade show, you have an excellent potential opportunity similar to networking events, but on a much greater scale. Organizing the follow-ups to people you actually spoke to yourself then adding the person to your personal contact list is a given.

The general information requests gathered by associates at your booth can be handled in a similar way. Lastly, you may have organized a giveaway or contest to gather more leads at the show. These people are frequently less interested in what you have to say, and more interested in whatever they might be getting or winning. As a result, it

may require secondary contact to obtain the permission to add them to your regular communications. In general, hitting contest winners with a "hard sell" is not usually effective.

Seminars

Organizing informational seminars is a great way to build a healthy relationship with prospects and potential referrers. One effective technique is to have advance registration and to ask permission to send regular emails at that time. This way, even if the person is not able to attend the seminar, you still have an opportunity to stay in touch with them. After all, they were interested enough to register for the seminar.

Events

Concerts, parties, art openings, or any other occasion that gathers people together provide an opportunity to build your email address lists. Having a registration or check-in location, or associates with clipboards working the room are just two ways to make contact. In the case of events, it is a good idea to offer some kind of incentive to boost signups. However, make sure that the person can only receive the incentive via email. This way, you will improve the quality and accuracy of the lists you are collecting.

Post Cards / Direct Mail

When a company has an existing database of postal addresses, direct mail may be the best way to get the email addresses of your existing customers and prospects. Again, offering an incentive always helps stimulate a greater response and is particularly effective when there is a pre-existing relationship. This helps increase the typical response rate of converting postal address recipients to email recipients. Publish a specific website address on your mailing to direct people to a landing page with the list signup form on your site.

6.6.3 Email Content – Text vs. HTML

This is every email marketer's dilemma. More so, due to the fact that there is no clear majority of people preferring one format over the other. Some people will always prefer text to graphics, and some email readers only support basic text. A prominent Internet marketing website recently carried out a survey asking not only which format was preferred but why one format was preferred over another. Over 600 people, mostly marketers and small business operators, responded.

55% favored HTML and 45% preferred text. Given that well over 90% of email readers can view HTML, it is surprising that almost half the people would prefer to receive text. To investigate this point further, the survey gave those who chose text a list of possible

reasons to explain why. On average, people listed about two and a half reasons each. They said:

> ☑ Can't read HTML 6%
>
> ☑ Just want the meat without the distractions 32%
>
> ☑ Like to read offline 15%
>
> ☑ Ads are more intrusive in HTML 22%
>
> ☑ Slow to download 14%
>
> ☑ Other 11%

The most popular reason for choosing plain text over HTML was an interesting one. People were clearly expressing a desire for email layouts that focused on the message, and they often saw HTML emails as containing elements that distract from the content — the content being the reason they signed up for the email in the first place.

11% of the people who selected “Other” as their reason gave their own reasons as:

> ☑ Text takes up less storage space 28%
>
> ☑ Security — fear of viruses 22%
>
> ☑ Easier/faster to read/scan 13%

- ☑ Text is easier to read on a PDA 9%
- ☑ Text is more reliable, formatting/forwarding etc. 7%
- ☑ Easier to save/file/copy text 6%
- ☑ Like to read email in preview pane 4%
- ☑ Text is more personal 4%
- ☑ Fear of tracking/being spied on with HTML 4%
- ☑ Text is more easily searched offline 1%

The fact still remains that readers are almost equally divided on their preference. The best way to get around this is to give your subscribers an option of receiving messages in text or HTML.

One powerful feature of the **Plug-In Profit Site** is a pre-written email marketing campaign that gets delivered to a list of opt-in subscribers in plain text format. This automated email campaign has produced millions in online profits. **Click here** to learn more about it.

6.7 Managing Email campaigns

6.7.1 Personalization in Email Marketing

People respond more favorably to marketing when they feel special and unique. People respond differently to things when they

perceive themselves as part of a group. These are only some of the psychological factors that come into play when using individual message personalization as a part of your email marketing campaigns. When done correctly, personalization can be a powerful way to reinforce the bond between your company and your customer. However, poorly personalized messages can just as quickly sever that connection that you have worked so hard to establish.

The Initial Greeting

The initial greeting has a tremendous impact on whether a recipient will read the rest of a communication. The tone must match the type of communication and the type of relationship that exists between the sender and recipient. For example, "Hi John" is good for an email from a business to consumer, but too casual for a message to a business recipient. A "Dear Mr. Smith" or "Dear John Smith" is more appropriate for a business to business communication in email just as in a business letter.

Providing References

A very strong technique is including a reference to a specific product or service that the recipient has either already purchased, or that they have requested information about. Don't forget to link

directly to the page on the site that corresponds to the product or service you are trying to sell.

Affiliation

When recipients are members of a known group or organization, you can create a positive tie-in. When using this kind of personalization, you must make sure that the relevancy will be obvious for the recipient. This works particularly well for sending partner offers, but again only as long as the offer tightly matches the needs of the target group, and will be perceived as relevant.

The more reliance your email marketing campaign has on your database, the more important that it is to have the correct data. Errors in your data can lead to your mailing showing how poorly you know the recipient, not how well.

Always have default information to substitute in case you are missing data. You can write your copy so that substituting this default text maintains the flow of the narrative. For example, let's say you plan on merging the "Company Name" from your database into your email. Using default text of "your company" works well as in "We know that XYZ Corp. can benefit from our services" or "We know that your company can benefit from our services".

Lastly, always respect the privacy of the recipient and avoid all sensitive information. Anything that might make the recipient uncomfortable such as financial status or health status are best left off limits when it comes to email personalization.

In conclusion, leverage the full power of your database to personalize email content to individual names, histories, likes and dislikes. In the world of direct email marketing, one size does not fit all, so use available tools to make your email as personal and as relevant to each person as possible.

6.7.2 Creative Segmentation

If you look at the overall behavior of all of your website visitors, you'll be inundated with a ton of information. Trying to distinguish and identify patterns among such a large group is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

If you segment or divide your users into logical groups and then compare and contrast how they behave and what they do, you'll have more accurate, actionable information that actually means something.

Segmenting your website visitors allows you to develop a clearer overall picture of your site's performance. If the metric you're trying to measure is how many people buy a particular product, it makes sense

to measure that within the context of how many people interacted with the site in a meaningful way.

Since prospects and customers are always more likely to respond to messages that match their interest sets, it makes sense to chop the database into smaller, segmented slices based on preferences and past behaviors, making email messages as relevant as possible to each group. You may use historical data to apply what you know about the likes and dislikes of your target market segments, and develop your messages and offers to fit.

6.7.3 How Often And When to Mail?

Email marketing is a powerful yet inexpensive way to make contact with customers and prospects. Depending on whom you are trying to touch, there may be certain times of day, or days of the week, when the recipient may be more responsive to your message. In addition to specific timing for your email marketing campaigns, the frequency and the number of times to send can all play a big role in helping to improve your results.

When to Email?

For a mailing to business recipients, sending midday from 11 AM through 3 PM is generally the best time. Sending a message earlier in the day can result in a higher risk of the message getting lost in the

rush to prepare for morning meetings. Send it too late in the day and it may end up quickly deleted before the recipient leaves for their commute home.

On the other hand, when mailing to consumers, 5 PM through 8 PM is the best time. People tend to check their personal email when they get home from work or after dinner. Most consumers are too busy getting ready for work in the morning to read their email.

Like the time of the day, different days of the week can affect your results as well. The best days to contact businesses are weekdays except for Monday and Friday. Monday has proven to have too many meetings to reach decision makers, and on Friday, most people would prefer to leave early before the rush hour than receive your email, no matter how exciting the email and offer may be.

Consumers are more likely to spend more time on the Internet on weekends, and hence have more time to consider your offer. One observation is that since many people tend to check their personal email at various points throughout the day, selecting a specific time to hit your target group while they are online is much more difficult.

Avoid Mailing During Holidays

During the holidays, people tend to be away from their computers and don't check their email regularly. This means they may get your

message when they return together with a ton of other mail that has piled up during the holidays. Chances are all but the most important messages will be deleted in a rush without a second look.

Frequency of the Email

Sending email too often can be annoying, resulting in recipients asking to be removed. Don't send often enough and you may be forgotten when the recipient is finally ready to buy. Generally, once every 2-3 weeks is best. A few exceptions are a daily newspaper or a time-dependant offer like a seminar invitation.

Sending three variations of the same offer to the same recipient is a good way to improve response rates. You should never send the exact same offer more than once. Otherwise you risk the recipient thinking that it's just another copy of the same email and deleting it. If a recipient has not responded by the third attempt, they are not going to respond at all, either because it's the right offer/wrong time, or the wrong offer altogether.

Following-Up

It is important to follow up at least once after an initial offer. Many times it has been observed that a number of recipients will click-through on the first mailing only after receiving a second mailing. You cannot wait too long to send a follow-up message or they may have

forgotten about the original offer. Follow-up contact is recommended 1-2 weeks after the original offer is sent.

6.7.4 Refrain from Spamming

The proliferation of abusive email marketing has dramatically changed the landscape for anyone with an email address. Legitimate marketers now not only have to work harder to obtain a positive response for a campaign, but they also have to avoid a negative response and all this while trying to avoid getting filtered right out of the inbox before recipients even see your message.

Make sure you have permission to communicate with every person on your lists. Many spam emails are now claiming "you signed up for the XYZ list" when in reality there is no existing relationship. If someone has indeed opted-in to your list, make sure they understand when and where this took place. If their relationship is with a third-party that you are partnered with, make sure to spell that out instead. You may be better off with a partner sending on your behalf, so as to avoid any confusion about exactly why the recipient is being emailed.

Once you've crossed the line with a recipient by spamming, there is usually no going back. The same ability of email marketing to directly reach recipients, can inadvertently offend them. Like the difference between using a chainsaw to cut up a fallen tree versus

accidentally severing your own limb, email marketing requires both care and knowledge to use correctly. Make sure you stay on the correct side of the line, and you can put that power to work and start improving your bottom line results.

Avoid Looking Like Spam

These days, many people's email inboxes are protected by some sort of spam filter. The purpose of the filter is to block spam email from arriving in the user's inbox. One of the methods used by spam filters is to identify certain words, known as "spam triggers", found within your message. If your email contains too many spam triggers, it will automatically get deleted before reaching your subscriber's inbox.

Here's a few frequently used spam trigger words: money back, order today, cards accepted, order now, extra income, money-back guarantee, for free, 100% satisfied, special promotion, check or money order. To avoid having your message automatically blocked, check your message content first BEFORE sending it out with the free analyzer tool found here: **www.onautopilot.com/email-analyzer**

6.8 Analysis of Email Campaigns

6.8.1 Tracking Performance - Measuring Useful Metrics

Tracking and analyzing the actions of your customers and prospects is critical to your success. After deploying several campaigns, you will have generated a mountain of response information that reveals invaluable data enabling you to create new and more effective approaches and offers. There are many software tools easily available that track, record and analyze all data pertaining to your email marketing campaign. Many sophisticated analysis tools predict future actions based on past behavior. Such tools are crucial for your campaign as response data is meaningless unless it can be analyzed and turned into valuable customer knowledge.

Once you have the capability to track the vital statistics of your email marketing campaigns, the inevitable question becomes: how well are my mailings doing? Here are some guidelines on what information to gather and how to measure the performance of your campaign from the gathered information.

There are a number of different pieces of information that can be gathered when using any reasonably good email broadcasting service. The five primary measurements are: the totals each of messages sent, message opens, click-throughs, bounces, and opt-out requests.

Total number of items sent must be accurately counted, based on reaching each individual email address only once. Opens measure the number of people who actually view the message using their email program.

I prefer to use “unique” opens, so that if a recipient views a message in their preview window, then opens it into a full size window, that this only counts as a single open instead of two opens. Click-throughs are recipients that respond to your offer by clicking on a link in the email. Bounces are messages that are undeliverable to the recipient. They could be “soft bounces” due to temporary issues such as a full mailbox or “hard bounces” from an invalid email account, but for our purposes here it means “people on your list who did not receive your message”. And last, opt-out requests are recipients who request to no longer receive email.

There are a wide range of results that can be measured for email campaigns, such as:

> ☑ How accurate is the list (how many bounces out of total sent)
>
> ☑ How active is the list (how many opens out of total sent)

- ☑ How positive was the reaction to the offer itself (number of click-throughs out of total opens)
- ☑ How negative was the reaction to the offer itself (number of opt-outs out of total opens)

The actual number of responses on any particular campaign can vary quite a bit. A newsletter whose primary job is to inform will not achieve the same click-through rate as a promotion, which is intended to get a specific response. The differing levels of permission within your list of recipients will also affect results. Until a list has been "cleaned" of bad addresses and those who are not interested, you may see far different data. Pruning these from your lists will help you improve your results considerably.

In order to account for these wide variations in factors, I suggest some general "baseline" ratios that should be achieved on any particular mailing. There should be more opens than bounces, or else the list is probably out of date. Also, there should be more click-throughs than opt-outs, otherwise the offer is poorly targeted or the list is of questionable origin.

In order to get the optimum response you will need to send two or three multiples of your email marketing campaign, each time using

a variation of the original offer. If they haven't responded by 3 attempts, it's time to change your approach.

The typical response pattern is that mailings 1 and 2 will have a similar response, with number 2 often having slightly fewer click-throughs than number 1. Number 3 picks up the stragglers and undecided recipients, so the response will be much lower, but usually significant enough to justify the mailing. Please note that you shouldn't necessarily just blast out three mailings one after another. For example, you might piggyback your first offer onto a monthly newsletter, send the second offer separately as a special promotional mailing two weeks later, then finish the series with the final offer in the next month's newsletter.

It is useful to understand how the size of your lists is changing over time. By viewing how many people sign up for your lists each day, you can attempt to correlate list growth with other marketing activities that you may be conducting. It is also important to consider how many people are signing up for your lists versus how many are opting out of them. If your lists have been cleaned, and the overall list size is still shrinking, you need to reevaluate both your list acquisition strategy and the content relevancy of your mailings. Testing is critical to optimizing your email marketing campaigns. But in

order to test, you have to measure first. Make sure you have a way to collect detailed information about your mailings, preferably in an automatic way. Careful analysis of the actual metrics will give you the information you need to take your email campaigns to the next level.

6.8.2 Enhancing Email Response

The process of email marketing may not always bear the kind of results that you expect. In fact, even after doing all the basics right the response rates may fall way short of expectations. The good news is that email responses can be enhanced with a little bit of analysis and research.

We've discussed the importance of gathering statistical data during email campaigns. With this information now available and a few creative segmentation strategies, email response can be improved a great deal. Your emails may reach three sets of readers:

- ☑ Those who deleted the email without even opening it
- ☑ Those who opened the email but did not read it or click on the offer made
- ☑ Those who read the email, clicked on the link provided but did not accept your offer

The set which represents readers who never opened your email is probably the biggest. In fact, it's possible that at least 50% of readers discarded your email as junk. To boost response rates of such readers, you should segment these as a group and change the subject line of the email or the sender's name and address. Chances are good that you'll find some of the changes work better than others, and that some of the non-openers to the first message have opened up the new message based on a single and possibly simple change.

Perhaps this change lies in a new appeal in the subject line, or perhaps it's due to the message coming from a living person instead of an impersonal company. Record and save those variables and continue to test and fine-tune them with each subsequent campaign.

The next segment is comprised of readers who read the email but were not interested enough to click on the offer and land on your website. This segment may be pretty big as well. It is very likely that most of these readers may have read a couple of lines at the beginning of the mail and deleted it. The best possible remedy in such cases is to analyze that section of your promotion. Does it say enough to make people want to read further? If not, reformatting and/or reworking the introductory copy and headline may be all it takes to increase your clicks.

