

Derek Gehl's
***Six Steps You Need to Follow to
Guarantee The Success of Your
Online Business!***



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Introduction: Why should you listen to me?

Right now you may be wondering, “Who the heck is Derek Gehl, anyway?”

Fair enough! One of my own personal business rules is, never listen to anyone who can't back up his claims with solid proof. And it's a good idea for you to do the same.

As CEO of the Internet Marketing Center, I have helped thousands of people grow their own successful online business. And by “successful,” I mean their businesses generate more than US \$100,000+ a year – and often much, much more than that!

Our flagship product, [*Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet*](#), has been the #1 best-selling online marketing course for over 10 years now.

(And in the ever-evolving world of the Internet, 10 years is the length of an Ice Age!)

Why does our course continue to be so popular? Because it WORKS!

If you ask any other online marketing “guru” out there, I guarantee they'll tell you that *Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet* was one of the first Internet marketing products they ever bought. (If they're willing to admit the truth, that is! ;-)

And if they're willing to make a full confession, they'll have to admit that my course played a huge part in helping them achieve their online success!

That's because my best-selling course is based on the six fundamental business-building steps that I'll be sharing with you in this report.

These are the exact same steps that we here at the Internet Marketing Center have taken to build a company that's made over \$60,000,000 – purely from online sales!

And they are the six steps you absolutely must take if you want to build an online business that's guaranteed to be profitable.

If this information is so valuable, why am I giving it away for free?

Every morning when I come into the office, I grab a cup of coffee and check my email.

And after I've read the emails I receive from my subscribers, it's all I can do to stop myself from throwing my coffee cup against the wall!

Don't get me wrong – it's not my subscribers that get me so angry... it's the unscrupulous scammers who have robbed them of their hard-earned money.

Over and over again, people tell me stories of how they've invested a fortune in some kind of Internet marketing “solution” – and have yet to see a *dime* in return for all the money and hard work they've put into it.

Maybe they were persuaded to buy a ready-made website, complete with a “hot” product to sell... only they didn’t realize there were 1000s of other people out there, using the *exact same site* to sell the *exact same product*. Even worse, no one on the Internet was even looking to buy the product they were selling!

So they end up facing HUGE competition trying to sell a product no one wants to buy. *Ouch.*

... Or maybe they’ve handed over all of their hard-earned cash to some kind of “expert” who promised to drive hundreds of thousands of eager-to-buy visitors to their site. But the so-called “expert” ends up being a faker who doesn’t know the first thing about proper search engine optimization techniques.

... Or maybe they’ve bought into a \$400/month program that was “guaranteed” to teach them how to make *tens of thousands* of dollars a month online – within a matter of days. (And months later, they’re still no further ahead in their business building efforts than they were when they first signed up!)

I’ve got to tell you, stories like that just make me feel sick to my stomach. It absolutely **KILLS** me to know that so many good people have been sold a lie, and are suffering because of it.

Some people even tell me they’ve been scammed out of their entire life savings!

I don’t want anyone else to experience that kind of anguish. And *that* is why I’ve made this information freely available to everyone who wants it.

If you’re interested in making money online – but aren’t sure what you need to do in order to build your own thriving Internet business – then please, for your own sake and for the sake of your family, **READ THIS REPORT** before you invest a single dime in any other Internet marketing product or service.

The sad reality is, there are a lot of false promises out there. By reading this report you will arm yourself with the knowledge you need to tell whether an offer is a good one that will help you make more money online... or if it’s going to suck up all your time and money, leaving you with absolutely nothing to show for it.

The shocking secret is... there IS no shocking secret!

I know that’s a funny thing to hear from the guy whose flagship product is a course called, [*Insider Secrets Course to Marketing Your Business on the Internet!*](#)

But the fact is, there is no real “mystery” involved to creating a successful online business.

You simply need to follow these six steps:

Step #1: Find your niche market

In other words, you need to confirm that there's a NEED for whatever it is your business is going to sell – and that people are willing to pay for it!

Doing market research BEFORE you set up a business is just as important in the offline world as it is online... But online research tools now make it incredibly easy to do this kind of research.

Step #2: Make sure you sell the right solution

You have to come up with a product or service that does a good job of satisfying the need you've identified in Step #1.

Again, this kind of research is just as essential for a “brick and mortar” business. After all, you don't want to invest thousands in a product no one's interested in buying!

Step #3: Keep your visitors glued to your site with compelling salescopy

You wouldn't let just any stranger off the street come into your store and sell your products, would you? Of course not – you want to hire the best person for the job!

When you have an online business, the WORDS on your site are going to be your best salesperson – so you have to make sure they do a good job of selling the benefits of your product to your potential customers.

Step #4: Design a website that leads visitors straight to the order button

A classy storefront can mean the difference between a bustling business and a commercial graveyard – and this is just as true for an online business.

Unfortunately, most small online businesses tend to commit fatal design errors that drive their visitors away within seconds of arriving at their site. Make sure yours isn't one of them!

Step #5: Use an “opt-in” to collect leads and build customer relationships

People won't want to buy from you unless they feel like *they* know you. When you run a “faceless” Internet business, it's doubly important for you to brand your business and create an identity for yourself in the minds of your potential clients.

That's why you need to capture your visitors' email addresses so you can build relationships with them over time. Otherwise, you'll only ever make a fraction of the sales you could be getting.

Step #6: Drive swarms of cash-in-hand visitors to your site

Now that your site is set up and ready to go, it's time to get the word out! Search engines such as Google are going to be one of your most powerful advertising weapons... Discover how you can use them to drive thousands of qualified leads to your site – for little or no money!

... And that's basically it! I cannot emphasize how important these six steps will be to your success.

Once you have successfully completed all of these steps, you *will* be the proud owner of a website that is guaranteed to generate you healthy profits.

However, if you skip a single step, or do them out of order, you will not achieve the kind of success you're hoping for. And you'll probably end up wasting many days trying to correct a painful situation you never would have experienced had you done all these steps in the right order in the first place!

I'll cover each of these six steps in much more detail in the pages ahead... so please read on to learn more!

Step #1: Find your niche market

1. The #1 fatal mistake made by 90% of Internet start-ups

One of the most common questions we're asked here at The Internet Marketing Center is, "What's the hottest product to sell online?"

Sounds like a good question, right? After all, doesn't everyone want to start a business selling a hot product?

The fact is, looking for a hot product to sell online is the #1 fatal mistake made by at least 90% of new business start-ups, and it is why so many Internet businesses fail. Rather than trying to hunt down a hot product to sell online, you'll be much better off looking for a group of people with a common problem that they're actively trying to solve.

Why is it so critical to find a group of people with a common problem, rather than a hot product? Well, the simple truth is that people very rarely go online to actively look for products to buy.

Much more often, they go online to search for *solutions to their problems*. Once you identify a group of people with a common problem, you can start to think about a product or service you can position as a solution to that problem. Then, all you have to do is put yourself in the way of your perfect potential customers, and set yourself up for an incredibly successful business!

It's natural to want to jump right in, choose a product, and start playing with your web site...

... But then what?

How do you know who your potential customers are? How do you find them? How do you show them that your product is a good buy for them if you don't know what their needs are?

If you want to guarantee the success of your business, you must recognize that there's some very important footwork that needs to be done *before* you get to this point.

Once you've chosen your area of interest, the next step before choosing a product or service to sell is finding a group of people who have a common problem. Your ultimate goal is to give these people a solution to their problem with your product or service.

If you already have a product or service idea, you still need to take this critical step. You'll need to determine what problems your product solves... who are the people having these problems... and where they are looking for solutions online.

Once you know how to find the people who are actively looking for a product like yours to solve their problem, your business will be poised for success.

Building a web business is like building a house -- every piece supports the rest of the structure, and it all relies on a strong foundation. And the foundation of every great business (online OR off!) is a great "niche market."

2. What's a "niche market"?

Before we dive into how to find a niche market on the Internet, we need to make sure you understand *exactly* what a niche market is.



Important Note:

Even if you've already got a basic understanding of what a niche market is, it's still worth reading this section very carefully -- because until you can *successfully define your niche market*, you'll just be spinning your wheels.

The term "niche market" is one that you'll hear in just about every discussion about marketing -- online *or* offline. But it's important to note that everyone thinks of niche markets a little differently...

Traditional marketers may define a niche market as a large group of people sharing several characteristics (for example, men aged 30 to 35 earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year).

However, online, we need to narrow the focus A LOT more than that! So we define a niche market as:

A group of people who are searching the Internet for a solution to a problem but not finding many relevant search results.

Identifying a niche market is one of the biggest challenges on the road to choosing a product. Many people have difficulty being as tightly focused as they should be -- and often try to go after niche markets that are, in effect, not niches at all, but huge general markets in which they couldn't hope to compete.

For example, all of the following might *seem* like good niche markets:

- musicians
- parents
- pet owners
- history buffs

... But the truth is that all of these markets are WAY too big! Try entering the word "pets" into a search engine. You'll get 227,000,000 results! Do you really want to try to compete in such a huge market?

Narrowing your focus to a small, niche market gives you tons of advantages:

- There's WAY less competition
- Small markets are much easier to dominate -- so you can become *the* source for your product or service online.
- Since niche markets are often close groups, your reputation can spread by word of mouth -- offering you an ever-growing base of potential customers
- You can often find great deals on advertising on other sites that target your small market
- You can easily gain the loyalty of your customers -- which offers you lots of opportunities to expand your offer with related products and follow-up offers!

That's why you'll need to narrow your focus a *lot* more...

3. How will I know when I've found "the one"?

We'll be introducing you shortly to some great research tools you can use when you embark on your own "niche market hunt."

Before we get to them, however, we need to make sure you'll be able to recognize a true niche market when you find one!

One way to identify your potential niche market -- and make sure it's as focused as possible -- is to write it using the following formula:

My niche market is people who are (action) + (your area of interest).

Take a look at how the large markets mentioned above can be narrowed down using this formula:

- My niche market is musicians who are **(learning to play) (bongo drums)**
- My niche market is parents who are **(wanting to build) (a backyard tree house)**
- My niche market is pet owners who are **(attempting to train) (their pet parrot)**
- My niche market is history buffs who are **(trying to authenticate) (Gold Rush memorabilia)**

See the difference? Finding a niche market is about finding a specific and highly focused group of people who are all looking for something on the Internet, and not really finding it. If you can't describe your niche market using this formula, you probably aren't focused enough yet.

But don't worry! Remember that for every subject you're interested in, there may be many small groups who have an interest in the same area. You just need to pick one, then figure out what needs they share.

For example, let's say you're interested in golf. (That's another HUGE market – plug the word “golf” into Google and you get 392,000,000 results! Yeesh!)

However, if you narrow your focus and use the formula we described above, you could discover that one of the following niches could be the basis of a profitable business:

- Caddies who are **hoping to develop better knowledge of clubs**
- Golf course employees who are **studying the best way to maintain the putting greens**
- Golf course owners who are **trying to recruit new members**
- Golf course suppliers who need to **keep up-to-date on the latest developments in the world of golf**

If you *can* describe your market like this, you've already taken the first step to setting yourself up for success!

Once this critical first step is taken care of, you can go on to the next step to guaranteeing your success, which is simply to clearly define the problem your market shares.

4. How to guarantee you have a hungry market -- before you ever invest a dime!

Remember that people don't go online looking to buy a product or service... they go online to find *information and solutions to their problems*.

Your task is to think like your potential customers -- to determine what problem they're trying to solve and what you could offer as a solution.

For example, if your niche market is "people who are looking to correct their golf slice," you can see pretty clearly what the problem is this group will be looking to solve... they have a problem with their golf slice! All you need to do to guarantee the success of your business -- before you ever invest a dime -- is offer a product or service that solves this problem!

The upshot is, if you don't take these critical steps to define your niche market, you're making a potentially fatal mistake -- even if you have the best product in the world!

After all, if you can't find the people who want to buy your product, and target all of your marketing efforts to appeal to them, the greatest product in the world might not ever make a dime online.

5. Online research tools to help with your “niche quest”

Okay... so now that you understand what a niche market is, how do you go about finding one online?

The good news is, the Internet offers some incredible research tools that help you find out EXACTLY what people are looking for online – so you can give them exactly what they want, and make a fortune doing it!

The first of these is a type of online tool you probably use every day: the ultimate online information finder, the search engine!

Get started with the search engines

When it comes to online research, the search engines are your best friends! The top search engines — Google, Yahoo, and MSN — have indexed *billions* of Web pages which you can find simply by typing keywords into their search windows. They're quite simply the fastest and easiest way to find information on the Internet.

Here are the three main search engines you need to know about:

- Google.com
- Yahoo.com
- Live.com (also known as MSN.com)

Together these three search engines get more than 95% of all the searches done on the Internet. Google is by far the most popular, but people who enjoy accessing the Internet through Yahoo's portal or MSN's portal tend to use those two search engines as well.

What kind of sites should you look for?

You should start your research by doing searches on terms that relate to your personal hobbies, interests, and life experiences.

Whether it's information you picked up on the job... skills you developed as part of a hobby... knowledge you gained from a previous business... or simple a topic you've long

been interested in learning more about, just about every single skill, interest, or area of expertise you have can become the foundation of a successful business.

For example, if you're interested in model trains, do searches on terms such as:

- “Model trains”
- “Toy trains”
- “Train sets”
- “Model train hobbyists”
- “Train enthusiasts”
- “Model train parts”
- “Model train tracks”
- “Model train bridges”
- “Model train scenery”
- “Model train reviews”
- “Model train forums”
- “Model train blogs”
- “Model train e-zines”

... And so on. Be sure to do searches on specific brand names of popular model train sets, as well.

Start off by searching keywords that are one or two words long. Then, as you become more familiar with the market and products being sold to it, start getting more specific with your searches. Use keyword phrases made up of three or four words, or even more.

As you do your research, explore the search results carefully! Make a list of the sites you find interesting, or bookmark them in your browser, so you can return to them later.

When you look at sales sites, take notes on what kind of products they offer, and how they position these products. What are their selling points? How much are people willing to pay for them? All this information will help you down the road.

Also be sure to sign up for “news alerts” through your favorite online news service.

Many news sites — such as www.NYTimes.com, news.google.com or news.yahoo.com — will automatically email you an alert about any new story on a topic you've identified. This is a great way to get the latest, most up-to-date information about your topic of interest delivered right to your mailbox.

Finally, pay careful attention to free community sites that cater to people who are interested in the topic you're researching. Sites such as blogs, forums, and “e-zines” (online magazines) are invaluable sources of information. They're where people gather to talk to each other about their favorite topic, and share product reviews with each other — and more importantly, to ask QUESTIONS!

Why are their questions so important? Because if you notice the same question being asked over and over again, that could mean that a group of people share a problem – and aren't able to find a decent solution for it online!

(That's when you have to ask yourself: Can *I* provide them with that solution? And is it something they're willing to pay for? If you can answer "yes" to both these questions, congratulations! You may have found a viable niche market!)

6. Use keyword research tools to discover EXACTLY what people are searching for!

The search engines will take you a long way toward your goal... but there's another, very specific kind of online tool that will help guarantee you find the "pot of gold" you're looking for.

And those tools are "keyword research tools."

These tools allow you to discover the EXACT keywords people type into search engines when they're trying to find information. ("Keywords" are simply the words and phrases searchers use to describe what they're looking for online.)

Not only that, they show you how many sites are competing for those terms – so you can research your competition and determine exactly what kind of threat they pose!

(As you probably know, modern business is all about "supply and demand" – which is exactly what keyword tools allow you to discover!)

Finally, these keyword research tools organize all of this detailed information into useful reports you can use to estimate how much traffic your site could expect to get in a 24-hour period if you were ranked in a top position under those keywords.

Why is this information so important?

Because 80% of all online sales begin with someone typing a keyword into a search engine!

Without a doubt, search engines play a vital part in the online shopping process. That's why you want to discover *exactly* what online shoppers are looking for – and the words and phrases they're using to describe it.

For example, are you trying to find cheap airfare tickets to Honolulu? Then the keywords you'll type into a search engine will probably be something like, "cheap airfare Honolulu."

Your potential customers are using keywords that relate to their shared interests and needs. Once you figure out what these keywords are, you'll be able to find the sites they're visiting and learn more about what they're looking for on those sites.

However, guessing your market's common keywords is more difficult than you may think! People don't always use the search terms that seem obvious to you. You'll need to do some research to discover the keywords that are most popular with your future customers.

So... what keyword research tools do we recommend?

While there are many to choose from, two really stand out from the crowd, in terms of the sheer amount of useful information they give you. And these two are:

- Keyword Discovery (www.marketingtips.com/keywords)
- Wordtracker (www.marketingtips.com/wordtracker)

Both of these keyword tools offer free trial versions that will give you an idea of how they work, and the kind of information they provide. However, when it comes time to dive fully into the research, we recommend you use the paid version of the tool you choose. In order to guarantee your niche is viable, you're going to want to get as much comprehensive keyword information as you can.

Keyword research tools allow you to find out how many people may be searching for information to solve a particular problem. And they give you a good idea of the demand for your solution – as well as the competition you'll face if you try to sell to that market.

This is EXACTLY the information you need to know in order to determine whether your niche market idea will translate into a profitable business for you!

Step #2: Make sure you sell the right solution

Once you have established WHO your target market is and found a problem they have in common, it's time to develop a solution they'll be willing to pay for. After all, your ultimate goal is to create an online business that generates a profit, right?

Unfortunately, this is a point where a lot of people find themselves stuck. How do you develop your own product or service? What if you don't WANT to develop your own product? Then what? How do you contact product manufacturers and distributors to ask if you can sell *their* products?

Well, our best advice is, don't sweat it...

There are actually LOTS of ways to make money online. And in this step we're going to cover your 5 most profitable options...

- Develop and sell your own product
- Sell your own service
- Develop your own information product
- Drop ship brand-name products
- Recommend affiliate products to earn commissions

We are going to show you exactly HOW you can make money with each approach! Read on to learn more...

1. Sell your own product (as opposed to someone else's)

The benefits of selling your own product are significant, and should be carefully considered before making any decisions about what you're going to sell.

When you sell your own product or service...

- You control production costs and quality of service
- You can ensure you're using the most cost-effective warehousing and distribution services
- You control the marketing, guarantee, and sales process
- You can repackage and resell your product in different ways
- You don't have to worry about the other company backing out of the agreement or ceasing to manufacture the products you're selling

Of course, the main advantage to selling your own product is that you ultimately **control how much profit you make on every sale**, and you have the potential for the biggest profit margin.