Finally, we have the last segment comprised of readers who actually read the email and were interested enough to click through and reach your website. However, once they got there, their interest faded and they chose not to follow through with the transaction. This segment of people will normally be much smaller when compared with the above two segments.

In such cases it's best to take a hard, objective look at the landing page. Something is clearly missing or is not being communicated effectively. Does the offer remain clear? Is the form too cumbersome or too long? Can you revise the form, and perhaps also revise some of the required form fields within it, for purposes of having these potential customers complete their first transaction?

Sometimes it may pay to instill a little humor in your email. There have been many instances when potential clients were so moved by a humorous gesture in the email so they immediately decided to do some business with the marketer. Make some assumptions and apply them to your next campaign. It's all about getting potential customers to **feel good** about you and what you have to offer.

Considerable time and effort may be required to improve the email responses you get. That said, the fruits such a process can bear over a period of time can be well worth it.

6.8.3 Should the message trick the reader or be honest?

Often, companies try to trick people into opening an email to start a relationship with a prospective customer. From the customer's point of view, this is certainly not the most brilliant idea. Almost all potential customers would prefer not to do business with someone who deceives them, no matter how good a product or service they offer.

As a marketer you must approach your direct mail and email marketing messages with the attitude that this may be the one and only opportunity to start a relationship with a new customer. Considering this, the tips below will be helpful:

> ☑ Messages should be honest and reflect the company's credibility - Take the high road with your ads. Tell people who you really are and what you really do.
>
> ☑ Be clear and concise with the offer - Don't make it difficult for the reader of your message to figure out what you are promoting.
>
> ☑ Test your message - Try your message out and ask for feedback. This is a good way to assure that you are not misleading your prospect.

☑ Know your audience - The shotgun approach to marketing does not work with direct mail or email. Sending your message to the wrong audience is a wasteful way to spend your advertising dollars.

Remember your message is a reflection of your brand, product or service and employees. Make sure your message is something you can stand behind with pride no matter how it is delivered.

6.9 Autoresponders

Automation of your email marketing process is crucial for the success of your business. An automated system enables you to reply immediately to requested information, send automatic follow-ups to your prospects, and save tons of time. Automation can be achieved with a tool known as an autoresponder.

The autoresponder (Auto Responder) is a program that automatically sends an email reply with a pre-written response to any person with an email address that requests it. Anytime that you've visited a website and signed up for an online newsletter and found a

reply waiting for you in your email inbox almost instantly, you've been automatically added to someone's autoresponder campaign.

Advantages of Using an Autoresponder

An autoresponder allows you to capture the email addresses of your website visitors so that you can build your own opt-in targeted mailing list and follow up with your subscribers automatically. This is the tool most commonly used for sending an email newsletter.

The autoresponder will automatically extract the prospect's name and use this information in your follow-up messages. With an autoresponder, you can send personalized follow-up messages addressing each subscriber directly by their own name. If you personalize an email message with a subscriber's name, this prospect is much more likely to buy from you.

You can sell your products 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with the help of an autoresponder. An autoresponder is also a handy tool that automatically follows up with a series of email messages at preset time intervals and works for you 24 hours a day. You will be able to develop your follow-up messages and set reliable time intervals. For example, you could write a series of 7 messages that you want delivered to new subscribers and set each of those messages to be delivered to new subscribers every third day. So, when someone initially subscribes at

your website, that person will receive one follow-up message instantly and 6 more messages over the next 18 days. All of this is accomplished without any additional effort from you, other than the **one-time setup** of the messages in your autoresponder.

Following up with your prospects could easily translate to a 100% increase in your sales or more. Your potential customers may simply forget about your initial message or they simply may have a bad day which is why it's so important follow-up with your prospects at preset time intervals at least five times after sending your initial message.

Autoresponders are great for sales letters. Suppose you posted to a couple of forums and newsgroups — you could offer a free report about your industry. You then post the email address of your autoresponder instead of the website and within seconds the forum user could be reading your free report via your autoresponder follow-up and your autoresponder messages could direct them to your sales letter for a related product. It's 100% automatic. With your autoresponder, you can even set up predefined answers to the most likely questions. This can cut up to 80% of your normal customer service requirements.

Given below are some of the other key benefits of autoresponders:

- ☑ They introduce your business to the prospective customer
- ☑ List out special offers for members
- ☑ List out benefits of joining your website
- ☑ Compare your product or service with your competitors
- ☑ Give testimonials of existing customers
- ☑ Welcome letters for new members
- ☑ Thank you messages for new orders
- ☑ Order confirmation
- ☑ Acknowledgement of a query or a receipt of payment from your customer
- ☑ A reminder when their subscription or free access period is about to expire

Choosing and Setting up Autoresponders

It can be simple to set up and use an autoresponder, but choosing which one from the dozens of autoresponders that are available can be difficult. Most web hosts offer a simple autoresponder that gives one email message in response to an email to a specific email address. The problem with this type of responder is that one message is often

not enough to keep the continued contact or deliver the content that you want to offer your visitor.

There are two main types of autoresponders. They each have their pros and cons.

Autoresponder Services

Autoresponder services are web based services that allow you to send a series of emails to a visitor who has either requested the email through a web-based form on you site (the service provides the html code for your site to use) or who has sent an email to a specific address the service has provided you to use.

The primary advantage of such services is that they are very easy to set up, and are very reliable. In addition, they are host independent. This means that your web host doesn't have to allow you to run any particular services on your site to have access to all the features that an email autoresponder can provide.

GetResponse.com works perfectly well for most people. It has all the features you could ever need, and the price is very reasonable.

Autoresponder Programs (or Scripts)

The other choice for an autoresponder is to purchase (or lease) a program or a script (usually written in perl, requiring CGI access on your server.) Several of these are available.

These types of autoresponders allow, potentially at least, for increased flexibility. Some are quite powerful in their own right, while perl scripts can generally be modified to suit your needs for a fee. A good example of a script-based autoresponder that you can install on your site and never pay monthly fees to use is Autoresponse Plus at **AutoresponsePlus.com**

Autoresponse Plus offers the advantages of a system you can own along with all of the flexibility. It is available at a very reasonable price and most of the complexity often associated with such programs can be almost completely eliminated because professional installation is available for a small fee.

If you don't want to deal with the headaches of setting up your own profit-pulling autoresponder campaign, I've developed a service that **sets up an autoresponder for you**, loads it with a 400 day pre-written email marketing campaign, builds that autoresponder into your own website and provides step-by-step instructions on how to build your opt-in list and make money online. To learn more about how my service can save you time and make you money, **click here now**.

6.10 Call to Action — Closing the Deal

At the end of the day, everything you do online is geared towards one thing: driving your users to take an action that will result in you

making money. That might be buying something from you, subscribing to a newsletter, clicking an affiliate link, etc.

When you begin preparing your email copy, you have to know exactly what you want the user to do as soon as he finishes reading. You can have the most amazing headline and the greatest product described in the finest email ever written, but if the reader doesn't know what to do at the end of the email, you've wasted your time.

You've got to get them to take action.

There are a number of points to bear in mind when you're trying to turn your reader into a customer.

Stand Out

You want to be sure that your reader doesn't miss your call to action. It's got to absolutely stand out from the rest of the page. You can do that by playing with font color, font size, underline, bold etc., but make sure it's easily noticed so that it can be acted upon!

Be Clear

Orders rarely come in the form of long sentences. In general, marketing material should take the form of short paragraphs, punchy phrases, and bulleted points that spell out the benefits as clearly and

quickly as possible. Potential customers tend to scan rather than read. The easier you make it for them, the more likely they'll buy from you.

Compel

The words you use to persuade someone to take action are crucial. You want your call to action to include real action-packed verbs that are simple to obey. Use phrases like "Click here", for example, or "Press Submit". The more precise the verb, the easier it will be for the reader to take the action you intend.

Play it Straight

Once you've got them doing what you want, you don't want to waste time. If you've told them to click on a link so that they can fill in an order form, make sure that the link leads right to the form. Don't give them a chance to change their mind. Even the best call to action copy only works for a short time.

Create a Sense of Urgency

Many people like to put off making a decision as long as possible, especially if that decision means spending money. The fact is though, if they don't take action as soon as they finish reading the email, they probably won't take action at all.

You have to create a real sense of urgency, an idea that if they don't buy, click, order, whatever... *right now*, they're going to lose the opportunity of a lifetime. This isn't too difficult to do. Here are some options:

Offer a time limited prize: "Order now and receive a FREE copy of 'Build Your Own Bicycle!'"

Offer a quantity-limited prize: "The first 50 people to register will be entered into our FREE prize drawing!"

Create a penalty for not acting immediately: "Every day that you don't use the amazing ideas in this book, you're throwing away thousands of dollars! Download your copy and start earning now!"

Bear in mind that the kind of action you want people to take will depend on the kind of product you're selling and the type of person you're pitching to. If you're trying to sell cars online for example, "Place your order here" isn't likely to get many results. People don't usually like to buy cars so quickly. You might want to say something like: "Click here for a picture of the interior" or something that's less committal than inviting them to part with lots of cash. Similarly, if your marketing material doesn't contain all the information necessary for someone to buy, your call to action will only be to invite them to find out more.

Below, I've put all of these suggestions together in a sample marketing email. I've also added my notes to explain how I built it up. Feel free to use this email as template for your own.

6.11 Sample Marketing Email

Subject: Discover How To Make Your Visitors Pay You!

(The subject line is unique to emails. It's like a mini-headline, but it's got to stay short.)

Want Your Users To Give You More Money?

Give Them More Value!

(There's the headline. I've used a Question Headline here. I've stated the problem and followed with the solution.)

Dear Friend,

As the webmaster of a dating site, you know how important it is to keep your users coming back day after day, week after week. You know that the more your prospects see your site, the more likely they are to buy a subscription – and the more they'll keep sending you cash!

(The first paragraph explains what the email is all about: making money.)

And you also know that the only way to keep those users logging in is to renew your content on a regular basis.

GoDating.com is now making its dating magazine available to the webmasters of dating sites. **GoDatingMagazine** will give your users:

(And here I explain how to do it: by adding value. Note the link so that they can see what I'm offering. GoDating.com and GoDatingMagazine are fictitious and simply created for the purpose of this example.)

- **Amazing, insightful articles** on subjects ranging from matchmakers and soul mates to swingers and foreign brides.
- **Real, practical dating advice** for both online dating and face-to-face relationships.
- **Exclusive interviews** with dating experts, authors and celebrities.
- **Fun, interactive Love Quizzes** to help your visitors discover their real selves!
- Heartwarming relationship news from around the world.
- Exciting, fresh content, *week in, week out!*

(Bullets and bold make the benefits stand out.)

GotoDatingMagazine is updated every week with new articles, news stories and an interactive advice column.

That's 20 original relationship articles every single month! You can provide your users with all this fantastic dating content for just $99.95 a month.

If you were to hire writers to produce this content yourself it would cost you hundreds — if not thousands — of dollars. For the price of just a few monthly subscriptions, you can give all your users this incredible extra value increasing your customer retention and profits.

(More details. As soon as I tell them it's going to cost money, I explain why it's great value.)

To learn more about what we can do for your users — and your income — contact me TODAY at: andrew@godating.com.

(And there's a simple call to action.)

We look forward to working with you!
Sincerely,
Andrew Hudson,
Editor,
GoDating.com

In **conclusion**, from the advent of the Sears catalog in the late 19th century to tons of catalogs arriving in every mailbox today, Email marketing has proved to be a superior way to quickly and cost-effectively create a personal connection with customers, and garner immediate sales results. It also lends itself to greater measurability and testing in order to optimize results. Email marketing can be easily coupled with other marketing techniques to further improve end results. One such technique, which is an integral part of email

marketing, is marketing through newsletters. Newsletters are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

You can get **your own email marketing newsletter** setup to start making money online within 24 hours using **this service**.

7. Creating Newsletters That Sell As Well As Inform

Running your own free newsletter or ezine can bring huge benefits to your website. Newsletters are one of the most important components for you to drive traffic to your website and build your online business.

The popularity of online newsletters is based on the need for information. The main reason people are online is because they want and need information and that is exactly what newsletters provide. Newsletters are mostly delivered via email, some however are delivered as HTML pages or blogs. Newsletters which are delivered as HTML or blogs pages still utilize email, as the publisher will often email subscribers notifying them that a new issue or update is ready.

There are many advantages of starting your own newsletter, however newsletters do require a bit of work to get started and maintain so they may not be for everyone.

The two main advantages are:

- ☑ Being able to maintain regular contact, and
- ☑ Being able to build a relationship with your subscribers

Newsletters allow you to maintain regular contact with your website visitors. This is vital to success because rarely do people buy on their first visit. In fact, people usually have to be exposed to an offer 7 to 10 times before they actually buy. A newsletter allows you to keep the connection with your site visitors, reminding them of how your product is suited for them.

Newsletters give you the "excuse" to send potential customers emails packed with articles and, of course, your sales message. Newsletters are great for building trust and relationships online. If your newsletter provides consistent quality content your subscribers can really use, they will start to trust your opinion and begin to feel that they know you. This is important, as developing relationships is vital for every business.

The other often overlooked advantage of having a newsletter is the income it can generate, not from selling your products and services, but from selling advertising space in it. You do need a medium-to-large subscriber base before other businesses will be interested in advertising, but this is not that hard to achieve, especially if your newsletter is regularly full of quality content. You can earn a few hundred bucks extra every month just from advertising if you play your cards right.

Many of your subscribers will eventually become your customers if they trust the information you regularly send them. Put simply, a newsletter is a way to build trust with your subscribers by providing value. If you help people online, eventually they will buy from you.

However, running your own newsletter involves a considerable amount of work. It is vital that you regularly write or acquire quality content before your next newsletter mail-out. Ideally, a newsletter should be sent out every week or two. This is not always easy. In fact it's never easy; the next thing that adds to your work load when it comes to newsletters is maintaining your email addresses. Many of the email addresses may be wrong because some people subscribe with an invalid address or people change their email addresses. Maintaining a list of working email addresses is crucial.

7.1 Advantages of Newsletters as a Marketing Tool

Just as in the old days, trust builds relationships, and relationships build sales. Used properly, newsletters can help build business relationships based on trust. And the key word is **trust**. Trustworthiness in content, subject lines, mailing lists, regularity, and ability for your readers to quickly subscribe and unsubscribe are all critical to your success. Given below are some of the key advantages of newsletters:

Newsletters Demonstrate Value

Newsletters deliver valuable information that solves the day-to-day problems of readers, helps them stay on top of industry trends, and saves time by distilling practical information such as real world best practices and industry advances from many sources.

They help in building trust.

As stated earlier, the most crucial benefit arising out of newsletters is building trust. Newsletters can very easily become customers' trusted information source on business problems. Trust helps you to position your company as a credible source, which in turn retains your customer base.

Online business owners can portray themselves as a reliable source of information.

Newsletters deliver accurate and timely information that is vital to the success of your customers and visitors' business at regular intervals over time.

Newsletters serve as an attention getter.

Valuable and relevant information can always prove to be a great attention getter. Most people dread junk emails. However, once you build a sense of trust amongst your potential customers, you can reinforce your value to your visitors with each newsletter issue.

Newsletters offer better prospects for closing a sale.

Not only do newsletters make it easy for potential customers to contact you, they also let you harvest the relationship built around them and simplify sales for your sales team. Sales teams dream about knowing their prospect's hot buttons prior to making that first call.