You know exactly what each product costs, so you can test different price points to see which one generates the highest number of sales with the biggest profits (sometimes

fewer sales at higher price points can result in the most profits, and vice versa).

Obviously, if you're going to sell your own products, then you need to be prepared to *develop* your own products. Doing market research like we described in the previous step — where you find a market with a problem, and then look for ways to provide a solution the market is willing to pay for — is by far the BEST way to come up with a winning product idea.

2. Sell your own service(s)

No matter what kind of service you offer (even if the service is something you don't actually *provide* the online), you can profit from an online presence.

Here's how any service provider can use a web site to generate business:

a. Service providers who deliver their product online:

Delivering a service online is a great way to earn a living. You can work right out of your home office and you never have to interact with your clients in person — so you can literally spend all day in your pajamas, if you like!

Here's a list of just some of the services that can be fully delivered online:

Accounting	Greeting card writing
Announcement services	Newsletter publishing
Bookkeeping	Nutritional consulting
Commercial voice-overs	Office/secretarial services
Computer consulting	Party planning
Custom music composition	Programming
Data entry	Relocation consulting
Desktop publishing	Research
Events planning	Technical writing
Fitness program planning	Translating
Freelance editing	Tutoring
Freelance writing	Video editing
Gift baskets	Web design
Ghostblogging	Web hosting
Graphic design	Wedding consulting

Are you starting to get the idea? Remember, this is just a short list — there are tons more services you could provide without ever leaving your home.

Once you've thought about what kind of services you could provide, try checking out web sites like www.Elance.com. These online service marketplaces are great sites to check

out, when you first start marketing your services. You may even get some new business ideas!

b. Service providers who advertise their services online, but deliver them offline:

Whether you're a small-town dentist, a high-priced online legal consultant, a real estate agent, a tutor, a landscaper, a bed-and-breakfast owner, an auto mechanic, a caterer, a fitness trainer... or anything in between, the simple fact is that you need to have a web site!

We're reaching a point now when people EXPECT service providers to have a web site offering details such as package information and pricing, contact information, customer testimonials — as well as personal information about the service providers themselves that establish the credibility of the business.

In fact, some people won't even pick up a phone book to look for a service provider anymore. They search only online, so if your business isn't there, they won't find you!

When you sell a service, you are essentially selling a relationship with yourself. And this means you've got to spend more time and effort establishing your credibility and developing a rapport with your visitors than is typically required of a site selling a physical product.

You not only need to establish the benefits of the service you're offering, you also need to establish the value of YOU providing this service.

3. Create and sell your own electronic information product

As we've already discussed, if you decide to sell products that require physical delivery, you're going to need to deal with **stocking, packaging, and shipping costs** — all of which will eat into your profit margin.

That's why the single most profitable thing to sell online is a product that can be delivered electronically!

Here are more reasons why you should consider selling an “e-product”:

- They're **easy to produce**. Within a matter of days, you could be holding your finished product... ready to be marketed online!
- **Duplication is free!** Once you've got one copy of your product, you can make countless extra copies of it, at no additional cost. That means **your profit margin is 100%!**
- Since they're delivered electronically, **you never have to worry** about stocking, packaging, or shipping costs that will always eat away at your profit margin.

- **Delivery is instant**, satisfying the demands of the impulse buyer... and exploding your profits! You can easily email them your product from your automated server.
- You can **automate your entire business!** You can set up your order form and e-commerce system to automatically process the order, put the money in your bank account, and electronically deliver your product to the customer. Selling electronic products online is the perfect "no-hands" business!

So what are the options for products you can deliver this way? How about:

1. eBooks
2. Paid subscription newsletters
3. Video or audio recordings
4. Software
5. "Members only" web sites
6. Interactive courseware

Just one thing to note: If you want to sell an electronic information product, you need to be sure that people can't steal or share your work. On the Internet, where information is so readily available, this is a bigger problem than most people realize.

We learned our lesson from costly personal experience, so we developed a piece of software that allows you to securely market any information product on the Internet by giving you complete control over every individual product you distribute online.

eBookpro goes way beyond the basics of most eBook software available on the market. Its "point-and-click" wizards allow even the greenest computer newbies to easily build and start selling their own eBook in just minutes!

Plus, the latest version of eBook Pro contains new features for creating and distributing viral eBooks in order to generate more traffic to your site. And of course, it includes state-of-the-art technology that ensures your valuable information remains safe from thieves. You can even disable copies of your eBook remotely – so if you get a credit card "chargeback" or if a customer wants a refund, you can ensure they don't get to keep their copy of your information product for free.

To learn more about how you can use eBook Pro to create and sell your own information product, check out [eBookpro](#).

4. Recommend affiliate products

Maybe the thought of making your own product sounds a bit intimidating. After all, this may be your first online venture – maybe you want to wait until you get your feet wet before you jump into the "deep end" of product development.

Or maybe you're keen on the idea of creating your own product... but you're also

impatient for **immediate profits**, and want some way to make money while you work on developing your product.

If this sounds like you, then we strongly urge to you consider joining different affiliate programs as a way to make money online.

An affiliate program is simply a "no-risk" partnership that allows you to promote another company's product or service on your web site. For every buying customer you refer to the company's site, you get paid a percentage of the profits!

Affiliate programs are a great way to get started on the Internet:

- There's a lot less work involved
- You save money on product development costs
- You may not need your own online ordering system
- You don't have to worry about tracking inventory
- You may not have to deal with customer service hassles
- If the product isn't selling well, you don't have to deal with a lot of old stock piling up.

As one of the company's "affiliates" (promotion partners), you're assigned a special "affiliate URL" that tracks all of the visitors you send to their web site and all of the sales that you generate. You earn a commission each time someone you've referred to their web site makes a purchase.

There are lots of different ways you can encourage visitors to go to the company's sales site. For example, you could can post a banner on your web site that links to the affiliate program's site. Or you could publish a "product review" article about the company and its products on your site.

There are two different kinds of affiliate programs you can join — one-tier programs and two-tier programs. If you're a member of a one-tier program, the only way you earn money is by getting paid a commission for each sale you refer.

However, with a two-tier program, you can also make money by encouraging your visitors to sign up as affiliates for the program as well. Each person who signs up for the program through your referral becomes your "sub-affiliate" — and you get to earn commissions for all the sales *they* make as well!

Needless to say, we think that two-tier programs, with their extra income potential, are definitely the way to go. In fact, that's why our own affiliate program has been two tiered ever since we first set it up!

5. Sell drop ship products

Selling drop ship products is another way to bypass the product development hurdle and still make decent money online.

If you want to sell products without the hassles of tracking inventory, setting up warehouse space, and maintaining a confusing shipping/receiving infrastructure, drop shipping may be the best option for you.

Drop shipping lets you sell **quality, brand-name products** on your web site for a profit, while the drop shipper takes care of fulfilling the order. They warehouse the stock, pack the orders, and ship them out to your customers.

The best way to locate a distributor is to simply ask the manufacturer of the product to recommend one. Most manufacturers have established relationships with at least a couple of distributors, and they should be happy to put you in touch with one of them.

Another great way to find a distributor for the type of product you wish to sell is by looking through related trade magazines. You'll often be able to find listings of manufacturers and distributors advertising in the back of these publications. You can start by going to Yahoo! and searching for the phrase "trade magazines."

You may also be able to find distributors and manufacturers using the Thomas Register (www.ThomasNet.com), or you can try the comprehensive directory of drop shippers we recommend, which is available at www.MarketingTips.com/dropship.

These directories provide listings for thousands of companies broken down by product, brand name, and company name. It takes some time to get used to navigating through these sites, but they can both be great resources.

6. Combine profit streams to explode your income potential

Now that you know the top four ways to make money online, there's no reason why you can't incorporate several of them into your business model. The key is to focus on one, maximize the amount of revenue you get from it, and then move on to the next.

Combining income streams gives you the opportunity to generate more money than would ever be possible with a single profit strategy. It also helps protect your business against possible changes in the marketplace.

Any business is prone to slow periods and other forces beyond your control — so make sure you're not depending on only one source of revenue to keep your income steady.

Say most of your income comes from booking skiing trips for tourists in your local area. But one year, winter comes very late and there is virtually no snow. You may still sell

some vacation packages to people looking for great discounts, but you're not going to generate the kind of revenue you'd been counting on.

But what if you also sold eBooks about the best skiing locations on the continent? Or you were generating affiliate income by promoting skis, snowboards, and snow gear for another site? Even though your main source of income took a big hit, you'd still be generating income from these other sources — and that would make it a lot easier to get your business through to the next ski season.

Plus, you could generate income from these secondary sources all year long. It's easier to create a business that generates \$30,000 a year than one that makes \$100,000 a year. But once you've set up one profitable business, you can take what you've learned and use it to build another one — in half the time!

Then you can develop another, and another, and so on, always automating each one and building on what you've already learned. Soon all these multiple streams of income will start adding up!

Of course, it's best if you can automate your sites as much as possible, then just duplicate your business model and apply it to a new product or service.

The trick to building a successful, multifaceted business is to take it one step at a time. Start with one sales model and tweak and test it until it's generating maximum profits. Then survey your market to discover what other products or services they'd like you to offer, and then add them to your business, continuing to tweak and test to make sure you're growing your bottom line, not damaging it.

Of course, there is a lot of information you'll have to learn in order to build your business as efficiently as possible. And this kind of knowledge doesn't just come to you overnight...

Creating a business takes time and involves a lot of trial and error, and you'll probably make a lot of mistakes in the process. But bear in mind that mistakes are NOT failures — they're learning opportunities that allow you to discover better ways to build and manage your business.

Step #3: Keep your visitors glued to your site with compelling salescopy

Okay... so you've identified your niche market, and now you know exactly what you're going to sell to them.

The next step is to build your web site, right?

... WRONG!

Before you even think about building your website, you need to know what it's going to say. In other words, you need to write your salescopy. It's going to be the most important part of your website – which is why you need to plan your whole site around it, instead of trying to make it fit inside a design you've already created.

1. Why is salescopy so important?

The only contact you're going to have with the vast majority of your potential customers is through the text on your web site — your salescopy.

There is no face-to-face, personal interaction on the Internet, so your salescopy needs to do the job of a salesperson in an offline, brick-and-mortar store, who helps customers in person, shows them your merchandise, explains the benefits of your product, and "sells" them on your offer.

And that's why it's so important that you have salescopy to...

- Immediately draw the reader in with exciting benefits and enticing copy so you can lead them toward the sale
- Establish your credibility — after all, nobody will buy from you if they don't think they can trust you!
- Explain the benefits of your product or service to your reader and show **WHY** they need it
- Direct visitors through the sales process in a way that encourages the **MAXIMUM** number of sales

... And much, much more.

It's amazing how many people are still making this huge mistake: They develop an excellent business model and put together a great web site with all the right elements — good graphics, a well-organized navigation menu, a clear and simple ordering process...

... and then they neglect their salescopy!

Unless you are a massive enterprise with an established reputation that precedes you (like Ikea, for example, or Wal-Mart), you will need to have salescopy on your web site to convince potential customers of the value of your offer.

2. What is salescopy? And what is NOT?

When we're talking about salescopy, we do not mean those big headlines or five-word blurbs that far too many people attempt to use to do all of the required selling for them.

We've all been to web sites where the homepage is filled with some massive text that says something brief — and generally pretty vague — about the product or service at hand. Though this kind of text is designed to be catchy and grab your attention, what these site owners don't realize is that it's really doing just the opposite; most often, it's simply confusing their visitors and encouraging them to move on to another site.

Many people will have a couple of sentences of copy that they hope will be enough to turn their visitors into buying customers... but this doesn't cut it either!

Another common mistake is using huge, bold, colorful text to greet their visitors, saying such things as:

"Welcome to www.WidgetWorld.com!"

We'll tell you right from the start: This does NOT qualify as copy! You cannot fill your homepage with some enormous, vague headline, and expect it to do all of your selling for you.

What you need is carefully constructed salescopy that takes your visitor by the hand and leads them through all the necessary steps in your sales process. Before any person makes a purchase, online or offline, they need to know what's in it for them. They need to be convinced of the merit of your offer.

In some cases, this will mean you need short, compelling chunks of text that detail your products or services and create excitement around your offer. Each blurb of text will present the benefits of each specific product or service to your audience, in order to generate enough interest to persuade visitors to click through to product pages where you can present your offer in more detail.

In many other cases, it will mean you need a long salesletter. "Long copy" on the Internet takes its cue from direct marketing salesletters that have been tested over and over again for about a century now — and have never stopped working.

Long copy salesletters can be anywhere from 6 to 100 pages long — most run around the 8–20 page mark. These highly structured letters are specifically designed to lead readers through a proven sales process.

Generally speaking, long salescopy works best for sites that sell one product or service, while short copy works best for “catalog sites” that sell a number of different products.

3. The 10 essential copy elements of a successful online business

No matter whether your site requires long or short copy, there are 10 essential “must-have” salescopy elements that EVERY site needs to have in order to lead its visitors through the buying process and straight to the order form.

Read on to discover what these 10 elements are!

#1: Your unique selling proposition

Successful salescopy will position your product offer from a unique sales angle: What is your "Unique Selling Proposition," or "USP"? What is it that makes your product stand out from the competition's? What is the main selling point of your product?

For example, if you are selling toasters, what makes your toaster different from the thousands of other toasters out there? Why would anybody buy your toaster instead of your competitors'?

FedEx promises to "*Get it there overnight*" — something that no other mail carrier could do when they first broke into the marketplace and made a name for themselves.

Domino's Pizza used to guarantee "*30-minute delivery or it's free!*" They didn't even TRY to sell you on the quality of their pizza, because they guaranteed fresh, hot pizza at your door in 30 minutes or you didn't pay. And that made them stand out from all the other pizza joints in town!

To fine-tune YOUR unique selling proposition, start by asking yourself:

How does my product do its job better than the competition's?

Going back to the toaster example, the question would be: *How does my toaster make toast better than the competition's?*

Okay, this question might seem a bit silly (unless you're selling toasters), but ask the same question of your product or service. Then continue asking yourself questions like:

- Does my (toaster) *cost less* than the competition's?
- Does my (toaster) *last longer* than the competition's?
- Does my (toaster) *look more attractive* than the competition's?

Does it ship faster? Come with special features? Burn less toast? Use up less energy? Magically get rid of toast crumbs? *What does your product or service do or offer that makes it unique?*

That's what you need to emphasize in your salescopy!

#2: Language that speaks to your target audience

Defining your market is one of the steps that should be taken in the early stages of setting up your business, so if you still don't know exactly who you are targeting, you'd better get a move on!

But knowing who your market isn't necessarily enough. Now you are confronted with the task of being able to *target your audience*.

That means knowing who your audience is and what they might be looking for.

Ask yourself: Does your product or service appeal to children or teenagers? Moms or dads? Businesspeople in New York City? Surfers in Southern California? Small-business owners or multinational corporations?

How old are they? What kind of education do they have? What are their salaries?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, go back and do a little more market research... If you DO know the answers to these questions, then start thinking about the best ways to *target* this audience.

What are their fears? What keeps them from succeeding in what they want to do? What limits their abilities or their freedom? What are they really excited about? What are their "hot buttons"?

How can you show them that you understand their needs and wants... and *give them exactly what they're looking for*?

Don't be afraid to ask. By surveying your customers (or potential customers) you can sometimes discover that they buy your product or service for reasons that never occurred to you.

#3: An attention-grabbing headline and sub-headline

No matter what the subject matter of your web site, you can benefit from a compelling headline on your homepage. Your headline should immediately communicate the biggest benefit of your product or service and attract enough interest to draw readers further into your site. It's the key to enticing new visitors to stick around during that crucial "stay or go" decision.

While the main purpose of your headline is to attract the attention of your visitors, the other main purpose of your "grabber" or headline is...

To get your visitor to read your sub-headline.

And the main purpose of your sub-headline, of course, is to lead your visitor into the rest of your salescopy – your product descriptions, images, testimonials, and so on.

We test out different headlines on our sales material all the time... and we know for a fact that a simple headline change can increase (or reduce!) sales by up to 714%. And that's just a number from our own personal experience — plenty of other studies report headlines that increased response by up to 1,700%!

When writing your headlines, you should concentrate on *communicating the benefits* that your product has to offer to the reader. And create enough curiosity that they'll be compelled to read your sub-headline... then your first paragraph... and then be pulled into your salescopy.

A really good headline should accomplish some or all of the following:

- Emphasize the *key benefit* of your product or service
- Emphasize the *biggest solution* that it provides
- Generate *curiosity* and pull visitors into your web page
- Capture the essence of the main attractions or *power* of your product or service

The only type of headline worth writing is a headline that jumps off the page, seizes your reader, and forces them to pay attention... How can this lofty goal be accomplished? By giving your customers a powerful taste of exactly what they stand to gain from your web site.

Once you've written a few headlines, *test them*. Run them for a couple of weeks, then compare the results against other headlines. Then, tweak them and test them again! You may have to do this a few times before you hit on one that pulls consistently... but it's definitely worth the effort.

#4: Proof you're a credible business

Internet users are a skeptical crowd. They're constantly on the lookout for bogus information, false claims, and online scams. Plus, there's a lot of competition out there, and it's all too easy for your visitors to simply move on to another site. So not only do you need to let them know you're reliable... you also need to assure them that you're the best person for the job!

The sooner you establish credibility, the sooner your visitors will begin to trust you and accept what you're telling them. By being up front and personal with your visitors about who you are, you'll help them feel more comfortable doing business with you — and they'll be far less likely to worry that you're hiding something from them or that there must be a "catch."

You can establish your credibility in a couple of different ways.

i. Provide your credentials: Explain what makes you an "expert" in your field by providing information about your experience and your credentials. Discuss your business experience, your achievements, awards, and accolades. Boast about your success. Brag about your company. Heck, on one of our sales pages, we even include one of our financial statements!

ii. Include customer testimonials: Testimonials are an extremely convincing way to let your visitors know that other people have risked doing business with you and have been very pleased with the results. In fact, testimonials are so effective that they can EASILY increase your sales by more than 250%.

You can distribute testimonials strategically throughout your sales pages or display them on your homepage. If you have a left-hand menu bar with blank space below your menu, you have a perfect spot to fill up with testimonials. And you can always collect all of your testimonials and repeat them on another page of your web site called something like: "Read what our customers say about us!"