7.2 Creating an Effective Newsletter

Creating a successful newsletter can be extremely rewarding. Subscribers and customers respond with glowing feedback, online sales jump and your customer relationships and brand loyalty strengthens. Here are some useful tips that will you create a successful newsletter:

Define Success

Ask yourself, "What is the purpose of my newsletter?" A newsletter is a substantial investment of company resources in terms of time and energy, and you need to define in as tangible terms as possible the purpose of your newsletter.

Voice and Personality

Establish a voice or editorial personality – whether newsy, serious, gossipy or funny – that is synergistic with the image you want to portray and connects with your audience. Remember that email newsletters aren't email promotions designed to stimulate immediate

action. Sales and promotional copy don't suit e-newsletters. Nor does the traditional tone of broadcast corporate communications.

Think of your newsletter as a one-on-one conversation. Just imagine sitting in a coffee shop talking informally with a customer. That's the starting point for your approach--a more personable and appropriate "human" voice will come naturally. Drop the jargon, drop the sales pitch, be as honest as you can, and talk like a human being.

You can have as much or as little personality as is appropriate. Consider including a brief editorial, a comment or two, an editor's note, a couple of lines of commentary, a touch of opinion; add a little human element here and there. Sign editorials, give authors a byline, or list some names down in the administrative section of each issue to which your readers can relate to.

“From” Line

Whether a person’s name, name of the newsletter or company name – decide what resonates best with your readers and stick with it.

“Subject” Line

“Vol. 1, Issue #8” or “Company News” are not enticing subject lines. They are certainly consistent and simple, but they don’t tell your

readers anything that will motivate them to open your email. Your subject line is your calling card - entice your readers with the most interesting or intriguing information in your newsletter.

Style / Format

Establish a format and layout of your newsletter's various elements (table of contents, article, sponsor ad, "Tips", subscription information, etc.) that is clean, simple and consistent with each issue.

Content

Figure out what your readers want and give it to them. Seek continuous improvement by obtaining reader feedback and monitoring click-through rates to determine what types of articles are most popular.

Another dilemma that we all confront is too much information and too little time. The newsletter's job is to keep readers on top of trends and the latest developments in the industry. Aim for articles and feature stories to meet one of the following criteria by including either: major industry occurrences, forward-thinking industry ideas, education on issues or new techniques, or business opportunities.

Whether your customers work out of a corporate or home office, employees need answers to questions and tips for improving business activities. E-newsletters provide you with an opportunity to point out

work inefficiencies, and share relevant best practice. When you create a newsletter, try changing your focus from selling products and services to solving your customers' problems. Think about what they need and give options they don't know exist.

Frequency

Determine how frequently your readers want to hear from you and what you can commit to. As a rule of thumb, a weekly newsletter is ideal. However, don't launch a weekly newsletter if you are not absolutely certain that you can distribute a **quality** newsletter every week. A bi-weekly newsletter is a good option too.

Timing

Test and pick a day and time that works best and **stick to it**. Readers should almost be able to set their watches by the receipt time of your newsletter.

Make it Viral

Provide information to readers that inspires them to forward that information to friends and peers, which in turn stimulates purchases or requests for additional information. Make it easy for readers to forward articles and information to their circle of influence such as providing a

"Forward to a Friend" link that enables readers to forward your newsletter with a personalized note.

Search

Make it easy to find articles of interest and back issues. Provide a table of contents and links to articles within the newsletter and to resources and past articles on your site.

Printing

Consider providing "printer-friendly formats" on your website.

Personalize

At minimum, address your reader by name. The most successful newsletters have a human being associated with them — and a personality. If possible, your newsletter should be written by a **person** at your company, not the company.

Write in Layman Terms with Simple Vocabulary

Not everyone has the vocabulary that you and editors do. Use words that are easy to understand, and if you do use technical terms, provide a definition that people can relate to. There is nothing more frustrating then a definition that makes less sense than the word itself.

Test

Test your newsletter on a few personal email addresses to check for errors and other issues before sending to the entire distribution list.

If you lack experience in print media, seek out assistance if you know someone in the field. If not, don't worry. The above-mentioned principles apply. Plan to research your material thoroughly and avoid factual or editing errors, as they will make you seem less credible.

Add hyperlinks and include updates on old material should new information surface. The typical form of newsletter is a one-way communication where you provide information to customers, such as product updates and announcements. You have the option of formatting your email by including colorized text and a variety of fonts, but not all email software supports HTML mail. Consider writing your newsletter in plain text or offer two mailing lists — one for plain text mailings and the other for HTML email.

Make sure you Include:

- ☑ Table of Contents
- ☑ Hyperlinks for customers who want more information for a featured topic

☑ Exciting secrets or tips related to your product or service

☑ Contact information

E-newsletters can take up a good amount of time if not managed correctly. The use of an autoresponder is a good option. It will automatically manage a list of email addresses and other important subscriber information that you've collected. Once your newsletter is ready, you can send it out to your entire mailing list (or sub-sections of your list) with one single click through your autoresponder, and each message will be personalized to each individual subscriber.

7.3 Steps for a Successful Newsletter Campaign

Marketing your business with newsletters is probably one of the most effective online marketing strategies. However, the whole process of devising and implementing a newsletter campaign involves a considerable amount of planning. Given below are a few guidelines that will help you make your campaign a success:

☑ Step 1: Determine what you can sell online, or how to monetize your site.

☑ Step 2: People use the Internet for information. Try to figure out what information is unique to your business?

Everybody is an expert in his or her chosen field. This information is valuable to others.

☑ Step 3: Identify your target audience. Define your audience, and then find out where they are going online for information. E.g. which sites, newsgroups and discussions boards are the most popular. This technique alone will greatly build your traffic as well as your name. You'd be amazed at how many businesses still define their audience as "all people" or "EVERYONE needs my product". This is absolutely not true! Contrary to popular business myth, the Internet is not a mainstream medium. Communities are usually quite passionate about their interests. Find your community and become an authority to them.

☑ Step 4: Create content. By providing quality content, you can build a successful business online. Content works in becoming your company's USP (Unique Selling Proposition). The quality of the content you provide will mean the difference between your site being a significant online business or just a "brochure site".

☑ Step 5: Create and maintain your mailing list.

☑ Step 6: Produce your newsletter. Email newsletters are great because you can include “hot links” that will open a web page. Make sure you include the **http://** because this is what most email software requires in order to understand text to be a live Internet address, make it clickable, and open the page in an Internet browser.

☑ Step 7: Make sure you have autoresponders in place to field often-asked questions, and to subscribe and unsubscribe your recipients automatically. You will always lose a few but don’t take it personally. Make it easy for people to unsubscribe from your mailing list.

☑ Step 8: Never SPAM. Spamming is the practice of sending information to people who didn’t actually ask for it. It has been an accepted practice in the offline direct marketing world but not online. Don’t even try it. You could find yourself switched off by your internet service provider or having other serious actions taken against you. Review the Federal Trade Commission website for more details at: www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/buspubs/canspam.htm

7.4 Getting Subscribers for Your Newsletter

There are many different ways of getting subscribers to your newsletter. Obviously, the first place you should start is on your website, as doing this can get you an immediate flow of subscribers. You should advertise your newsletter and place a sign-up box on every page of your site**.** Always use the sign-up box instead of a simple email link when you can because the results will be much better. The top of the page is the best place for your sign-up box as it gets more exposure, but if you don't have room at the top, use the bottom. Always include a privacy statement telling people exactly how you are going to use their email address and how you will keep it private. With all the talk about spam nowadays, this will reassure them, which in turn will increase the number of new subscribers you acquire.

Offer an incentive to your visitors. You should, whenever possible, offer them a free gift if they subscribe, such as a free report or ebook. There a hundreds of free ebooks which you can give away. You are bound to increase your sign-ups by doing this, provided you offer them something related to your site's theme. In fact…

If your website is related to the content of this ebook, you can give away this PDF file, "*Dotcomology* – The Science of Making Money Online" to all your subscribers as a free gift.

Next, you should submit your newsletter to all the newsletter directories you can find. There a plenty of them on the net and some of them get a lot of traffic every month. If your articles are good quality and informative, newsletter and website publishers will be interested and your work could get published in hundreds of different newsletters and websites. Not only will this increase your credibility, it could result in thousands more visitors to your site. This is because at the end of all your articles which you allow others to publish will be an "About the Author" section and a link back to your website. Also, if lots of your articles are published on other websites then your link popularity will improve dramatically. This will result in higher search engine rankings in Google and the other engines that use link popularity as a ranking factor, which or course means lots more visitors and profit for you.

Include details of your newsletter in your signature file. This is the little bit of text that you attach to every email you send to people you are in contact with. In fact, your email signature file will also be included with any email discussion group correspondence you have. Email discussion groups like those provided through **Topica.com** offer a great way to communicate with people who have similar interests as the topic of your newsletter. Contribute to the discussion by posting useful information and solutions to problems. You can also mention

"We have put together more in-depth advice on xxx. Feel free to visit our website. You'll find loads of free information and resources."

This technique alone will drive much more traffic into your site. It also begins to establish you, the author, as an authority in your field. Once your online customers come to trust your information, they will also trust your recommendations for products/services you endorse.

Similar mediums to email discussion lists are newsgroups and online discussion forums. Remember that you cannot advertise your newsletter directly in any of these mediums, but listing your website in your signature is perfectly OK (in most cases). The amount of subscribers you get through your forum signature file will depend on the quality of your post. If you post interesting and useful information, people will think that your newsletter/website will also be helpful.

Apart from these, ad swaps are a very effective way to gain subscribers. You should find other publishers with newsletters similar to yours and trade ads with them. You run their ad and they will run yours. This helps both parties. You should swap ads with publishers who have a comparable list size to your own. Another method of swapping would be to have the other webmaster recommend your newsletter in the confirmation email he or she sends to people who have just subscribed, and you in turn could do the same for them.

7.5 Advertising in Newsletters

We discussed earlier the advantages of having advertising space in your newsletters. Similarly, advertising in other company's newsletters is equally beneficial. By advertising in other newsletters, you can reach an audience which is highly targeted and cost effective. There are so many newsletters out there covering so many different topics that it's easy to find highly targeted ones to advertise in. If you've matched the audience of the newsletter to the product you're selling, you will successfully reach your target market.

Almost all newsletters are archived online, and thousands of people read these archives, allowing your ad to be seen by these people at no extra cost. This can bring in exposure and extra sales on a long term basis. In addition, newsletter publishers may have already developed a trust between themselves and their readers. Just by placing your ad in their newsletter, it's more likely to be read because it appears in a publication they like and trust.

Newsletter advertising is not only effective, it's cheap as well. A five-line ad in a newsletter that goes to 3000 people might cost you between $5 - $25 per issue. With so little risk involved, it's usually worth the investment.

Buying Ads in Other Newsletters

Just as you can sell advertising, you can also buy advertising in newsletters. You can use those ads to promote your business or to invite people who read newsletters to start reading your newsletter.

Again, you have to pick your partners carefully. There's no point just picking a newsletter with the cheapest rates; you want to make sure you choose an outlet that appeals to the same buyers as you. You also need to think about where your ad is going to be placed. In general, the higher the position the better.

And the more the merrier too. Don't expect a huge response from a single ad. It's always best to think of advertising in terms of a campaign. You'll get a better deal — and better results — if you reserve an advertising slot for 4-5 issues than if you buy them one at a time.

7.6 Promoting Affiliate Programs through Newsletters

As many webmasters are now discovering, making money with affiliate programs can be hard work. It is not as simple as uploading some banners then sitting back and collecting commission checks. A more effective way to distribute this content is through newsletters. As a more creative approach, web-savvy marketers are finding that

creating a “niche specific” email newsletter is one of the most effective ways to boost profits with affiliate programs. For example, a website about pets could offer a free newsletter about caring for a pet. The newsletter could include informative articles such as “How to exercise with your dog” and “10 tips on keeping your fishbowl clean”, etc. Pet products such as a dog leash, bowl, and toys should then be included with an affiliate link to encourage a purchase.

One of the main reasons why newsletters are a great way to promote affiliate programs is because of the click-through rates. Click-through rates for a targeted newsletter can reach anywhere from 10 to 15%. This can be significantly higher than banners and buttons. Obviously, if you receive more click-throughs you will have a better chance of success.

Moreover, promoting affiliate programs through email allows for the removal of some of those slow-loading banners from a website. Instead, websites can be filled with much stickier content such as interactive bulletin boards, articles, chat rooms, voting booths, etc.

Common sense dictates that featured affiliate products should be related to a newsletter’s target market. If a newsletter is geared towards senior citizens, this market is probably not interested in the latest skateboard gear. Instead, a better fit might be to feature an

online greeting card service that pays a commission for each free registration.

Remember, a newsletter should always be opt-in. A subscriber must request to be on the list and be given instructions on how to unsubscribe. Benefits of an opt-in newsletter include: higher response rates, fewer undeliverable emails, and time saved on list management. Never send commercial email to people who have not requested it.

7.7 Blogs

A blog (also known as weblog) is a place to collect and share things that you find interesting. It could be your political commentary, a personal diary, or links to websites you want to remember or tell others about. Actually, it can be about anything at all.

A blog is often a kind of hybrid diary/guide website, although there are as many unique types of blogs as there are people. Blogs can be used to introduce products to potential customers.

Truth is, people published blogs long before the term was coined, but the trend gained momentum with the introduction of automated publishing systems, most notably Google's Blogger at **Blogger.com**. Millions of people ranging from business executives to teenagers at

home sharing their personal thoughts online use services such as Blogger to simplify and accelerate the online publishing process.

Blogs as a Marketing Tool

Blogs offer huge marketing potential. They are highly strategic tools that can strengthen relationships, share knowledge, increase collaboration, and improve branding. Blogs give site owners a chance to interact with their visitors on a more regular and personal basis.

A blog can take the form of a diary, a news service (or summaries of and links to current news items on a topic), a collection of links to other websites, a series of book reviews or products, reports of activity on a project, the journal of an expedition, and much more. In fact, businesses can even use blogs to advertise their products or services.

One of the most interesting ways to use a blog is by allowing it to function as a discussion forum for customers of your products or services. In this case, the webmaster can give posting rights to other people – visitors and customers, and their posts may or may not be reviewed before they are published to the web page. Customers can then post favorable comments about the website's offerings. Some blogs are set up in such a way that only the owner has posting rights, but in most cases anyone can add comments to blog posts.

Blogs combined with newsletters offer huge marketing potential. For example, articles within newsletters can be linked to a blog which dramatically extends the article's shelf life. Once the article is posted online, it becomes a searchable document available to be located through search engines and other means of online syndication.

How to Create a Blog

Most blogs are now created using software or services designed specifically for this purpose. Some of the software is free - and some of the organizations that provide blog software will also provide free server space to house a blog so that it is publicly accessible on the Internet. There are also commercial versions of some of the free software; these commercial versions often provide more features. Some blog software is available only as commercial software. Alternatively, bloggers can create and maintain their blog using free software or a free weblog service, but use FTP (File Transfer Protocol) to load the resulting blog to their own hosted website.

There are many blogging softwares available online. One of the most popular blog-generating technology is Google's Blogger which you can start using instantly and at no cost at **Blogger.com**. Blogger is probably the easiest and most widely used blogging software on the market today. You can be publishing your own blog within 5 minutes

using Blogger. However, if you want your blog hosted on your own remotely hosted domain, you will need some basic knowledge of FTP.