Customer testimonials are one of the most powerful tools you can use because they prove that you have delivered on your promises. Your readers will be more convinced by what your customers have to say about your product than by what *you* have to say about it — guaranteed.

#5: Benefits, benefits, benefits!

Killer salescopy doesn't focus on the features of your product or service — what it does, how it operates, or what it looks like. It focuses on **how the user will benefit** from these features. This is a subtle difference that people regularly miss when writing their salescopy, and **it's a mistake that costs them countless sales.**

The difference between a feature and a benefit is this: A feature is something the product has or does, while a benefit is something it does *for you*:

- A **FEATURE** is one of the components or functions of your product or service.
- A **BENEFIT** is something your product or service will do for your buyer to somehow offer a solution to a problem.

Emphasizing benefits is **the number one most overlooked rule of copywriting**, and this lack of emphasis is one of the top reasons advertising falls flat.

If this sounds a little complicated, just keep in mind that benefits are directly related to features. You can usually list all of your features first and then go through your list and identify the corresponding benefits.

Here are some examples of features and their corresponding benefits:

- **Fact/feature:** Deluxe Autowasher reduces water use.
Benefit: You save money.
- **Fact/feature:** Wash, wax, and rinse with the same unit.
Benefit: Extremely easy and convenient to use. You save countless hours every month.
- **Fact/feature:** Sturdy, polished aluminum construction.
Benefit: Unit will last longer, so you'll save money on replacement costs.

Did you buy a car with air conditioning just because it had air conditioning... or because it would keep you cool and comfortable on hot days? Did you buy a minivan because it had anti-lock brakes and airbags... or because it was very safe for you and your family? See where we're coming from?

Benefits are not "quality and service" or "cheapest." They are the answers to "what's in it for me?" or "why should I keep reading?" or "why should I order?"

If you are selling a service that will increase your clients' sales, give specifics. Don't just say, "By using this product, you will increase your sales!" Get specific and say, "Your sales will increase by up to 22% in 30 days or less!"

By offering benefits instead of features, you are creating a higher *perceived value*, which translates into more sales. This will be what pulls readers through your salescopy, straight to your order form!

#6: An iron-clad guarantee

These days, shoppers have been trained to be incredibly skeptical. They've been hardened by experience to doubt nearly any advertising they see or hear. We've all been burned before... and every time it happens, it becomes harder for us to trust anyone. Guarantees help to alleviate any anxiety the customer may be feeling about ordering from you.

If you are marketing a quality product or service, then you should not be afraid to back it up! Offer a 100%, no-hassles, no-questions-asked, lifetime money-back guarantee!

Right now you may be thinking that offering a lifetime guarantee sounds risky, right? Well, you may be pleasantly surprised...

Did you know that the longer your guarantee is good for, the fewer returns you will receive? It's a fact! You will receive fewer returns for a lifetime guarantee than a one-year guarantee. And you will receive fewer returns for a one-year guarantee than you will for a 30-day guarantee.

Why? There are two reasons...

- The customer feels more confident that your product or service will live up to your promises because the long guarantee indicates that you have confidence in what you are offering.
- The customer doesn't feel that they are on a strict time limit to return the product or feel rushed to review the product as soon as they get it to qualify for the 30-day return period. With a one-year guarantee (or longer), even if they want to return it, it is easy to put off because they know they have a long grace period.

An iron-clad, no-questions-asked guarantee goes a long way towards letting customers know that you're reliable, and that if they aren't satisfied with what they received, they won't lose a thing. This is especially important on the Internet because, of course, the majority of your first-time customers don't know you and don't have any reason to trust you with their business.

And if you're worried about getting scammed by customer who return your product right before the guarantee ends, don't be.

The fact is, very few people go to the trouble of returning anything. Unless they're absolutely infuriated, people are either too busy or too lazy to go to the trouble of returning something. And, of course, you're smart enough not to do anything to infuriate your customers!

#7: Free bonus items to create added value

When you create a blockbuster package that clearly exceeds the value of what you're asking your customers to pay you can easily **double or triple your sales**.

You pile on so much value, the customer can hardly believe that they're getting everything in your package at such a reasonable price.

The easiest way to do this is by creating a package of bonuses that, combined with the value of the product itself, is perceived to be worth much more than the price they're being asked to pay — so the customer will feel like they're getting more bang for their buck.

When you're deciding what to offer as a free bonus, your options are almost limitless.

However, there are two basic rules that you should follow:

Rule 1: Make sure that your "bonus" is of value to your target market.

Rule 2: Choose something that is related to your product or service, or something that will enhance your product or service in some way.

Here are some bonuses that you could create to "plump up" your offer:

- Consider writing an eBook on a topic that is related to your product or service. For example, if you sell gourmet puppy food, you might consider writing an eBook titled, *Training Secrets That Will Have Every Puppy Housebroken and Learning Basic Obedience in Less Than One Week!*
- Offer a special video that complements your product or service. For example, if you sell fly-fishing gear, you might offer a video that teaches people how to build on their fly fishing skills.
- Use your newsletter subscription as a bonus, especially if your newsletter provides powerful information your customer couldn't get without purchasing your product.
- Offer a bonus product that complements your product. For example, if you sell hockey jerseys, you could offer customers a hat with the same team logo on it as a bonus.

There are a few things, however, that you should definitely NOT include as a bonus item.

For example, you should NEVER offer a coupon for, say, 20% off their next order. This is NOT a free bonus! It means your customer needs to spend more money in order to receive the benefit, and they'll be more inclined to *resent* the offer than appreciate it.

And don't offer any old item that people *might* be interested in, unless it specifically relates to your product or service. If you're selling puppy food, that means you should NOT offer an Elvis clock, a *Backpacker's Guide to Borneo*, or anything that puppy owners will not be interested in! In this case, you should offer a puppy training eBook or free puppy toys — something that the *vast majority* of your target audience will want.

#8: A sense of urgency to encourage *immediate* sales

Okay, so your readers are compelled by your copy... they are intrigued by your benefits... they've been drawn through your salescopy and they're almost ready to make a buying decision.

At this point, if you don't instill a sense of urgency in the reader, far too many of them will simply think: "Hmmm. This is interesting. *Maybe I'll come back and check it out later.*" (Which, of course, they'll probably never do!)

... Unless you give them a reason why they absolutely **MUST** buy *right away!*

By creating a sense of urgency, you can prompt readers to take immediate action and go through with their purchase. This is a guaranteed way to add a *significant* boost to your bottom line!

You can create urgency in a number of different ways:

- *Limit the time* for which your offer is available — "Available for the next FIVE DAYS ONLY!"
- *Limit the quantity* of products or services you can offer — "Available only to the first 250 people to order!"
- Include a *discount* for a limited time or on a limited quantity of products.
- Include *bonus items* for a limited time or on a limited quantity of products.

Of course, if you limit the time for which your offer is available or limit the quantity of items being sold... you have to actually stick to these limitations! Otherwise, your customers won't believe you when you create these special offers. So do regular promotions and change your offer from time to time to ensure that you are creating an URGENT offer that prompts customers to *buy now!*

#9: A strong call to action that gets your visitors to BUY

After you've grabbed your visitors' attention with your compelling headline... established your credibility... presented your offer... and included all the other essential copy elements that we've just described, you might think your visitors are a sure thing. After all, they've come this far, so they're sure to buy now, right?

Wrong! This is the moment when you have to spell it out for them as clearly and blatantly as you possibly can. And that means you need to...

Ask for the order! Ask for the order! And then ask for the order again!

Everything we've discussed up to this point has been leading to this one crucial make-it-or-break-it moment of asking for the order and *closing the sale*.

And it takes a LOT of work to close the sale -- which is why you can't just skip to this point right away! Unfortunately, nobody is going to be persuaded to purchase your product or service by a "buy now" button. So you need to spend quite a bit of time building your credibility, explaining the benefits of your product or service, convincing readers of what's in it for them...

If you haven't led up to your close with all of these important elements gaining momentum and ushering your reader towards the "buy" decision, you won't be able to accomplish the task using the "close" alone.

But once you've made it to the point where your reader is ready to hear it, you **MUST** ask for the order.

Here are a few examples of simple, but direct, ways of asking for the order:

- "Just click HERE to order NOW — Risk-free!"
- "To order your copy today, along with your 5 FREE bonuses, click here now!"
- "Click here now to take advantage of this limited time offer!"

In the moment of the "hard sell," you will want to restate the strongest benefits and main selling points of your product or service, then clearly direct your reader to your order form. Without this direct approach to asking your customers for the order, they won't be given that final "nudge" they need to pull out their credit card and start purchasing!

#10: Your contact information

Once you've asked for the order, it's extremely important that you make it as easy as possible for your customers to contact you! Give them a number of different ways to order your product or service — like via secure online order form, phone, or mail/fax order forms.

Also be sure to provide plenty of contact information so that a potential customer who still has a few questions can feel perfectly comfortable about getting in touch with you to ask. Provide your email address and phone number (a 1-800 number is best), and state the best times of the day to call.

Include names of people to talk to so people can feel better about calling or e-mailing.

When a sales offer says: "Call this number to speak to a representative," it's much less inviting than saying: "You can call us any time at (number) and ask for Sam."

This may seem like an obvious part of your sales process — but it's shocking how often it's overlooked! A separate page of contact information on your web site is not enough.

You need to extend a personal invitation to call or email with questions or concerns, right at the end of your salescopy.

Okay... so those are the 10 essential elements to create good salescopy. Think of them like the ingredients of a recipe: skip one, and your entire cake will be ruined.

But once you start practicing a little, you'll be surprised at how quickly you get the hang of incorporating these elements into your own copy.

And the surprising thing is, even if you think you've made a bumbling attempt at creating urgency... or including lots of benefits... or solving the problems of your audience... chances are, your copy is still *hundreds of times stronger* than it would have been without at least an attempt to include these important techniques!

And as we've said, it's all a matter of science. Just stick with the copywriting techniques that have been tested by the experts over and over again for the past few decades... because they will *definitely* help to improve your sales and your business!

Keep testing the important elements of your copy, like your headline or your bonuses — over time, until you hit on the combination that always delivers the maximum returns.

No matter *what* your business... no matter *who* your audience... no matter *what* type of product or service you offer... the techniques we've discussed are a fundamental requirement of your sales process and the key to your business success.

Step #4: Design a website that compels visitors to take action

Now that you have your salescopy, it's time to build a home for it! In this Step, we'll cover the basics you need to know in order to build a website that leads people straight to the order button.

1. The 10-second rule: Why you must plan BEFORE you build

According to market research from Gartner Group, more than 50% of Web sales are lost because visitors can't find what they're looking for! Imagine spending all the time, effort, and money attracting visitors to your site, only to lose them because they can't find their way around!

You know those spy movies where the hero has 10 suspense-filled seconds to dispose of the message detailing his latest assignment before it self-destructs? Well, you have an equally short 10 seconds to grab your visitors' attention before your chances of making a sale self-destruct... and your first-time visitors leave your site forever.

You have to make those critical 10 seconds count by ensuring that the first fold of your web site (that's the first screen of your web site visible without scrolling) snags the attention of your visitors. And to do that, you need to provide a compelling benefit that persuades them to stick around to find out what you offer.

This probably sounds simple enough; however, most web site owners make fatal mistakes within their first fold that drive visitors away and limit the sales potential of their sites. In the process of trying to "tell it all" ... "sell it all" ... or "dazzle 'em all," they just end up "confusing 'em all." Or they assume that their web site will sell the offer itself, and they don't provide enough information.

Think about all of those times you've arrived at web sites that:

- Overwhelm you with graphics
- Point you in 14 different directions with links here, there, and everywhere
- Annoy you with flashy banners
- Slow you down with a long, pointless Flash presentation
- Spend the entire first page talking about "Mission Statements"
- And just plain drive you away with a lack of relevant information

... We've all been to these sites — and left them in a hurry, no doubt!

Make sure your visitors don't flee YOUR site. Give them what they expect to find – as well as lots of compelling reasons to stick around and discover more!

2. The “standard” pages your visitors expect to find on your site

While every site is different, there are a few basic pages your visitors will expect to see, because they're now generally considered to be a "standard" part of every successful web site. Visit sites like eBay.com or Amazon.com and you'll see that they include most, if not all, of the following pages:

a. FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

This is where you list the most common questions your visitors ask and provide the answers. Not only does this give your visitors the information they are looking for, it also accomplishes three very important goals:

- First of all, it's your chance to address your customers' concerns. Chances are, as you deal with customer queries, you'll keep hearing the same doubts; things like, "What makes your product different from your competitors?" By addressing these sorts of questions in your FAQ, you have a perfect opportunity to continue pointing out the benefits of your product or service.
- Second, by posting the answers to frequently asked questions, you're slashing the time you need to spend answering calls and emails from customers.
- Finally, once you've written the responses to the FAQs, you can use these answers time and time again when people send email. Just cut and paste the pre-written answers into your reply!

b. Privacy Statement

Privacy on the Internet is a sensitive issue, and you need to assure your visitors that you will respect theirs. That's where a privacy statement comes in, outlining exactly what sort of information you collect from each visitor, what you do with it, who you share it with, whether you use cookies, etc.

The Direct Marketing Association has an easy-to-use Privacy Statement Generator (www.the-dma.org/privacy/privacypolicygenerator.shtml). Simply answer a few questions about your site, business, and marketing practices. Make sure there's a link to your privacy statement on every page of your site.



Important Note:

Whenever you collect information from your visitors — like you would with an opt-in form or an order form — be sure to add a prominent link to your privacy policy.

We've found in testing that this can have a positive effect on conversion rates and help calm peoples' fears about sharing personal information. Be sure to have this page open in a new window, though, so your visitors won't lose their place on your site.

c. Acceptable Use Policy (or Terms of Service)

This is a set of guidelines outlining the terms and conditions of your site. Think of it as the rules of online behavior. If you have a membership site, this could mean stating what sort of conduct is unacceptable in your chat rooms or member forums. It can also limit commercial use of your site, as well as its images and content, and it should state the consequences of abusing the policy.

Also, any legal statements, such as warranties or disclaimers, can go here. Take a look at web sites similar to your own to get an idea of standard content. Amazon.com and Yahoo.com both include "Terms of Service" links you can click on at the bottom of their homepages.

d. About Us

It's important that visitors and customers know who they're dealing with. Having an "About Us" page, where you give the background of your site and yourself, goes a long way to establishing trust. Include a picture of yourself and any key staff, and spell out exactly what your site is aiming to do.

e. Contact Us

Another key step in establishing credibility is providing contact information — and not just an email address. Visitors should be able to easily find your mailing address and telephone numbers, too. While it's a good idea to have several specific email addresses you can provide for different purposes, such as sales@MyCompany.com, partners@MyCompany.com, etc., people are generally more comfortable when there's a name attached to a specific title. So if you have people performing specific functions, list their names as well.

f. Shopping cart

If your site offers multiple products, your customers will expect a shopping cart, which they can use to collect various products from your site until they're ready to complete their purchase.

So now that you know the key pages your site should include, it's time to think about how you're going to tie them all together...

3. Creating site navigation that leads visitors to take an action

Navigation is one of the biggest problem areas for web site owners. Too often, they start building the web site *before* they've mapped out the navigation. And that's a classic example of "putting the cart before the horse!"

a. The value of sketching with pencil and paper before building

Before you start building your site, it's a good idea to map it out with a pencil and some paper.

Start by compiling a list of all the things your web site will include. Don't worry about whether or not things are "logical" or "ordered" at this point. Just make sure your list is complete. Once you have the list, it's time to decide what the navigation of your homepage will look like, since this will likely be most visitors' jumping-off point.

Draw out your homepage. Then for each link to a new page, draw another page on a separate piece of paper. Once you're done, you should be able to lay all of the sheets out on the floor or tape them to the wall in a pyramid, with your homepage at the top.

Now pretend that you're a visitor, and try moving from one page to the next. Is it easy? Hard? Have a friend or family member try it. Do they struggle?

Mapping your navigation on paper like this prior to building it will help you catch issues with navigation *before* they're a serious problem.

b. Why you lose visitors with every "extra" click you ask them to make

Your focus at this point should be to minimize the number of clicks your visitors will have to make to accomplish the key goals on your site. Web surfers are impatient and are always one click away from leaving, so you can't assume they will take any extra trouble to "find" your information or offer.

WARNING: Any time you ask your visitors to click on a link, you risk losing them.

In fact, our studies have shown that you can **expect anywhere from 30% to 60% of your visitors to drop off at each click!** So instead of having a link on each page of your site leading to a separate page with the opt-in form for your newsletter, for instance, place the form itself on each page — one less click means losing fewer subscribers.

c. Why you should avoid adding unnecessary "layers" to your site

The further a visitor has to dig into your site, the less likely it is they'll complete the action you want them to take. That's one reason "splash" pages — those entry pages on a site that have some pictures or a Flash presentation with text saying "click to enter the site" — have to be tested very carefully to make sure they don't have a negative effect on sales. It's just an extra layer.

By the same measure, why have your products buried in a separate section — or layer — when you can feature them right on the homepage?

d. Navigation for sites that sell fewer than 10 products

If you're selling a single product, or just a few products, your navigation should be quite simple. A single product sold through a salesletter, for example, would require little more than links to the standard pages surfers expect and your order page.

A site selling only a handful of related products could easily feature them all on the main page, with links to details about each product on their own separate pages. This is much more direct than having a link that says "Products" and forcing the user to click one layer down to see them.

e. Navigation for sites that sell more than 10 products

Just because you can't show all your products on your homepage doesn't mean that you have to bury them a level down. When it comes to a site with many products, it's a good idea to group products into a hierarchy of categories. If you sell cameras, for instance, you can group them by the intended customer (professional photographers vs. amateurs) or by type (digital, film, etc.).

It's worth noting that researchers have discovered that there are two main types of shoppers out there: the **browsers**, who like to explore by clicking links that take them deeper into the site, and the **searchers**, who prefer to home in on the keyword they're looking for. If you can add a search function to let customers look for specific items, you'll keep both types of shoppers happy.

f. Navigation for sites that sell a service

Service sites are among the most straightforward to design and plot out, because you can usually avoid complicated catalogs. Very often the most effective type of site for selling a service is to have a salesletter right on your homepage, where you can start selling the benefits of the service you provide right off the bat — with no extra layers for visitors to wade through.