Adapting Blog Concepts to Your Newsletters

As mentioned before, blogs combine very well with newsletter marketing strategies. Keep in mind, however, that a blog is not intended to replace your newsletter. Its purpose is to extend and complement your newsletter marketing strategy, serving customers and prospects in a way that extends your reach even further.

Another potential for blogs is that they can serve the purpose of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) resource site. Blogs can be automatically archived by age in days, weeks, or months. And they're searchable, allowing readers to easily retrieve the information they need, when they need it.

Creating an effective blog requires careful planning. Blogs should present as much information as possible while representing the voice of your website. Here are a few guidelines on how to plan and create a blog to go along with your newsletter.

Like all good communication vehicles, you want to establish goals and objectives. Define your audience, what its needs are, and how best to meet those needs.

Find someone who can step into the role of pundit, who's willing to be the host. Keep in mind that over time, your blog will develop a personality. Look for a potential leader who's waiting to be unleashed and empowered. In fact, you could be the right person for the job.

Search carefully for the right software to publish your Blog. Research the search engines by looking up “blogs”, “create a blog” and “blog software” to find a blogging tool that fits your needs.

Before you officially launch your blog, plan topics that you will discuss. Keep in mind that you'll want to include an easy way for readers to respond to the content on your blog. Most blogging software such as Blogger have this feature already built-in to your blog with an easy ON/OFF switch to allow or not allow reader interaction.

Use your newsletter to announce and promote the blog. Offer to email it to subscribers or provide the option, through an icon or link, to visit the blog directly.

You'll want to periodically check in on reader responses and see if you are getting the kind of feedback and response you intend. If not, as with any marketing strategy, you may need to refine your approach, depending on the feedback and analysis you receive.

NOTE: Become a Plug-In Profit Site member and I'll walk you step-by-step through the process of setting up your own money making blog. Even if you don't have anything to publish, I'll provide a source of content that you can use on your own blog starting immediately. If you have not signed up yet, **click here** to enroll now.

7.8 Planning Your Content

Here are some more ideas you can use in your newsletter or blog:

Interviews

These are great opportunities for joint ventures. You don't have to interview a competitor, but you can probably find people who work in related fields or clients who have used your product in a unique way. Just drop them an email and ask if they want to participate (and seeing as they're getting free publicity for their business, why shouldn't they?). You can even do the interview by email.

News

You probably already read the newspapers and magazines that relate to your businesses. They're going to be full of great content that you can use in your own newsletter. Obviously, you can't just paste them into your newsletter and send them out, but you can report what other people are reporting, provided you give due credit. Heck, you

probably notice that other people do it all the time. How many times have you seen phrases like, “according to AP” or “Reuters reports that” in the mainstream media? If it’s good enough for CNN, it’s good enough for you.

Talk to Your Customers

One of the best ways to guarantee that your newsletter or blog will be read by your subscribers is to invite them to write in with their questions. You could devote a section to a Q&A column. You’ll have to be careful with privacy. Feel free to edit what they write so that it flows better, but don’t be afraid to let your readers speak straight to you. It’s the best way to come across as an expert and provide advice that you know they’ll find valuable.

7.9 Ezine Joint Ventures

You must be creative in your advertising. Instead of asking for cash in return for newsletter or blog advertising space, you could ask for a reciprocal promotion on a partner’s newsletter. As long as you’re not competing, joint ventures with complementary businesses are a great way to increase your customer base and boost your sales.

For example, you could trade banner space, text links, articles, etc. In fact, you might even join each other’s affiliate programs and agree to promote each other’s products in your available ad space.

We'll talk more about joint ventures in the next chapter, but just remember that nearly any type of joint venture you set up for your business can be applied to your newsletter and/or your blog. In fact, publishing your own newsletter and blog is one of your greatest assets. Once you are doing this and have a readership, you've got a hot commodity that a lot of other businesses would like to get their hands on and you can use their interest to YOUR advantage.

7.10 Managing Your List

As you build up your subscriber list (if you're trying to do this without an autoresponder), you're going to develop a big problem. Whichever mail program you're using, whether it's Outlook or Eudora or something else, it's just not going to be set up to deal with the kind of mass mailing involved with newsletters.

If you have more than 50 people on your list, you'll need to use an autoresponder. Don't even *try* to do this by yourself!

There are some free autoresponder services on the market, but I don't recommend using any of them unless you simply don't have ANY money. An autoresponder is really the most important tool for conducting an online marketing campaign.

One of the biggest problems with most free autoresponder services is that they stuff their own ads onto your newsletter. This draws the attention away from you and your products and pulls the attention of your readers toward other company's products/services.

If you're going to do a newsletter (and you should) it's worth investing in a **professional service**. That is, after all, what you are offering, isn't it? Otherwise, you simply have a hobby and hobbies don't usually pay the bills.

Remember, newsletters and blogs are great ways to keep customers and revenue flowing in. They remind people you're still out there, provide news about deals and bargains, and give customers the confidence to buy. You can put them together in a snap, or even pay someone a small fee to do it for you. However you do it, the thing is to **just do it**. Publishing a newsletter and/or a blog on the Internet is one of the most important keys for unlocking your online profits.

If you're still intimidated about doing it all yourself, **click here to get details about my service** and let me install everything for you.

8. Joint Ventures — Partnering For Success

We've already mentioned joint ventures briefly, but in this chapter we're going to look at these kinds of partnerships in much more detail. I can't stress enough how important joint ventures are in creating a profitable online business. It doesn't matter what products or services you're selling, there are always people that you can partner up with in a way that will bring benefits to both of you, without costing you a penny. It's those savings that will boost your profits dramatically.

In this chapter, I'll explain how to find partners, reveal several different joint venture ideas that you can put into practice with your business, and I'll show you how to keep track of all your deals.

8.1 Choose Your Partners

Selecting the right partners is crucial for the success of a joint venture. As always, the best bets are businesses whose services complement your own. If you're selling CDs for example, you could do a deal with company that sells audio equipment, or a music magazine; if you're offering home-made furniture, you could partner up with other home furnishing companies.

Essentially, you want to be sure that you're both appealing to the same type of market but not directly competing.

One way to find partners is to figure out where they advertise. As you surf around sites related to your business, you'll probably notice that you keep seeing promotions from the same sites. Those are the kind of people you want to team up with.

In fact, you may not even have to look any further than your email inbox. You probably already get a whole bunch of newsletters from companies in related industries, and are already pretty familiar with their business. So your first choices for joint ventures should be pretty easy to think of, and those may be the best ones too.

If you want to expand the scope of your partners beyond the immediately familiar though, it's worth visiting **Alexa.com**. Alexa is a useful site that ranks other sites based on the volume of traffic they receive. This is very useful when you want to confirm that a potential partner has a relatively high volume of visitors to send you. Alexa can even tell you the name of the webmaster and give you the contact information you need to contact the webmaster.

Of course, it's one thing to get in touch with a potential partner — it's quite another to get them to agree. In my experience though, this isn't really a problem. About 80 percent of the people I contact already know me and understand exactly what I have in mind. Once you establish your position in the marketplace, you'll probably find that's true for you also. The whole negotiation takes nothing more than a couple of emails and maybe a five minute phone call.

Even a cold call gets pretty decent results. In general, I start with an email introducing my site and suggesting a partnership. It's pretty rare not to get a reply, and about half of my proposals result in a deal.

So what sort of partnership do I suggest? In practice, that depends on who I'm writing to. Clearly, you want to make sure that you create a joint venture that uses your partner's strengths to strengthen your own services — and your profits.

Here are three different joint ventures that are used regularly:

8.2 Joint Subscriptions

This is a newsletter joint venture. A user comes to your site and signs up for your newsletter. They then get a thank you message inviting them to sign up for other newsletters that they might find interesting. Those other newsletters are your joint venture partners. In return for an advertisement on your site, you get the same on theirs.

You want to be careful not to pester the user, so keep the invitation simple and well targeted.

8.3 Exit Pop-ups

Exit pop-ups have become an increasingly popular way for Internet-based companies to work together. The fact is only a tiny percentage of the people who visit your site will actually give you money. The rest will just click straight through. The problem is that you're paying for all of those visitors. Whether you're buying them on a search engine, an advertisement or some other deal you've set up, you're still paying for them in one form or another. The more ways you can find to turn those visitors into money, the better.

Exit pop-ups present another website to visitors as soon as they leave your site. The advantage is that your visitors aren't bothered until they actually leave (in which case they're no longer your visitors), and you can choose which pages generate the pop-up. So if a user comes to your home page and then clicks away, they get offered your joint venture; if they purchase, they don't. You can approach another site directly to arrange an exit pop-up joint venture.

8.4 Plug Your Pals

There's no need to be too subtle with joint ventures. There's nothing wrong with using your email list to simply send a marketing

letter to your subscribers to plug your partner's products. You'll have to negotiate a good deal for this in return — one that includes a mail-out of at least a similar scale to their list.

Ultimately, a successful joint venture depends on providing services that are truly complementary. Offline for example, a computer technician could make a deal with a computer store offering customers free installations and support in the first three months after their purchase. He'd get access to a pool of potential customers; the store gets an extra service to offer its customers. Online you can use similar special offers to truly boost the power of your partnerships.

8.5 Strengthening Your Joint Ventures

The best way to make your joint ventures truly successful is to use exclusivity. Offer your visitors something they can't get anywhere else, even if it's someone else's services, and you make your visitors feel that they're getting a real value by knowing about your site. Of course, if you want your partner to give something truly valuable to your visitors, you'll have to do the same for them. You don't have to give everyone gold watches, but you can offer them a discount or special offer of some kind.

For example, I get a newsletter every week from a marketing guru. Just about every edition he sends me contains at least one offer

of a book or some other product at a bargain rate. Those products come from his joint venture partners, and I assume that he's doing the exact same thing with his products in their newsletters. I get a lot of newsletters, but his is one I always read. I never know what sort of deal I'm going to be made next, and I know that I'm getting a real value in return for my free subscription. If you've got a good relationship with a joint venture partner, these are easy to arrange.

8.6 Track Your Joint Ventures

Whenever you enter a deal, whether it's listing a keyword on a search engine, buying a banner ad, or entering into a joint venture, it's crucial to track your progress.

The only kind of joint venture you should enter into is an equal one. There's no point in sending thousands of visitors to a site that only sends them back in the hundreds. You're going to wonder what you're getting out of the deal and if you can't get more somewhere else. In most cases, you probably can.

How you track the responses will depend on the particular joint venture. If you're swapping visitors, any traffic-monitoring script should keep you in touch. Otherwise, you'll have to monitor sales which is ultimately the best way to track your progress.

Joint ventures are one of the most enjoyable ways of promoting your business. Working from home can be pretty lonely. When you start to set up joint ventures not only do you get access to the customer bases of other entrepreneurs, you also build up a network of other people working in the same industry which can be very helpful.

8.7 Keeping Your Customers

The whole point of joint ventures is to generate customers. But even more important than getting them is keeping them. It's much easier to sell something new to an existing customer than to sell something to someone who has never purchased from you before.

In fact, at the end of every month I sit down with my stats and sales figures, and try to figure out answers to the following questions:

- ☑ 1. What percentage of my sales came from repeat customers?
- ☑ 2. Do my customers believe that they are important to the success of my business?
- ☑ 3. Did I go out of my way to learn all about my customers and keep them interested in my products?
- ☑ 4. Did I check out my competitors to see if they're offering customers something that I'm not?

> ☑ 5. If a customer complained, how quickly and adequately did I respond?
>
> ☑ 6. Were orders filled correctly and did I offer bonuses to particularly loyal customers?
>
> ☑ 7. If I heard about a customer who went elsewhere, did I try to win him back?

It doesn't take long to answer these questions, although it does take a bit longer to put new procedures in place if an answer comes up "no". But it's definitely worth the effort. I'll confess, I got into this for the money, but I love getting letters from satisfied customers praising me for my service. The fact that it pays to do that too, is a real bonus.

Essentially, there are two golden rules for providing great customer service: punctuality and politeness. Always answer your customers as soon as possible and deliver their goods as quickly as you can. And always maintain a professional, business-like manner with them. It doesn't matter how much they complain or moan, or how unreasonable they are, remember that you're a professional and keeping your cool is part of your job.

So now you know of a whole range of different ways to promote your website. You know how to use search engines, buy advertising

and build affiliate programs. You understand the benefits of newsletters and how to set up joint ventures with other people selling on the web. In the next two chapters we're going to look at precisely *what* you can sell online, starting with information products.

Of course, you could *read* about making money online for years and never get anywhere. The key is to take action. If you're ready to roll up your sleeves and put the online marketing concepts you've learned about into action to start making money, **click here** to sign up for my Plug-In Profit Site service and I'll personally set you up with everything you need to start earning multiple streams of residual income on the Internet within the next 24 hours.

9. Selling Information Products Online

In my experience, before most people set up an online business they've already got a pretty good idea about what they want to sell. It's often something they've worked with in the past or something they use in their spare time, like model aircrafts or football memorabilia. The web, they believe, is the perfect way to get those products to the public with little expense.

But not everyone comes online with an idea in hand. In this chapter and the next, I'm going to look at two kinds of product you can create and sell online: info products and software programs.

Let's start with information products.

On the web, information products mean ebooks. These are books that are downloaded from the web (like this one) and are usually aimed at niche markets. It costs a lot of money to make a print book and if the market is small, few publishing companies are going to bother with the risk and the expense. Ebooks cost little more than the time it takes to write them.

And anyone can write an ebook! You don't have to be John Grisham or the world's leading expert to write a book. Everyone knows

something that other people don't know, whether it's how to fix a TV or how to tell the difference between a Fish Crow and a Northwestern Crow. You don't even need to write it yourself. If you've got an idea for a book, simply find yourself a ghostwriter, tell them what's on your mind and get them to write it for you.

9.1 Finding a Writer

If you don't want to do the writing yourself, finding a writer for your ebook is easy. Finding a *good* writer though is the tricky part. A lot of people think they have what it takes to win the Pulitzer if someone would just give them a chance, but even most college graduates have a hard time constructing a sentence, let alone writing a complete book. And you don't want any old book. You want a book your readers will enjoy reading in a style that speaks to them.

If you've already hired someone to write your newsletters for you, they're probably going to be the first person to ask. Every time you hire a new writer, you're taking a risk. You'll have no idea how talented they are, how much they know about your industry or how well they can write in the style you need. A writer you already work with does know about your industry and you know how they write.

If you don't have anyone on call though, **Elance.com** is a good place to search. Again, check the portfolios carefully and pay attention

to people's feedback. Elance encourages its clients to review the work of the people they hire. These are great indicators that will help you determine the reliability and skill of a writer you're thinking of hiring.

One little tip for hiring writers on Elance is not to pay too much attention to the amount of work the writer has done in the recent past (another little piece of info Elance gives you). You don't want to hire someone who's too stressed to give your book the attention it needs, and just because someone's new to Elance, or doesn't use it very much, doesn't mean they don't have a lot of experience. They might have a lot of clients outside of Elance.

In short, you want to find someone who can show you an ebook they've already written, ideally on the subject and with the style of writing you are looking for.

Once you've made the hire, it's important to remember that you're paying someone to do the writing not the thinking. It will be up to you to supply the writer with all the information he needs to get the job done. The more you help the writer with the ideas you want in the book, the greater the chance you'll get the final product you want.

And finally, don't be surprised if the writer demands that you stump up some cash in advance. On Elance, a deposit of as much as 50% isn't uncommon. This is a result of all the unscrupulous buyers

who have bought services and not bothered to pay the bill. Too many writers have been stung in the past and most of the more established ones will want to see at least some cash to know you're trustworthy. There's often room to negotiate the deposit though, and you can sometimes use milestones to lessen the risk on both sides.