4. The critical elements of your homepage

When a visitor comes to your site, there are only two things that can happen: they can take an action (usually by clicking on a link) or they can leave.

The first fold is literally the most valuable real estate on your web site because this is the screen that your visitors absorb during the first 10 seconds of their visit and use to make their "should I stay or should I go" decision.

(Remember the "10-second rule" we talked about in the previous section!)

The first fold of your web site needs to be strategically designed so that it clearly communicates the biggest, most compelling benefit that you have to offer your visitors.

These are the key things you must include in the first fold of your homepage:

a. The headline

The very first thing that should draw the eyes of your visitors when they arrive at your web site is a headline that clearly states the biggest benefit your site has to offer. Graphics, logos, illustrations, menus, links, and other elements should never overpower or distract from this critical element.

Your headline should be located at the very top center of the page in a larger font size that naturally attracts attention. As we mentioned in the previous step, your headline should communicate information about what you offer and how you're going to:

- Make visitors' lives easier
- Save them money
- Save them time
- Help them in their personal lives
- Provide additional income
- Entertain them
- Make them more attractive
- Help them feel better
- Etc.

Plus, it should be visually appealing. For your headline to be most effective, your visitors must be able to absorb the benefits it shares in a glance. So you not only need to write a killer headline, you need to strategically format it! Use bolding, italics, and highlighting to tastefully emphasize key points. And watch where your lines break.

b. The opt-in offer

Given that so many of your first-time visitors will leave your site without buying anything, it is crucial that you ask for their names and email addresses as soon as possible. If you bury your opt-in offer on a second page, you'll lose potential subscribers who don't make it that far into your site.

(Check out Step 5 to find out how to create a compelling opt-in offer.)

c. The navigation

Visitors should be able to see your main navigation as soon as the page loads. If they have to scroll or search for it, you'll lose the majority of your visitors.

d. Call to action

Don't leave it to your navigation to direct the visitor; after all, they'll only click on a link if it is what they're looking for. You must give your visitors a strong call to action and tell them what you want them to do.

Let's say you sell a stress-relief product. Your copy might say something like, "After doing extensive research and testing, I found a set of really fabulous relaxation tapes that solved my recurring migraine problems, improved my sleep, and increased my energy levels — in just a few days! Recommend. Click here now to learn how they can soothe your troubles away and lead to a healthier, happier life."

For a site selling multiple products, a link that says "products" is far less compelling than a link like this: "Click here now to find the best tool for the job."

For a service business, a link that says "About Us" is informative, but doesn't give the reader a good reason why they should care. A call to action like "Discover why over 20,000 business owners trust us" will be much more effective.

5. Balancing salescopy with graphics

Good-quality product shots are important because they let customers see what they're buying. But it's important to realize that the features that close the sale are going to be quality *information* and a strategic *sales process* that establishes credibility, develops rapport, and emphasizes value — not flashy pictures.

When deciding which images to include on your site, ask yourself: What does it add to my site? We've found that the following types of images can boost sales, but be sure to do your own testing when adding images:

- Including a photo of each product you sell can be helpful, but make sure to use "thumbnail" pictures when you have several images, so pages always load quickly and don't get bogged down by large image files.
- If you're providing a service, then you and your staff are "the product," and photos can help personalize the service you offer.
- Pictures of satisfied customers posted alongside their testimonials add credibility to their statements.
- A "product shot" of electronically delivered products such as eBooks or software can help drive sales by making the product seem a bit more tangible.
- If you're writing a personal salesletter, including a small photo of yourself can help customers feel more connected to you, and "put a face to the name."

6. Avoid the biggest design mistakes business owners make

Business owners often go a little overboard when they build their first site. Here are a few pitfalls and "rookie" mistakes you should avoid:

a. Driving traffic away with banners and links

Be careful not to drive traffic away from your web site with distracting banners and links.

While there are some situations that warrant placing banners or external links on your homepage (e.g., when you're promoting an affiliate product or selling advertising space), you need to make sure you're not driving traffic right into the hands of your competition.

For example, if you're selling your own eBook about dog training, you shouldn't have a link to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) at the top of your homepage. Amazon.com is a HUGE, well-known bookseller that has already established its credibility with online book buyers. If you present your visitors with the choice of purchasing their dog training books from you or Amazon.com, they're likely going to choose [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Unless your site is supported by advertising, think carefully before placing any links or banners within the first fold of your homepage! This is where you should be directing visitors toward your offer, not away from your site!

b. Too much color, too many fonts

When you're designing the look of your site, choose a basic color theme and a couple of fonts, and then stick with them. Look at any well-designed site and you'll notice a consistency in the choice of colors and fonts. Nothing looks more amateur than a mishmash of fonts and colors.

c. Colored or patterned backgrounds

Make sure your background stays in the background. Resist the urge to add textures or use dark backgrounds. No matter how cool it looks, if visitors can't easily read your copy, they won't buy your products or services.

d. Unnecessary graphics and images

When tackling their first web site, some people make the mistake of thinking that having lots of images and fancy graphics makes the site more interesting. But unless images serve a specific purpose, they are merely decoration and will distract from what you're trying to accomplish with your site.

e. Unnecessary or cheesy use of Flash, audio, video, or animated gifs

Words sell — not graphics. So, if visitors spend the first 10 seconds at your site trying to figure out how to make your long Flash presentation stop, or waiting for large graphics to load, you can be sure that they're not going to stick around.

Always remember the main goal of your web site; if having large graphics and animation distracts visitors from that goal, get rid of them.

Any graphics or multimedia features should ONLY serve to enhance your message and illustrate a benefit — not for your own self-gratification. Your friends and family will be far more impressed by the long-term profits your site generates than by flashy, spinning images.

f. Slow-loading pages and graphics

If your homepage doesn't load quickly, your visitors will lose patience and click away. Get out a timer or a watch that registers seconds. Now stare at your screen for 10 seconds. It seems like an eternity, doesn't it?! Web surfers are extremely impatient — if they can't begin reading or viewing your homepage in less than 10 seconds, they will simply leave.

The Web Page Analyzer (www.WebsiteOptimization.com/services/analyze) is a great free tool that will tell you how long your web site takes to download at various modem speeds. It also points out which parts of your page are causing problems.

If you DO need to use large graphics on your homepage, provide a small icon that links to the larger graphic and warns people that there may be a wait as it loads.

g. Hidden links

For your navigation to work, you have to keep link colors consistent — people generally expect links to be blue and underlined. That may seem boring from a design point of view — even predictable — but that's the whole point!

They *should* be predictable. Your visitors should be able to scan your page and immediately know what they can click on. If you do use other colors for links, then at least underline them so they stand out. Either way, be consistent. If your text links are blue on one page and green on another, they'll start to lose meaning.

Also, try to avoid underlining words for emphasis, or people will try to click on them. Use **bolding**, *italics*, or "ALL CAPS" instead.

7. Testing your site's "usability"

Be sure that you take the time to test each of your web pages in the different web browsers (e.g., Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Opera, etc.) as well as in all resolutions

(i.e., 640×480, 800×600, 1024×768, 1280×720, etc.). Even take the time to test your page on new and older versions of the major browsers.

Some great free tools that will make this really easy can be found at www.AnyBrowser.com and www.BrowserCam.com.

Don't overlook this! We often come across sites that haven't been tested this way that end up "breaking" when we look at them in various browsers.

Check all of the links, the navigation bars, the load time, etc. And be sure that you do this before you submit your site to the search engines.

Finally, this is also the best time to perform some basic usability testing, which is a way of discovering how easy it is for visitors to navigate your site. Believe it or not, you can do this kind of testing before you even start building your site.

8. Resources for designing your web site

For good articles and resources on developing effective navigation and designing a simple site that works, check out these sites:

- SitePoint: www.sitepoint.com
- Builder.com: <http://builder.com.com>
- Useit.com: www.useit.com
- Webmonkey: www.webmonkey.com
- AnyBrowser.com: www.anybrowser.com
- WebDeveloper.com: www.webdeveloper.com
- Web Page Analyzer: www.websiteoptimization.com/services/analyze
- NetMechanic: www.netmechanic.com

Remember, designing a good web site means designing a web site that works! Don't lose sight of why you developed your web site in the first place. Every aspect of your site should somehow contribute to your goal — be it to sell, inform, or simply entertain!

The first fold is the most valuable real estate on your web site because this is where new visitors make their 10-second decision to stay or go. That's why you need to sidestep tempting design errors like misplaced banners, distracting animation, wordy mission statements, and premature ordering information, and use this space for a headline to carefully communicate the biggest benefit your web site has to offer and provide effective links to guide your visitors.

Navigation needs to be clear, unambiguous, and consistent throughout your site. That includes the language you use to describe each link, which should leave no doubt about what the visitor will find when they click it, as well as a compelling reason *why* they should follow your link.

Your visitors will expect to see certain elements on your site, including a clear privacy policy, contact information, and the answers to their common questions. You should also consider including an opt-in form on each page in your site, to make it easy for people to subscribe to your newsletter.

Of course, people won't bother navigating your site if it takes forever to load, and in most cases, distracting and unnecessary graphics and animations will only take away from your main goals.

Finally, you need to test that your site works in various types and versions of browsers and different types of computers (Mac versus PC), or all your work could be wasted.