9.2 What Can You Write About?

In essence, there are four categories of books. Of course there are a plethora of subcategories in each of these main categories, but the main ones are:

9.2.1 Pleasure Books

Usually fiction: novels, short stories, poems, romances, sci-fi, historical, adventure and humor are the most popular, but they're all hard to sell online. Most people prefer to buy fiction in stores.

9.2.2 Inspirational Books

Spiritual books, devotional writings, uplifting life-experiences, Biblical or other religious writings, stories from the heart, or life-changing principles. This is another tough market to sell to online.

9.2.3 Study Books

There is a constant need for reference material both for business and academic use. This could cover everything from supplementary

reading for school kids to advanced math tutoring for university students. Do you know something others don't?

9.2.4 How-To Books

"Do-it-yourself" and self-improvement books. Straightforward approaches, pictures and analogies that teach everything from archery to amateur zoology.

Although *all* these types of books sell, the how-to-books and guides are by far the best sellers on the web. You don't have to be massively original here. The most profitable books are those that offer a slightly new take on a topic with proven popularity. There's no point in picking a subject that only interests you and your best pals.

I've found that these are the ten most popular and most profitable topics for "how-to" ebooks.

- ☑ Making money.
- ☑ Saving money.
- ☑ Saving time.
- ☑ Saving effort.
- ☑ Building a more comfortable life.

- ☑ Achieving greater success.
- ☑ Solving a problem.
- ☑ Increasing knowledge.
- ☑ Attaining better health.
- ☑ Gaining information.

Those are pretty general, and clearly you're going to have to generate ideas that focus on a particular topic. A book entitled "Making Money" isn't going to sell many copies; a book entitled "Making Millions in Your Pajamas" will.

When you're looking for a topic, first make sure it's a subject that you do actually have some knowledge about. Otherwise, make sure you hire a writer who does.

If you've found a subject that no one else has touched, or even come close to touching, it's unlikely that anyone will want to read it. The reason that there are millions of romances on bookshelves (and almost all of them the same) is that publishers know they sell. And like you, they're interested in making money not breaking new ground.

So how do you assess the popularity of your chosen topic? Here's a simple three-step process:

- ☑ Identify keywords for your book idea.
- ☑ Conduct a search of your keywords to determine how many people are searching for the information you're putting out.
- ☑ Run your keywords through the search engines and look for the following information:
  - o The number of ebooks already available on the subject.
  - o The number of paid sponsor ads for the search. This indicates that there is interest on the subject. Otherwise big companies wouldn't be wasting their marketing budgets to sponsor the searches.

What does all this information tell you? First, it tells you whether there is a market at all; and secondly it tells you whether the market is saturated or not. This is critical info that you need to know before launching a project to write and market a book on the Internet.

9.2.5 Choosing the Right Topic

We discussed earlier the importance of choosing the right topic for your ebook. The Internet is primarily used to communicate, entertain, educate and research. It is thus no wonder that nonperishable, information-intensive products including books, travel guides, and magazine subscriptions are the most popular online products at

present. Content-rich sites, subscription-based sites to advertiser-supported sites focusing on a wide range of topics, have been sprouting all over the Internet.

Ebooks and guides on various subjects have been prospering in the recent past. Anything you can put in a physical book, you can put in an ebook. You can sell just about any content as long as you have an offering that has a market and an ability to get it to your customer. Yes, there are exceptions. In some cases you might be competing with big companies with a large chunk of the market share.

Here are some categories that you may pursue:

Personal Advice, Motivation and Self-Help Sites

There are several sites aimed at the individual — mainly motivational and self-betterment sites. Such sites offer tips, articles, advice and counseling on how to build self-esteem and self-confidence and reduce stress for a happier life. You may also provide great inspirational quotations, inspirational stories, motivational poems, and other resources to motivate and inspire your visitors. It could include psychology tests, IQ tests, emotional intelligence tests and personality tests for self-improvement.

The market for personal advice and counseling is huge. You can provide educational counseling through such sites. Professional advisory information and training is covered in a subsequent category.

Fitness and Health, Diets, Weight Loss Sites

These sites provide complete guides, articles, tips and counseling on proper eating and exercising habits, benefits of diet and exercise, fitness techniques, diet articles and diet tips, weight loss, as well as some of the popular diet plans. They can include tips from fitness experts, reviews of fitness and diet programs, message boards, forums and discussions on health and fitness.

Information of various nutritional and diet supplements, healthy and non-healthy foods can be included. A couple of the popular fitness and health sites are **eDiets.com** and **WeightWatchers.com**.

Not all these type of sites are comprehensive in nature; most in fact focus on some specific program(s) and try to promote those programs to their members. Members are provided not only great details about some proprietary programs, but also personalized guidance to suit their individual cases. Members are also able to share their experiences. Generally, such sites will also offer privileges and discounts to their members for fitness equipment, nutritional supplements and/or membership at fitness clubs.

Credit Help Sites

This category includes sites offering access to consumer credit history records and related content, for example **ConsumerInfo.com** and **CreditExpert.com**. Such websites also offer credit counseling and tips as well as credit consolidation services. Articles, guides, and tips for credit improvement are provided as well.

Medical Research Sites

These sites focus on medical issues and/or health insurance. Medical research websites provide an extensive listing of research resources on various diseases and promotion of health through public education. They often include clinical information as well as information about doctors and hospitals in all states. Information on medical ethics and fraud is often provided.

Consultants, paralegal and legal researchers and consumers are amongst those who have interest in such sites.

You might also consider a site that provides information on health and medicine for the general public or for a specific target group, say women, nursing mothers. While there are quite a few sites that offer this type of information free, there is room for those that can provide

uniquely targeted information. Alternate and complementary medicine and therapy is another area evoking wide scale interest.

Personal Finance and Investment

These sites offer advice and tips on managing personal finance and investments. These include articles and guides from financial experts and assist in retirement planning. Such sites provide comprehensive information on various investment plans such as investing stocks, mutual funds, bonds, real estate and so on. They also offer advice on taxes.

Launching Your Info product

Once you've selected the niche market that you want to build an information business around, it's time to get to work and create your first info product. If you've always thought of yourself as a writer and want to do it yourself, go for it. If you'd rather pay a professional, that's a good option too. Since online information products are so cheap to distribute, you can probably make your initial investment back once you've sold thirty or forty copies of your new info product.

Information products can provide you with an unending stream of revenue. Once you've uploaded the book onto your server, set up the website and payment system and launched your marketing campaign, the money pretty much rolls in by itself. There's no shipping, no

inventory, no fiddling about with order sheets. You just keep an eye on the marketing and make sure the visitors keep coming. Put a series of books like this out, combined with the marketing methods discussed in this book and you're looking at a pretty easy way to make a living.

TIP: If you would like to sell information products in an already identified **profitable niche market** but don't want to go through the trouble and expense of doing it all by yourself, I encourage you to sign up for my service **here** and I will setup everything for you within 24 hours. That way, all you'll need to do is focus on marketing your site.

10. Creating a Hot Software Product with No Programming Experience

Producing an information product is easy. If you can read this book, you can write an ebook. There are really no special skills required beyond the ability to write and some basic knowledge about the subject. Producing a software product on the other hand *does* require some special training. It needs someone who knows how to program, who understands how a computer works, and who knows how to construct software. It's more complex than putting words on a page. It can also be much more profitable.

With the right software product, the sky's the limits for profits; Bill Gates proved that; but Bill Gates didn't become a multi-billionaire by simply being a great programmer — most decent programmers will tell you he's barely that. In fact, if you've been using Windows for a few years, you'll know exactly what they mean. *He became rich by combining some basic programming talent with some outstanding marketing skills.* It's that combination that we'll focus on in this chapter.

There's no two ways about it, you're going to need an idea. You might have one already. Lucky you! But if you don't, it's time to whip

out your pen and paper, and start scribbling. There must be some kind of tool that you wished you had on your computer, or a program that you use every day that just drives you crazy. Maybe you wish your Media Player stored favorites better, or there was a graphics program that was as simple to use as Paint but as versatile as Paintshop. Put down your ideas and then check out the competition.

Do a quick search on Google to find out what other products are already on the market that are just like the one you want to create. There's no point in putting a ton of effort into creating a product that's already out there. Check them out, figure out what's wrong with them and aim to create a new version that's just the way you like it.

(You'll also need to be sure that competition is selling. If they aren't finding a market, what's the chance your program will?)

10.1 Building an Outline

Programmers always begin with a written outline. When you come to hire a programmer, the better your outline, the easier the project is going to be and the more successful the final outcome will be.

10.1.1 Feature List

Just as it sounds, the feature list is a list of all the features you want your product to contain. Put as many down as you can think of.

You'll find that the list will come in handy not just to explain to your programmer what you want your program to do, but you'll also be able to use it when it's time to put together the marketing material. In effect, you're writing a list of unique sales points.

You might end up with something like:

> ☑ Capable of handling gifs, jpegs and bitmap images.
>
> ☑ Easy, one-click picture editing.
>
> ☑ Simple to use, fast to learn...
>
> ☑ And so on...

I usually find that this is the most enjoyable part of the whole project. As you come to think of each little feature, you'll find that you actually get quite excited. The project will begin to form in your mind and each feature should lead naturally onto the next.

10.1.2 User Stories

Here we get into more detail. User stories describe the program from the user's perspective. For the programmer these are the best way to understand precisely what your program is expected to do. For example, you might have a user story that ran like this:

"User right-clicks on image and receives a menu offering Edit functions. The user can then effect a change to the whole image by clicking on one of the options."

The user story has to be clear enough to be easily understood by the programmer but detailed enough to provide guidance. You want the programmer to be able to look at it and say, "Hey, that's cool!"

10.1.3 Data Directory

This is where things get complicated. Most software programs work at some level by storing and retrieving data. If you don't put the right data in the right place, you're going to get the wrong results, bugs and delays. Personally, I leave this part to the programmer. If he can't get it right, what chance do I have?

10.2 Study Competition

The only way you can distinguish your software product from that of your competitor's is by formulating unique functionality into the software. What is the most pragmatic way of devising a unique offering? The answer to this is plain and simple. Study your competition! This is probably the smartest thing you'll ever do. Make a list of all your competitors and their offerings.

Look out for news items and case studies on your competitors. These would give you a fair idea of what makes them stand out and what doesn't. Sometimes it is also possible to study customer reviews of software products offered by your competitors. This sort of information is invaluable. It will help you in offering your customers something your competitors don't.

Assessing the competition will also help you decide what kind of software product you wish to develop. For instance, sometimes it may not be worth selling a particular kind of product if your competitors are dominant market leaders and cater to a high percentage of the market segment. An example of this would be an accounting system or a word processing application. There are many standard accounting systems easily available in the market. Also, MS Word is dominant in the segment of word processors.

10.3 Determine Pricing

Studying your competition also gives you a fair idea of what the pricing should be for your product. The key is to price your product competitively. You may offer a lower price for your product, or offer it at the same price but have additional promotions or discounts. Apart from this, your break-even cost also plays a major role in pricing.

Moreover, the break-even cost may be a good indicator especially if your product is completely new in the market.

The formula for calculating break-even cost is:

Initial Software Cost

+ Upgrade Software Cost

+ Package Cost

/ Profit per Sale

= Sales Needed to Cover Cost

Initial Software Cost is your investment into the core software. Upgrade Software Cost is your investment into additional features or bugs that need fixed. You might determine that you need to add 3 or 4 major features and fine tune other features based on customer response. Package cost is your investment into packaging your software. This includes hosting costs, marketing material, documentation, website design, etc.

Ideally you should estimate the profit per sale to be enough so as to reach break-even after 50-100 sales. Again, while doing this you need to keep your competitors' price in mind. If you offer a niche product, customers may be willing to pay more.

There is no simple answer to how much should you charge your customers for your product. A client-based software could be charged at a higher price compared to a web based software. Further, you can also have different versions of the same product. The basic version would have the most common functionality and would be priced the lowest. Premium or advanced versions would have much higher functionality and would be priced higher.

10.4 Choosing a Programmer

No one's expecting you to sit down and code the software program all by yourself. There are plenty of people who can do a great job in a reasonable amount of time — and sometimes even for free.

Why would a programmer who usually charges about $100 an hour work for you for free? Well, that's where things get interesting...

A great programmer is a genius at coding. He can put together 1 and 1 and make it equal 10 or 11, or whatever two is in binary. That's his job. But very few programmers could sell you water if you were dying of thirst in the Sahara Desert. They'll tell you what water's made of and design a program to count the molecules in the bottle but they'll have absolutely no idea how to persuade you to buy it.

In effect, you can offer a programmer a joint venture: a collaboration of his programming skills with your marketing ability. Neither of you will make any money with a program idea alone. But together you can make a fortune.

That's what most corporate programmers dream of. They're just dying for someone with a great idea to come along and help them with the marketing. It's a match made in Silicon Valley heaven.

So where can you find these freelance programmers waiting to hit the big time? Again, **Elance.com** is a pretty good place to look. Many of the programmers advertising there are professionals who have made their money and are looking for a lower stress level than the 9-to-9 that most computer companies expect their whizzes to work. Many will expect payment but you should be able to find some looking to code for a 50/50 split of the profits.

Scriptlance.com is even better. This works in pretty much the same way as Elance, except that Scriptlance is targeted precisely at programmers. Again, you just submit a description for your project and wait for programmers to bid on it. As with Elance, your hiring decision will be based on the person's price and experience.

Now, I'm not claiming that it's super-easy to find a programmer who will work on the promise of future profits. They are out there, but

you're not going to bump into them on the street. Most of the programmers on Elance or ScriptLance *will* expect payment.

But there are plenty of programmers who have been waiting years for the chance to come up with that one idea that will give them a constant income month after month for no extra effort.

Be careful who you choose though. There's nothing worse than picking up a slacker who isn't prepared to put in the time needed to make the deal work. Ideally, try to find someone local; the whole process is going to go much smoother if you can create a decent personal relationship.

And most importantly, make sure your programmer is genuinely excited about your idea.

If you're going into a partnership with someone, they have to believe in the project as much as you do. In some ways, this is an advantage over paying someone to do the job (this and the $5,000 it would cost). When someone is truly captivated by the idea they have the motivation to do it right.

When you find a programmer who sounds interested in working with you, ask the following questions:

> ☑ Have you programmed a product like this before? (There's a fair amount of specialization within programming; if your

programmer hasn't worked in this field, he might have no idea what's needed.)

☑ How much experience do you have? (Some newbies will work for free to fill their portfolio; that's fine for you, but it might take a little longer.)

☑ How would you improve the product? (Every product can be improved; be suspicious if the programmer says it's perfect.)

☑ How long will it take? (Take too long and the market could change or dry up.)

10.5 Developing Functionality

It goes without saying, but you want to make sure that there is a level of interest within your target market for the software you plan to develop. Again, studying your competition is essential to ensure that your product is sustainable. After all, you would need to *at least* provide as much functionality in your product as your competitor.

The best way to assess what kind of specifications and functionality should go into your product is by asking your prospective customers themselves. A good strategy of achieving this is by surveying your existing customers and visitors on your website. You

could have the survey on your website itself or Email all your customers with a list of specifications for your software product. Just ask them what functionality they would prefer at a given price. Don't name the software at this time. Simply list the features and give a short description of what it will do. That should be more than enough to peak your customers' interests and generate a response.

10.6 Creating a Work Agreement

Even if you hire a programmer through an established freelance site like Elance or ScriptLance, it's still a good idea to draw up some kind of legal agreement. The last thing you want to happen is to reveal your idea for the greatest software product since Windows and watch some programmer put it together, cut you off and sell it to the highest bidder.

When you're entering into a business relationship like this with a total stranger, it is definitely worth paying a lawyer to draw you up a basic contract.

The agreement should contain the following:

A Confidentiality Clause

If your programmer spills the beans, he gets twenty years in a Turkish prison. That would be nice, but non-enforceable. A financial

penalty is enforceable though and par for the course in a work contract.

The information you share stays between you. If the programmer tells someone else and you lose money, you want to be sure you're going to be compensated.

Payments

If this is going to be a cash job, you want every penny put down. You don't want to release your product, watch it make millions then get hit with a lawsuit from your old buddy claiming 50% in royalties. If you're paying, the product is yours and so are the profits.

On the other hand, if you're not paying, the product isn't yours.

If you're working on a profit-sharing model, you'll have to negotiate who gets how much of the profits and for how long. And you must be sure that that's all put down clearly in the agreement.

Timeline

Creating a software product can take a fair bit of time — at least several months and much longer for really complex programs. Before you write the contract, ask the programmer to tell you how much he thinks each section is going to take and include those in the

agreement. You could even put in penalties for failing to meet deadlines, just as you would if you hired someone to fix your house.

In my opinion though, it's better to be flexible about deadlines. All sorts of unseen problems can crop up while you're putting together a program. Maybe you'll have some changes; maybe the programmer will have some suggestions and these things might have an effect on the timeline. As long as you seem to be heading towards your target release date, and as long as your programmer isn't stringing you along, I advise being flexible about the scheduling. It's better to get a great final product than a quick one.

10.7 Packaging Your Product

You have created a great product and are ready to market it. However, before you start marketing your product you need to package it well. If you sell a product that can be downloaded directly from the Internet you need to also provide proper documentation and licensing information along with the software files. If your product is such that it has to be shipped to the customer, in addition to documentation, licensing information and software files on a CD; you must also package the contents professionally.

Documentation consists of all manuals required for a layman to understand and use the product well. Without detailed documentation,

your products value would be “zero”, even if it’s the best product around. Documentation generally consists of three guides:

The Set Up or Installation Guide, which explains how to set up the software on the customer’s computer.

The Tutorial, which explains how the software can be used on a day-to-day basis. The Tutorial would also offer guidance and tips on how to perform certain tasks.

The Reference Guide, which is much more detailed and describes each function fully. This manual requires the most time to develop.

To create a box image for your product, it may be best to hire a professional to design and develop the box for you. However, if you are familiar with tools like Photoshop and are creative, you may design the box yourself. This will save you money. However, this should be done only if you are confident of developing an attractive cover.

Finally, you should always include licensing information with your product. The licensing information would lay out all the terms of the agreement between your company and your customer.

10.8 Customer Service and Support

In order to develop a good relationship with your customers, you must provide them with quality customer service. Let them know that,

should they have any questions or problems pertaining to the product, they are free to contact you. Provide them with all of your contact information to make the process simple. Make sure that you have a good customer support group ready to help. Reply to their support requests as quickly as possible and assist them until the problem is resolved.

Customer service is one of the most important factors in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Even if you have a great product, if your customer support isn't good, your sales will suffer. Good customer service is perhaps the most important way to build your credibility with the customer. When you are doing your business online, building trust and credibility is the most important factor. Prompt customer service can make all the difference for your business.

For every unhappy customer, you can expect to lose one hundred new customers. Why? When one customer has a bad experience with your company, you can be certain that they'll tell everyone they know about their bad experience. It will travel through the grapevine and ultimately cost you sales.

Follow up with your customers and ask them how they like your product or if they have any questions. This is a great way to not only provide good customer service, but to also obtain feedback about your

product. By listening to your customers, you will know exactly what they want, what they're having problems with and how you can develop a better product.

By following up with your customers and providing great customer service, you are creating a life-long relationship. Satisfied customers are more apt to purchase your new products in the future. Treat them with the utmost respect and go above and beyond the expected.

Your customer support should include:

- ☑ A 24 hour toll free number
- ☑ Email support that is quick and efficient
- ☑ Online chat support

Provide a Detailed Frequently Asked Questions Page

Before someone buys a software product from you they will probably ask a few questions regarding any concerns they have about your product. During the first few weeks of business you will receive a lot of similar questions constantly resurfacing. You would be fairly well advised to put this regularly requested information on your website to reduce your administrative workload. Your potential customers will be

happy to find their questions answered immediately; you won't even need to lift a finger beyond the initial setup.

Have a detailed FAQ page that tries to offer a clear explanation of your policies and rules, how the product works, and how the most common problems that customers will face should be tackled. Such measures will reduce the need for providing costly support time.

With information products and software products, there's no limit to the amount you can sell. You don't need massive warehouses to stock your goods, and you don't have to deal with postage and shipping or anything like that. You just have to set up a website and keep the traffic flowing. It's a completely automated system that brings me (and hundreds of others like me) money week in, week out.

But it doesn't happen without effort, especially at the beginning. You have the information and resources at your fingertips right now to create a fortune online. Don't let it slip through your fingers never to be acted upon. Take an action today that will move you in the direction of your goals. If it all sounds like too much work, sign up for my Plug-In Profit Site service **here** and I'll setup a turn-key marketing system that sells info products and software for you **automatically**.

11. Press Releases

Press releases, also known as news releases, are brief documents that are used to communicate news (not advertising) to the media. Although a one-page news release is the most basic of publicity tools, it is also one of the most powerful documents that your company can possess - IF it is used correctly. Just one news release has the potential to receive publicity that reaches thousands of potential customers.

Your press releases will provide publicity that will:

- ☑ Increase your sales
- ☑ Increase traffic to your website
- ☑ Give you and your company recognition and credibility
- ☑ Increase your profits for a relatively low cost
- ☑ Save you money

Press release distribution is an extremely cost-effective Internet marketing tool. It can build more credibility than any other Internet marketing technique because most readers are more likely to trust independent authorities such as reviewers, columnists, reporters or

broadcasters than an over-hyped advertising message. A well-written press release can dramatically expose your company to the masses and greatly enhance the image of your business.

11.1 Writing an effective press release or news article

Although common practice in the corporate world, press releases are an example of an all too often overlooked potential for business growth, exposure, and traffic generation.

Press releases, done correctly, can garner the online business significant, low cost marketing via interest generated in writers and editors across the globe. These interests can develop into stories, features, or even a mere mention that can send traffic counters reeling, and sales through the roof.

Developing an effective press release is an art form. The content must be creative, eye catching, and somehow moving to the reader. Though this sounds much like the creation of a successful marketing campaign, the idea here is to assemble a final release that communicates ideas and features in a manner that makes the copy of interest to the news-hungry.

One of the most important things to be aware of is that writing press releases is all about developing a persuasive message within the framework of a traditional news story format.

Editors will quickly trash media releases that make outlandish promotional promises -- "the best ever", "everyone wins", "one-of-a-kind", "changing humankind forever". Instead, you must think like a reporter. Media releases must follow journalistic style in order to be given any kind of consideration. How do you accomplish this task?

Collate and Organize Your Facts

Contrary to what most people think, a journalist actually spends the bulk of his or her time collating facts. When everything is ready, it is not uncommon for journalists to write the story in just half an hour.

How should we go about collating all the information and facts surrounding a particular event? A simple rule of thumb is to find answers to questions pertaining to the who, what, when, where, why or “5 Ws” of the event. And we do not stop at just the absolute facts and figures. These must be presented in the right perspective relative to some industry norms, trends and statistics. You may have to undertake some research by going through past industry and newspaper reports.

Identify Your Story's Angle

Now that you have collated all the relevant facts and figures, the next step is to identify the "angle" or headline of your story. A good story angle must have the following three attributes:

- ☑ It must be the most important fact in your story.
- ☑ It must be timely.
- ☑ It must be unique, newsworthy or contrary to industry norms and trends.

This story angle must be presented in the first paragraph as well as the headline of your press release. Most newspapers employ an "inverted pyramid" format that presents the most important information in the opening paragraph, follows by other information that support or develop the key points raised in the first paragraph.

Create a Catchy Headline

By all means, keep your headline short and simple using less than ten words. It should convey the key point raised in your opening paragraph in a light-hearted manner that catches people's attention and imagination.

Write in Third-Person Voice

Unlike an email newsletter written in a personal voice, a press release must be presented objectively in a third person point of view.

The reason is obvious. Every journalist has a duty to provide his readers with impartial facts and figures. He must not be seen as endorsing a company's products or services.

Some of the guidelines are listed below:

- ☑ Refrain from using any sales pitch in your press release.
- ☑ Remove "you", "I", "we" and "us" and replace them with "he" and "they".
- ☑ Provide references to any statistics, facts and figures raised in the press release.
- ☑ Refrain from expressing personal opinions, unless they are done in quotes.
- ☑ Draw conclusion from facts and statistics only - not general opinion.
- ☑ Provide "quotes" from the newsmakers.

As a newsmaker, put your most important message down into a quote. Reporters always use quotes from the newsmakers to add an authority voice to their reports. If your press release contains quotes that are important and relevant to the story, chances are high that they will be replicated in full in the published article.

Provide Additional Background Information

You should end your press release with an appendix that provides brief background information on your company, newsmakers as well as who to contact for further information.

Identify Your Readers

Do you understand your consumers well? As marketers, it is important for you to recognize the profile and buying behavior of your consumers. Information such as their age groups, interests and preferred media would come in handy when you want to reach out to them effectively.

The key to an effective communication, whether verbal or written, lies in presenting your messages to interested readers. Whenever possible, you should only send your press releases to those media whose readers' profile matches that of your target consumers.

Relate Message to Readers

What you want to say about your product or service may not be the same as what your readers want to know. You and your readers may look at the same event from totally different perspectives.

To kindle your reader's interest, you must present your intended message from their perspective. If you've done a good job understanding your readers, you should have no problem empathizing with their view and interest.

Remember that practice makes perfect and the best way to learn how to write an effective press release is to observe how business news is reported in the business section of your local newspaper.

11.2 Press Release Distribution

Local and/or small media are most likely to be interested in your story and it's the perfect way to hone your release-writing skills. Try local newspapers, trade journals, industry-specific magazines, websites, radio shows, and television shows. Don't send your release to just anyone, or you could be accused of spamming.

Always remember to get specific contact information for your press release. A release address to a particular person will receive a lot more attention than a general release sent to the media outlet.

You must send your press release to the right persons in order to increase the chance of having your story published. Look through the chosen newspapers and identify those reporters who cover events or activities that share the same theme as your products or services. You can identify the reporters by the article's byline.

Familiarize yourself with the editor or reporter's work. Find out the method she prefers to receive press releases. Don't automatically send them by email...some will prefer mail or fax. Find out their deadlines.

If you are sending your release by email, never send an attachment. Copy and paste your release into the body of the email. Never send a bulk email and always address emails individually.

For your local media, check the publication or their website for information on how to submit a release. Do a search on popular search engines for websites in your industry that might just be interested in running your story.

Submit your site to a few online newswires and news websites. There are a number of sites that require payment. However, there are a few good free websites as well. A couple of these include **PRWeb.com** and **Free-Press-Release.com**.

If your budget permits, you may contact a good press release agency. Such agencies distribute your press release to various industry-specific websites and publications for a fee. However, care should be taken while selecting a PR agency. Some of these may just spam instead of targeting your press releases correctly.

11.3 When should you distribute press releases?

Press releases should be distributed every time something newsworthy happens with your website or products. The key here is newsworthy. A press release may easily be considered spam if the reader feels that the content of the press release is not interesting.

Here's a list of events when a press release can be distributed:

- ☑ The launch of your website
- ☑ When you add new services & products
- ☑ When you arrange events like public speaking engagements, open houses, seminars, fairs and so on
- ☑ If your company creates new partnerships
- ☑ When you run contests on your website
- ☑ If you are arranging fundraisers and donations

> ☑ If your company or product gets a major award or accomplishment

Press releases can be an effective tool for marketing your products online or off. As discussed, you can hire professionals to create a valuable press release for your company. This will add to your costs, but it's usually worth it.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss a very interesting form of promotion known as viral marketing. Viral marketing is one of the least expensive forms of marketing, but it is actually one of the most effective ways to promote your business of all. In fact, viral marketing is primarily responsible for the success that the **Plug-In Profit Site** service has enjoyed throughout the years.

12. Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is defined as “any advertising that propagates itself the way viruses do”. E.g. When Hotmail users send emails, they “infect” the recipients with the tagline at the bottom of their messages. Viral marketing denotes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Thus, the name “Viral”! Viral marketing is also called V-Marketing, organic marketing, word-of-mouth marketing or word-of-mouse marketing.

Viral marketing works best when it induces websites or visitors to pass on a marketing message to other sites and people, creating a potentially exponential growth in the message's visibility and effect. In simple words, you pass your message on to 10 other people – each of these 10 people pass on that same message to 10 other people and so on. Such collaborative communications, by nature, need others in the chain. Everyone simply tells everyone else. ICQ, a service that prompts you when selected friends or colleagues are also online, is an example of a service that is viral by its nature. Its users want to tell their friends about it so that it will be more useful to them.

Viral communication is clearly an enormous opportunity for creating brand growth. Get it right and the rewards are enormous. Your consumers will spread your message for you, at astonishing speeds to a phenomenal number of people. Get it wrong and your carefully crafted proposition will get little further than the marketing director's inbox.

12.1 Viral Marketing through EBooks

Viral marketing can be performed in several ways. Many of these different forms of viral marketing have enjoyed enormous success over the years. One proven application for viral marketing is ebooks.

Ebooks or electronic books are self-contained files usually in PDF format exactly like the document you are reading now. The document could be a website you've created in HTML, a Microsoft Word file or nearly any other digital media format. When downloaded, the file opens up on your client's computer, usually using the Adobe Reader software application that can be downloaded free from **Adobe.com**.

Ebooks are very similar to normal physical books in the sense that they are rich in content. They are a huge resource for information. Anything you can put in a physical book, you can put in an ebook and it costs practically nothing to compile your ebook. If your site is about

tropical birds, you might write a tropical bird guide. If your site is about web design, you could write a beginner's web design tutorial.

An ebook basically is a packaged document that allows authors a great deal of flexibility in presentation of content. Ebooks can be downloaded from your website and stored and read offline at any time. Ebooks come with user-friendly navigation tools that lets the reader skip to any page or search for any keyword in the ebook. Ebooks can be completely interactive with the Internet and can contain live links, graphics, forms, JavaScript, embedded video, audio, animation and more. Hyperlinks and internal search engines enhance navigation, allowing the reader to find items of interest quickly and easily.

Ebooks will play a very important role in viral marketing over the next few years, no matter what the product or service offered by a company is. How can your business benefit from publishing ebooks with a viral marketing twist? Read on to find out.

Why are ebooks an effective viral marketing tool?

Here's how viral marketing with ebooks works. First of all, it is essential that your ebook contains interesting information. It's pointless to market something that is of no use to anyone. Readers of your ebook should learn something from the ebook. In this sense it is

very similar to a physical book. A reader would throw away a book after reading a page or two if she finds it to be boring and dull. The same is the case for ebooks. No one would want to download your ebook if it is not rich in practical content. In other words, your ebook should have some useful information that the reader wants.

To use ebooks effectively as a viral marketing tool they should be offered to visitors of your website for free. The production and distribution costs of an ebook are generally very small. This is what makes it an effective tool for viral marketing. As you can see by reading my "Dotcomology" ebook, viral ebook marketing is not just something I talk about. It's something I practice in my own business.

Your ebook should have the layout and feel of your business service or product, which would familiarize readers with your brand. Do you see how I've done this for my **Plug-In Profit Site** service throughout this ebook? The ebook you create would have a message promoting your website and a link to it. This will bring back the reader to your website and create an opportunity to generate business. Thus, ebooks can contain advertisements or links to your website that would persuade the reader to visit your website. For example, a footer on every alternate page can have some message about your business and a link to your website that would interest the reader and encourage

him to visit your website by clicking on that link. It's simple really. Like this: **Click here** to visit my website. ;-)

How does viral marketing come into the picture here? How do you ensure that ebooks can be given to more and more readers and in turn generate traffic for your website? A very simple way of doing this is to allow other visitors to your website to download your ebook for free and allow them to give away the ebook for free to others. Be sure to include hyperlinks to your website throughout the ebook. Also, you can include brief advertisements and all kinds of other things if you want. Your customer can either upload the ebook on their own website or offer it to their friends through email in the form of an attachment.

To make the ebook even more appealing to your customers you can offer them incentives. For example you could give your customer the ability to brand your ebook with their own affiliate ID for your product so that they earn a commission every time a person visits your website (through their branded version of your ebook) and buys a product. Affiliate program software (discussed earlier) can be integrated with your website that would give you a detailed analysis of all your visitors and track the affiliate who referred them.

Now your affiliate can give away your ebook to others, which makes them look good for giving something valuable away for free.

Plus, every time your affiliate brings in traffic to your website through their branded version of your ebook, they earn a commission. This gives your affiliates a reason to be excited and tell others about your ebook. Imagine this scenario duplicated by hundreds and potentially thousands of people passing around your ebook and you'll get a sense for how quickly your marketing message can be spread across the Net. This is exactly what is being done with the "Dotcomology" ebook right now. I could have turned this information in this ebook into a paid product if I wanted to, but I know the benefit of viral ebook marketing far outweighs the profits I could earn selling this information online.

To further benefit from ebooks, you can allow your customers to copy, change, and co-brand the ebook, which would contain a few ads and links about their own sites in addition to your own links. This will also help your customers to generate traffic for their websites. Think about it… The more incentives you add to your ebook that inspire other people to pass your marketing messages around, the more you will benefit from viral ebook marketing. It's that simple.

Ebooks are one of the best promotional tools online. With its vast variety of uses, just one quality ebook development and distribution can produce an on going viral marketing tool that will work 24 hours a

day, seven days a week spreading your marketing messages around the world exponentially.

Tips for Creating an Ebook

The most important aspect of an ebook is the content. Unless the content is well written and interesting, you will find it hard to attract customers. So the first rule of thumb is to produce useful content.

The format of the ebook is also very important. I recommend that any ebook you develop be created as a PDF file. The main advantage of using PDF is that it works with almost all operating systems whereas many other types of files cater only to Microsoft Windows users.

Additional tips to consider when creating an ebook include:

☑ Make sure your source code is protected. This should be done for security reasons. Your source code may allow unauthorized users to hack into your website which is the last thing you would want from a marketing campaign.

☑ Allow icon customization (allow using custom icons for your ebooks).

☑ Allow resizing of the compiled ebook to the preferred size. Resizing and icon customization basically allow your

customer to change your ebook according to their own preference. You could allow your customers to reformat and edit content from your ebook. However, care should be taken that they are not allowed to delete advertisements and links to your website. Making links and advertisement un-editable can be done while creating an ebook.

☑ Allow co-branding of your ebook. This is a very successful strategy and gives your customers a huge incentive to download your ebook and pass it on to their customers.

☑ Create an ebook search function. This provides easy navigation. Readers should be able to skip to any page in the ebook directly. They should also be offered keyword search functionality that enables them to search for a particular keyword in the ebook.

☑ Support Flash Files, Shockwave, JavaScript, DHTML, Audio, Windows Media, Midi Files and other formats.

☑ Insert a tracking feature in your ebook that tracks the number of people who have downloaded your ebook.

There are many different ebook compilers on the market that can help you accomplish everything discussed above. Simply do a search

engine search for “ebook software” or “ebook compiler” and you’ll find plenty of options. The two software programs that helped me turn this “Dotcomology” ebook into one of the most popular and widely read Internet marketing ebooks of all-time are Adobe Acrobat at **Adobe.com** and viralPDF at **ViralPDF.com**.

12.2 Viral Marketing through Emails

Email is one of the best ways to spread your marketing message. It's fast, cheap and, most important of all, it can be viral. Have you ever sent a message to your friends, maybe a joke or a story, only to have it sent back to you days later with several other email addresses in the CC field that you don't recognize? That's because your friends have sent it to their friends, and those friends in turn have sent it to their friends and so on. The email chain is often endless.

Email is an ideal mechanism for viral marketing, because a message can be spread to multiple recipients almost **instantly**.

Email allows us to touch people at any time and in any place. Email enables a whole new dimension of branding by allowing our brands to be directly connected to the times and places in which we deliver them. Because we can touch people more precisely, we can brand ourselves more accurately as well.

Email that you send to your customers and friends, if interesting or useful, could again be forwarded by your customers and friends to their own customers and friends.

A good illustration of viral marketing through emails is through ezines and newsletters. The term ezines is coined for publications sent through email. These publications could be anything such as articles related to your business, press releases for a new service offered by you or any other write-up inviting people to visit your website.

Email Newsletters or Ezines

We had a whole chapter on newsletters already in this book. However, what we didn't discuss then is that newsletters can be a great viral marketing tool. If your newsletter contains information of value, such as tips, hints, news or tutorials, you'll find that subscribers will forward it on to others, and that's viral marketing at it's best.

The use of newsletters can also help build content for your website which increases search engine visibility. Another great benefit is that your newsletters, ezines or ebooks will proliferate links on many sites that point back to your site. Several leading search engines, including Google, use page-ranking algorithms that measure how many links point to your site and rank your page in search findings

accordingly. The way to do it would be to encourage your readers to upload your material on their sites.

However, you must remember that a newsletter should contain valuable information, not just sales copy, otherwise interest will quickly drop off and you'll be getting a number of unsubscribe requests. Worse still, your ezine will be deleted as soon as it arrives, leaving you with a valueless list that only sucks up your time, resources and bandwidth.

Tips for Writing Articles that are Viral

Pick a topic that you know something about and then go to the search engines and find as many websites as you can that deal with that subject. As well as collecting information for your article, make a note of any URLs that offer free resources dealing with the topic of your article. Include those URLs in your article.

You should choose a topic very carefully. Once the topic is selected, doing enough research on the subject is vital. Organize the material and write in an interesting style. Make sure that you provide links to free resources.

The content in your article should not be pure sales copy. There has to be valuable and genuine information. Promotion of your product

or service should be subtle. Viral marketing using articles is much different than running an email marketing campaign that blasts millions of mail messages to unsuspecting readers.

At the end of your article, attach a 5 or 6-line “About the Author” box that includes your site URL or autoresponder subscription address.

When you have finished your article, do NOT send it out straight away. Hold onto it for 2 or 3 days and then come back and read it again. You'll be amazed at the improvements you can make. Those final improvements are what make the difference between an article that gets published and one that doesn't.

Once you are satisfied with your article, send it to your own ezine list, publish it on your blog and encourage your subscribers to publish your article on their sites. Additionally, you can use article distribution services such as **SubmitYourArticle.com**, **IdeaMarketers.com** and **ThePhantomWriters.com** to increase the reach of your article and possibly get it published on hundreds of other websites. Plus, once it’s online as a “free reprint” article, you’ll find that many new webmasters will find your article on someone else’s site and re-publish it on their own site including your resource box. This is an extremely powerful form of viral marketing. You are providing valuable content which other websites want and need which in turn motivates those

webmasters to publish your article and spread your marketing message via your article's "About the Author" resource box.

12.3 Viral Marketing with Affiliate Programs

Affiliate programs create powerful alliances between an online merchant's website and various "affiliate" websites. Affiliate programs as discussed earlier, are a great marketing tool, especially due to the fact that they are viral in nature.

However, affiliate programs are attractive only if they offer useful and valuable incentives to the affiliates. The best form of incentive would be cash in the form of commission from product or service sales. This is the best incentive for your customers to join your affiliate program and spread your marketing message.

Tips for Making Your Affiliate Program Attractive

The most important aspect of any affiliate program is the incentive. You should offer better incentives than your competitor sites. Money is the biggest and best form of incentive you could offer your customers. Offering a percentage of your sales revenue resulting out of each successful hit can be a great incentive.

If you are selling a digitally downloadable information or software product, I suggest offering 50%-75% commission to your affiliates.

Since these type of products cost you practically nothing to distribute once created, you want to offer the highest commission possible to motivate your affiliates. Otherwise they will simply find other people's products to promote who pay better than you do. Trust me on this one. I'm a top affiliate for multiple affiliate programs online who have won my loyalty by paying me better than their competition.

Apart from the normal incentives, offer something unique such as cash awards and bonuses for the top affiliates who are responsible for bringing in the highest traffic or highest business to your website. This would provide greater motivation for affiliates to not only join your affiliate program but also refer your website to more people. In fact, one affiliate program that I was not a member of started publicizing a contest where the person who referred the most new members by a certain date would win a $10,000 cash prize. Because of the excitement from that company's membership, word got out and I decided to join the company's affiliate program myself so I could take a shot at the prize. A few weeks later, I had referred over 600 new paid members to the company through my online marketing efforts and won the coveted $10,000 prize. Today, I continue to actively promote that company (Empowerism) and bring them hundreds of new members every month through my **Plug-In Profit Site** service. That's the power of offering a prize/reward to your top affiliates!

Standard affiliate programs only reward the direct affiliate for referring new customers. To stand out from the crowd, set up a two-tier or multi-tier affiliate program. In other words, reward both the affiliate responsible for bringing customers to your website as well as the person who had originally referred this affiliate. Allow me to illustrate this strategy. Let's say that John referred Max to your website and your affiliate program. Max liked your affiliate program and joined it and eventually bought your product or service offered on your website. In this case, John would get a percentage of the profit. Now let's say, Max referred your website to a friend of his – Harry. Harry visits your website – likes your product – and buys it. A single tier incentive program would reward Max by giving him a percentage of the profit generated. A two-tier incentive program would offer Max a percentage of the profit, as well as John a percentage of the profit, because John referred Max in the first place. Multi-tier affiliate programs can be very profitable.

The above point can be explained in simple terms as "Make it as easy and as natural for affiliates to promote your product or service as possible, by letting your affiliates benefit from those whom they refer". This will encourage your affiliates to convince more people to visit your website, buy your products and join your affiliate program.

Using Ebooks for Affiliate Marketing

If you've been delving into affiliate marketing at all, you're no doubt aware of the viral potential for ebooks. It's the affiliates who make them viral, after all, passing the word about the product to their website visitors, ezine subscribers, and clients, with the goal of earning a commission from a sale. This is, after all, exactly how the "Dotcomology" ebook has become so popular.

The possibility of re-branding the ebook (that is, customizing certain portions of it, or changing the affiliate link coding so that the current host of the download can gain from the affiliate commissions) adds pass-along momentum as discussed earlier.

Let me explain the concept of re-branding further. If you've created a useful ebook which also promotes your products or services and where affiliates can change the links in your book to point to their affiliate links, you can let your affiliates give this book away to their visitors and subscribers as something useful for them, as well as something that gives your affiliates a chance of selling your products to everyone who reads their branded copy of your ebook.

Remember, an ebook can come in the form of a report, a catalog, a sales presentation, a detailed list of features, and so much more – the possibilities are endless. It could be whatever that is helpful to

your visitor and your customer. It can contain graphics, hyperlinks and, with some compilers, even animated graphics and multimedia.

An affiliate can use downloadable ebooks to enhance the attractiveness of his or her website or ezine, use the ebook as an incentive or simply engender a feeling of trust in their visitors and readers by providing quality information and advice for free.

This technique allows affiliate program merchants to help their affiliates to become more acquainted with viral marketing and more effective in selling online. Using ebooks as a source of affiliate viral marketing can dramatically increase traffic and profits for any website.

TIP: Did you know that you can brand this "Dotcomology" ebook with your own affiliate ID and earn 5 streams of residual income simply by giving it away to others for FREE? **It's true**. If you have not done so already, **click here** to sign up for the Plug-In Profit Site so you can get started. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to earn money simply by **giving away** this "Dotcomology" ebook to other people.

12.4 Viral Marketing on the Web

How many times have you followed links from one site to another and another – only to end up at the first website? The Internet itself is really the best environment for viral marketing.

As discussed earlier, the simplest and most obvious way of getting people to link to your site is to make it an incredibly useful site packed with informative material. This takes advantage of the main reason people use the Internet - to find information. If you narrow down the focus of your site, you have a much better chance of being found on the search engines, and by those who are looking for the specific information you provide, and hence your chances of being linked to increase dramatically.

Inbound links from other websites to your website provide two benefits: increased traffic to your site and increased rankings in search engines that calculate inbound links in their algorithm, like Google.

Like you, other site owners are trying to increase their link popularity and require reciprocation or give preferential placement of your link on their site if you provide a link in return. This means you need a page or directory on your site to provide reciprocal links. Creating a links page or directory within your site makes your site more content rich and certainly more viral in nature.

Also, you can encourage your visitors to link your website to theirs. This is only possible if your website is useful to them and rich in content. Sometimes, providing incentives to visitors for link reciprocation would do you a world of good. You can encourage visitors

and other complementing sites to reciprocate your website's link in return of commission and "giveaways" for each person visiting your site through their link. This strategy may pay rich dividends.

12.5 Word-of-Mouth Viral Marketing

Word-of-mouth is considered the very best marketing, because it is unsolicited. Here are some ways to encourage friends to share with friends, and use their network to promote your site.

Install "tell-a-friend" software to generate referrals. Such software allows visitors to recommend your website to their friends and customers. For this to work, it's imperative that your website is informative and useful. Try and provide something unique on your website. This could be a new product or a new service that would interest your visitors and encourage them to spread the word for you.

Create email newsletters and send these newsletters to your friends and customers. Always encourage readers to forward your email newsletter to their friends. Do this at the end of a newsletter, and you may inspire some readers to do it instantly.

Create attractive press releases with a link to your website and send these to customers and friends. Press releases are incredibly viral in nature. By providing a link at the bottom of the press release, you

ensure that the reader can click on the link and visit your website. It is a good idea to submit your press release to publications that have the same type of target audience as you. Once you get some good press from the release, word-of-mouth marketing happens automatically.

12.6 Measuring Viral Effect and Performance

As with any marketing campaign, tracking the results and optimizing performance over time is absolutely necessary. Understanding the effectiveness of your viral marketing campaign is crucial information, not to mention interesting. You might be reaching a huge audience with your viral campaigns but the key is to analyze how many of the people reached actually visit your site. You may have an effective viral marketing strategy but somehow your message may not be efficient enough to bring visitors to your website in the numbers needed. Small changes in a message can often increase your conversions by 200% or more, so getting a detailed analysis of the viral effect and performance of your campaigns is critically important.

Thankfully, sophisticated viral marketers can track insightful and actionable data that can be used to evaluate performance. Important metrics to analyze are pass-along, click-through, and conversion rates. Marketers should separate the click-through and conversion rates by original customers from referrals and evaluate their respective

performances. These metrics will alert a marketer about the offers and customers that drive the highest ROI.

I don't know about you, but for most people, tracking all of these various metrics can get pretty complicated. It's important to do, but the fact of the matter is that the majority of people who want to make money online don't really have the time, dollars or patience to setup a system that tracks and decodes all of these figures. If you're not the kind of person who wants to set it up and figure it out all by yourself, I encourage you to review my Plug-In Profit Site money-making system which automates most of the difficult, time-consuming activities normally associated with making money on the Internet. **Click here** to learn more about the Plug-In Profit Site and sign up today.

13. Managing Your Life When You Work From Home

At the beginning of this book, I pointed out that not only does my Internet business bring me a decent chunk of money each month, it also brings me time. Now that my system is set up, all I have to do is check that my affiliate partners are sending me cash, suggest the odd joint venture to a partner, and stay in touch with my customers and affiliates. I rarely spend more than three hours in front of my computer each day.

But it wasn't always like that. It took a lot of effort and a lot of work to get into the position I'm in now. When I first started, it was a bit of a struggle to organize myself. My first website took ages to launch and while the other ones went up quickly. My family went days without seeing me.

Let's be frank. If you don't set up your business properly right at the beginning, you're going to make your life much harder and your income won't have the chance to really take off.

The problem is that until now, you've always thought of your home as a place to relax and the office as a place to focus and work. Now you're going to have to focus at home and that's not an easy shift

to make. You need to keep the same rhythm (without stopping to watch your favorite daytime soap!) and the same kind of discipline you had when you had to commute every morning.

The first thing to do is to give yourself an office. I'm not talking about a laptop on the coffee table (although that's how I got started) or a corner in the library; I mean a proper room with a door you can close and a desk full of goodies: from a computer with high-speed Internet access to a place to put your paper clips. If you don't have a spare room to start with, then use your bedroom. But if you're serious, think about finding an office once your business gets up and running.

The next thing you're going to need is a realistic schedule. This is one of the greatest challenges when you begin working for yourself. At the end of each day, I'd make a list of all the tasks I was going to do the next day. If I got half of them done, I was lucky.

Once you get a feel for how long each task takes you, whether it's approving a new site design, planning a new marketing program or answering customer's emails, set yourself a timetable and keep to it. Turn off the radio, shut the office door and get to work! And at the same time, don't get annoyed if the day ends before your work does.

13.1 Balancing Your Business and Family

Of course, all work and no play would make Stone Evans a dull guy. And it wouldn't do much for his wife and kids either.

When you have a family as well as a business, time in the office is time *away* from the family, and its hard to know when to stop. You can easily find yourself in front of the computer at midnight and all weekend too. Sometimes working from home seems to be a double-edged sword. If you spend too much time with your business and not enough time with your family, the most important relationships in your life can suffer. But if you spend too much time with your family and not enough with your business, the success of your business could be in jeopardy; and since your business is likely your main source of income, it's success can also determine the well-being of your family.

Fortunately, it doesn't take a superhero to make the work/family division work. All it takes is some patience, a little savvy scheduling and a lot of willpower. In fact, if you have the time to read the following tips, then you have the time to do them!

13.2 Know How to Say "No"

Not easy to do, especially when you're just starting. But if something doesn't fit into your schedule and impedes on another activity you've already planned, just say "no". For example, if a client

calls at six in the evening and pleads with you to have a teleconference with him at seven, but your son's basketball game starts at the same time, you're allowed to reschedule. Clients and colleagues actually like to work with people who put their family first. And if they don't, you shouldn't be doing business with them anyway.

13.3 Take a Day Off from Work at Least Once a Month

How often have you said: "I wish I had my own business! Then I could take a day off whenever I wanted..." Now you can do it! Chances are, for a while you'll be working more days with your own business than you would when you were employed by someone else. If you don't take the weekends off from your business, make sure you take at least one day a week for no work and all play. Then, on top of that, schedule a couple of days every month for a mini vacation.

For at least one day, do no work whatsoever and spend all day with your family. That means no computer (unless you're helping your kids with homework or playing games), no business phone, no fax, no meetings, and no paperwork for one entire day. Have fun! I do.

13.4 Learn How to Compromise

If you learn how to successfully make deals with your family and clients, you'll see how simple it is to balance your time between both. Running a home business and a family can be tricky, but getting

frustrated about it does no one any good. It'll cost you clients and create a frosty atmosphere in the house.

If a client, for example, gives you a week to complete a project, and contacts you two days before the deadline saying she needs it right away, don't let your frustration show. Offer her what you've got and tell her you'll send the rest later. She should be able to meet you halfway. The same is true of your family.

13.5 Maintaining a Positive Attitude Is Good For Business

And the end result of managing your time properly should be fostering the right attitude for business. Here are six ways to build a positive attitude.

1. **Be Committed**

   It took me a few years to reach the point I'm at now. I could have given up any time before I got here and I had a million different reasons for doing so. But I knew what I wanted and stuck it out. That's the first key to success.

2. **Accept Challenges**

   Being your own boss and owner of your own online business can be scary and a bit intimidating. It takes guts to leave a 9 to 5 job and start your own online career. It takes chutzpah to

have a dream and to go for it. You are the one who ultimately determines whether your business succeeds or not.

3. Be In Control.

Keep your mind focused on important things. Set goals and priorities for what you want to do and accomplish. Develop a strategy for dealing with potential problems and when those problems surface, feel confident in your ability to handle them.

4. Don't Be Too Critical

There is no use criticizing yourself once you've made a mistake. Saying "I should have landed that account or handled that situation differently" is not going to make any difference at all. It's just going to drain you of your energy and discourage you. Simply learn from your mistakes and move on.

5. Practice Makes Perfect

Stop worrying about getting everything right. It's not going to happen. Just keep striving to do your best and everything will work out fine. If not on the first try, keep going until it does.

6. Ask for Help

You want to work *for* yourself not *by* yourself. There is nothing wrong with asking for help. Don't think you're incompetent simply because you can't do it all. Professionals hire

other professionals to do the job properly. Don't be afraid to bring in a specialist when you need it.

If I have to warn you that there's nothing more important than getting the work/family balance right, then the chances are you're going to learn the hard way. I got into this occupation for the money, but there's no question that the greatest benefit my online business has given me is the extra free time I have to spend with my family. I'm sure if I put that time into building more websites or creating more products, I'd make more money. But there's more to life than money.

Conclusion: All You Need to Skyrocket Your Web Profits

In this book, we've looked at a whole range of different ways to make money online. It should be clear that at the center of the book, and at the center of all your online marketing efforts, is traffic. That's what all the marketing chapters in this book are about — bringing people to your site so you have an opportunity to make sales. As you build your online business, concentrate on marketing opportunities that provide targeted traffic. Don't fall victim to marketing gimmicks that promise you a million website visitors for a few hundred dollars. There is no substitute for hard work and doing things the right way. The marketing strategies in this guide are tried and true methods for bringing you the visitors and profits you desire.

You should also concentrate on programs that are multi-level in nature such as affiliate programs. If you are doing all of the work yourself, your income will be limited by your time and resources; when you bring others into your program, your income potential becomes unlimited. Affiliate programs increase the ways you can turn your traffic into cash, and that's what making money online is all about: generating traffic and earning money from it.

It should also be clear that the most lucrative opportunities are those that have a repeat customer component and pay residual income. It costs less to maintain a customer than to find a new one. That means it's always smart to take opportunities that generate repeat business. It's also important to create a newsletter that keeps your customers informed, in touch and in your business.

And the more revenue streams you have the better. On the Internet, as in the real world, chances come and chances go. Online, they just come and go a lot faster. If you are diversified, you are more likely to survive market dips that would otherwise shut you down and that will certainly shut down many of your competitors. I speak from experience. Both online and off, I've had major streams of income dry up overnight that would have crippled me if I did not have several revenue streams supporting me. I urge you to take my advice and start creating **multiple** streams of residual income immediately.

It should be clear now that a lot of what people have said about online business is absolute foolery. You can see that it's possible to make money; you can see that you **can** do it by yourself, right now; and you can see that whether or not you succeed is entirely up to you.

You can also see that the following myths are simply untrue:

Your site has to have millions of visitors to make money.

It doesn't. Small sites with good conversion ratios can make more cash than large sites with lots of click-through traffic.

Ad revenue and affiliate revenue don't make money.

They do, if you know how to use them.

It's easy: just put up a site and money will roll in.

If only that were true! Making money online takes time, effort and investment. The **Plug-In Profit Site** service can dramatically accelerate your online success by setting you up with all the tools you need to make money online, but you still have to work hard and invest in your business to succeed.

Some Warnings

The fact is, just because you can automate many redundant tasks to make money online, it doesn't mean that the streets of the Internet are paved with gold. Like any opportunity, there are scams and hazards. As you set up your online business it's important to stay alert, use common sense, and keep your feet firmly on the ground.

Don't be tempted by get-rich-quick schemes that promise you instant wealth with no investment of time or effort. There are lots of these online. One popular scam is an email that goes around every now and then from someone claiming to be a wealthy political

dissident who's having trouble getting a huge sum of money out of their country. They'll ask you to open an account put some money in it and they'll add the rest in return for a fat commission.

Unfortunately, many people have fallen for this type of scam and others like it. Just be advised that as soon as someone tells you they can make you rich and that all you have to do is send them some cash, you can be sure they're trying to scam you. The Internet is like the real world: if something looks too good to be true, it probably is.

And just like the real world, It takes money to make money. The Internet has provided a very economical way to do business and there are some inexpensive Internet marketing options; but marketing is imperative to the success of an online business and productive marketing campaigns do require *some* cash down. That might be money for search engine campaigns, payment for a programmer or a website designer, or even just the fee for your hosting company, but you will need some money to get started.

I can't promise you that there's no risk involved because there is. The size of the risk depends on how much you want to invest. You can start small with a cheap hosting company, a site you create yourself and so on. You can still make money like that; it will just take you a little longer. Alternatively, you can splurge right from the beginning by

getting a pro to create your site and marketing it hard from the get-go. It's entirely up to you.

Me, I started small but spent thousands of dollars learning from the school of hard knocks what works and what doesn't. Your own journey to online profits will depend, in large part, to how committed you are to success, how much you are willing to invest in your business and how hard you are willing to work to get there.

Being a successful Internet entrepreneur doesn't require massive amounts of investment or a genius idea. It simply requires a good plan, a modest investment and some initial time and effort. It also requires an understanding of how businesses actually work on the Internet and, above all, an unshakable drive to succeed.

My hope is that this book has given you a better understanding of what it takes to make money on the Internet. Keep in mind that there is no single book that can answer every question for you. The Internet, just like the world, is always changing and every individual is unique and therefore your journey to online profits will be unique to you.

The single skill that you must possess is the ability to take action. That being said, I have a special invitation for you…

A Personal Invitation from Stone Evans

Are you ready to put the theory of making money on the Internet into motion in your own life? If so, I have a great opportunity for you.

Let's continue the education you've begun in this book by putting the principles stated within these pages into action. I want to personally help you make money on the Internet and that's why I developed a turn-key Internet marketing system that will enable you to get started immediately — in the easiest way possible.

Within 24 hours, I can set up everything you'll need to start making money on the Internet and *walk you step-by-step along the exciting path to Internet marketing success*. Instead of general theory, **I will outline specific daily steps to help you succeed** through my world-renowned *30 Days to Success* Internet marketing guide.

In fact, by following the steps in my *30 Days to Success* guide, you'll already have your own website, your own opt-in email list, your own blog and a comprehensive online and offline marketing campaign set up and running within just 10 days! And that's only the first 10 days… Imagine how much you'll accomplish within the full 30 days!!!

Here it is — the moment of truth. Are you content to simply learn about making money on the Internet or do you want to actually do it?

I can show you the way. You simply need to follow the steps. **Click here** to sign up for my Plug-In Profit Site service today. I will build your website and get everything you need to make money online set up for you. Then, I will give you my *30 Days to Success* guide and private access to our member's support forum to ensure your success.

It won't ever get any easier than this. **Click here to join now!**

To Your Success!

Stone Evans, The Home Biz Guy

P.S. If I've given you this much high quality information in a **free** ebook, just imagine what kind of profit-boosting info and tools I provide to customers of my Plug-In Profit Site service who pay for the privilege of becoming a member. **Click here to join my inner-circle!**

P.P.S. This ebook, "Dotcomology – The Science of Making Money Online", can be branded with your own Plug-In Profit Site affiliate ID#. Once branded, you can give this ebook away for FREE to everyone in your circle of influence and get paid every time someone joins the Plug-In Profit Site service through the links in your branded version of this book. If you don't have your affiliate ID# yet, **click here** to join now. Once you have your ID#, **login here** for branding instructions.

30+ Free Tools and Software Programs to Help You Succeed

Over the years, I've discovered many FREE tools and software programs that can help you grow your business. If your funds are low (or even if you've got a big budget to spend), start with this list of FREE tools and software programs to get your business off the ground. Most of the tools listed below have a competitor somewhere online or offline who is charging money for pretty much the exact same software or service that you can use for FREE through the links below.

NOTE: If you find a link below that no longer works, please contact me through **this website** and tell me about it so I can update this ebook. One thing that is certain about the Internet is that it is always changing… Occasionally, a free service will expire or a link will be moved to another location. I appreciate your assistance in helping me keep the "Dotcomology" ebook up to date for all future readers!

Web authoring tools:

Convert text into HTML with one click:

www.cmg02.com/cg2/text_html.htm

Complete web authoring software for Windows, Max and Linux:

www.nvu.com

Powerful HTML website editor:

www.trellian.com/webpage/index.html

Free web authoring and graphic design software:

www.freeserifsoftware.com

Upload website files via FTP and SFTP:

www.sourceforge.net/projects/filezilla/

Website plug-ins:

Free content for your website:

www.freesticky.com

Add a search engine to your site:

www.freefind.com

Accurate real-time website stats:

www.statcounter.com

Automated reciprocal linking and website directory generator:

www.onlinemarketingtoday.com/software/link-management/

Create unblockable popup windows without coding:

www.antssoft.com/wisepopup/

Design and download professional-quality, animated banner ads quickly and easily:

www.addesigner.com

Formatting tools:

Format for your articles and emails for maximum effectiveness:

www.web-source.net/format_text.htm

Free color picker:

www.iconico.com/colorpic/index.aspx

Analyze the emotional impact of your headlines:

www.aminstitute.com/headline/index.htm

Research and discovery tools:

Spell checker:

www.spellcheck.net

Search the dictionary, thesaurus or encyclopedia or web:

www.reference.com

Find the perfect set of keywords for your web pages:

www.goodkeywords.com

Discover new keywords your future customers will find you under:

www.nichebot.com

Analyze keyword density:

www.keyworddensity.com

Check your website's link popularity:

www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/

Performance and protection tools:

Free multiplatform office suite:

www.openoffice.org

Protect your website from plagiarism:

www.copyscape.com

Scan your web pages to locate errors:

www.netmechanic.com/toolbox/html-code.htm

Spyware remover:

www.spybot.info/en/spybotsd/index.html

Free password manager and form filler:

www.roboform.com

Submission tools:

Add your URL to Google:

http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl

Submit your articles:

http://www.ideamarketers.com/signup.cfm

Ping your blog:

www.pingomatic.com

Communication tools:

Instant messaging on any platform:

www.icq.com

Talk to anyone, anywhere for free:

www.skype.com

Unlimited follow-up autoresponder:

http://www.getresponse.com

These FREE resources have been brought to you by Stone Evans, creator of the Plug-In Profit Site. **Click here** to get your very own money-making website set up today. You'll be glad you did! ☺