In fact, even once you've completed designing your navigation, make a point of constantly testing new things, even if you currently have a web site that is doing well. Why? Because what works today isn't necessarily going to work tomorrow! By tracking your results carefully, you can keep people on your site longer, help them find what they're looking for more quickly, and boost your conversion rates.

5. Use an “opt-in” to build relationships with your potential customers

All right... so your copy is written, and your website has been built and is ready to start making sales – so you’re done, right?

Wrong!

If you *only* set up your website to sell a product, then you could be missing out on more than 80% of the sales you **COULD** be making!

Why? Because the vast majority of online shoppers **DON’T** make a purchase on their first visit to a web site. Most people need a minimum of 7-8 points of contact with a business before they feel comfortable enough to buy from them.

So if you don’t reach out to them and give them a compelling reason why they should give you their contact information – so you can stay in touch with them and overcome their buyer resistance – then you’ll never realize your full income potential.

So... how do you stay in touch with them, and build a relationship so they feel comfortable enough to buy from you?

The answer is elementary (or should we say, “email-entary?” ;-)) – via email!

1. Why email marketing works for ANY business

The most valuable asset of your online business is your "opt-in" list — the list of people who have completed your opt-in form and given you permission to send them email.

Using email to sell products or services online is so easy that literally **ANYONE** can do it! In fact, getting started with email marketing will probably bring you the easiest profits you've ever been able to generate with your business, and here's why:

- **Your "opt-in" email list is made up of people who want to hear from you.** They've visited your site, or they've come into your shop, and they've decided that they like what they see enough to give you their email address. They are actually inviting you to sell to them!
- **You are giving your customers and subscribers something they've ASKED you for.** When someone gives you their email address, they understand that you'll be using it to send them information that they actually *want* to receive — meaning that your opt-in list will be highly responsive to your email promotions.
- **You are developing valuable lifetime relationships with your customers and subscribers.** Email allows you to contact the people on your list over and over again, so you can build genuine relationships with them. There's simply **NO**

WAY you could do this offline without spending a fortune on printing and postage!

- **Every time you send a mailing, the response is 100% measurable.** Unlike other forms of marketing and advertising, email allows you to evaluate the success of your campaigns within just a few hours. This will save you thousands in wasted advertising dollars!
- **Opt-in email marketing is effective... instantaneous... and FREE!** This is our favorite thing about email marketing: You can contact your customers and subscribers whenever you want, with whatever offer you want, and it never costs you one single dime!

In fact, the use of email as a marketing strategy shows no signs of abating, with spending on email marketing expected to jump from \$885 million in 2005 to \$1.1 billion by 2010, according to Jupiter Research.

But we've been profiting from email marketing for so long that we sometimes take it for granted! So we want to get you thinking about how YOU can use email to start generating extra cash immediately...

a. How your offline business can use email marketing

If you're wondering how on Earth your offline business can use email marketing — if you don't even have a web site yet — here's a great example: Suppose you own a hair salon and business is slow. You aren't getting many clients, and you are afraid that the coming months are going to be even worse.

If you'd been collecting your clients' names and email addresses (with their permission) when they came up to the cash register to pay for their haircuts, this is all you'd need to do:

1. Spend about 10 minutes writing an email message stating that for this month only, you are offering 20% off all services.
2. Send the message out to your list of clients.

Do you know what will happen within about 12 hours of sending that email?

Your phones will start ringing off the hook! What was looking like a slow month will soon be booked solid — and all you had to do was put together a simple email message, which took you 10 minutes to write and cost you NOTHING to send.

Of course, you don't need to sit down and actually send a separate email to each and every one of your customers. That could literally take you days!

But with computers, you have the power to send out an email promotion to your entire list automatically.

As you collect the names and addresses of your contacts, you just add them to a database. Your email management program will merge the email addresses with your message and sends it out to your whole list at the click of a mouse. It can even personalize each message with the person's first name... or with whatever personal information you want to include!

When you're ready to mail, you just have to write the letter once, and the program will insert the personal details for each person into each email, so it looks like you wrote each one individually.

b. How your online business can use email marketing

If your business already has a web site, you've got a great head start on your competitors who might not have a web presence yet. However, if you aren't combining the power of email marketing with your web site, you're probably generating only a fraction of the profit you could be making.

The real power of email marketing for online businesses is that it gives you a way to drive qualified buyers to your site... whenever you want... at the touch of a button... for FREE!

Think carefully about this concept for just a moment. Imagine having the ability to send a swarm of highly targeted visitors to your site at the exact moment you are featuring a product that you KNOW they'd be interested in purchasing.

This is exactly what email marketing will do for your business! Anyone who comes to your site and gives you their email address — in exchange for a free newsletter subscription or a free report — is a very hot lead. And as you'll see, there's no better tool than email to let you effortlessly follow up with those leads.

And once you've written your emails, the whole process of sending out personalized emails can be completely automated. You don't have to lift a finger. You don't even need to be awake!

2. Free opt-in giveaways your visitors won't be able to resist!

Aren't sure what to give your opt-ins, in exchange for their email address?

Here are some ideas...

Opt-in incentive #1: Free subscription to an online newsletter

This one's our favorite... Offering a free newsletter is probably THE best way to collect

opt-in email addresses. If you are communicating on a regular basis with your subscribers, giving them valuable information, and allowing them to get to know and trust you, how many of them will become loyal customers?

The answer? A LOT.

Your newsletter subscribers represent the perfect, targeted marketing opportunity. These people are familiar with you and your business. They are familiar with your products and your sales material. They WANT to know more about what you have to say!

These are the people who are MOST LIKELY to be open to future offers from you. Once you've established your credibility with them, they'll be receptive to your promotions.

This is exactly why starting your own online newsletter can be one of the most beneficial things you ever do for your business. It's an incredibly powerful way to establish credibility in your industry and build relationships with your customers and subscribers, and it's one of the most effective methods of *attracting* new subscribers and building your opt-in list.

By communicating regularly with your readers, you will earn their trust and respect. And once your readers trust you and value your opinion and judgment, a good percentage of them will buy from you. Plus, it gives you a strong edge over your competition!

Opt-in incentive #2: A free eBook

A free eBook can be a huge draw, depending on the kinds of products or services you offer. For example, the web site of a Chicago real estate agent would get a TON of opt-ins if it offered a free eBook titled "Seven things you MUST know if you are buying or selling a home in Chicago this year."

Of course, if you offer a free eBook, you'll have to go through the trouble of actually writing it. But keep in mind that an eBook doesn't need to be hundreds of pages long.

If you can pack five or ten pages with valuable information, your visitors will be more than satisfied.

Just like a free newsletter, a free eBook not only helps you build your list, it also gets your visitors familiar with you and your products or services. As long as your eBook contains useful information, your visitors will recognize that you are giving them something above and beyond what your competitors' sites are offering.

Want to offer an eBook but don't have time to write it? Hire a freelancer! Expect to pay anywhere from about \$17 to \$75 per hour. You can track down a writer at www.Elance.com.

Opt-in incentive #3: A free course

A free electronic course on a subject of interest to your visitors is another great way to start collecting opt-in email addresses. People love to get things for free, and if you offer to teach them about something they are interested in — at no charge — you'll not only be able to build your list quickly, you'll also boost your credibility.

Using delayed autoresponders, you can set up the different lessons in your course to be emailed to subscribers at specified intervals. A financial planner, for example, might try offering a course on how to invest wisely, which could be broken up like this:

Lesson 1: Education Savings Plans

Lesson 2: Retirement Savings Plans

Lesson 3: Investing in the Stock Market

Lesson 4: Real Estate Investments

The delayed autoresponder service could mail a new lesson to subscribers every seven days — meaning that subscribers would automatically be exposed to your company and your offer four times over the course of a month. And the best part is, you are contacting them with information that they have specifically requested, not just promotional offers!

Of course, you can also offer visitors your entire lesson series in exchange for their email address.

When visitors to Chris Standring's PlayJazzGuitar.com site give him their email address, they are promised a free 18-week "masterclass" in playing jazz guitar. This is a strategy that has helped Chris build an opt-in list of 10,000 and growing! And, as this whole process is automated, he doesn't have to lift a finger!

Plus, Chris takes this a step further by incorporating automated newsletters with more of a sales angle, with great results. He explains: "I have a newsletter that I send out biweekly called *What's New At PlayJazzGuitar.com*. In the newsletter, I always include a new testimonial about the course. As a result of this, I usually see an increase in sales every two weeks coinciding with the newsletter delivery, and it encourages return visits."

Opt-in incentive #4: A free report

A free report can work really well for any site that is selling a product or service, as it gives you the chance to position yourself as an expert in your industry.

Imagine the power of a well-written report on "New Trends in Web Design" if you were selling web design services. This would really set you apart from your competition, and it would give you a great chance to show your potential customers why you are their best choice for a web designer.

You might also consider creating a report that presents case studies of people or companies who are successfully using your products. Showing your potential customers real examples of people just like them who are using your product successfully gives you instant credibility and helps get potential customers to picture themselves using your product.

Consider the success Paul Jerard of Yoga-Teacher-Training.org had with his opt-in offer of a free report, "The Seven Things You MUST Know Before Enrolling In A Yoga Teacher Training Program."

He found that 10% of the people who visited his site actually downloaded his report the FIRST time they saw his offer. And of all the people who bought his products, 98% had previously downloaded his report. That's a lot of income generated by a short report that cost only a few minutes to create — and not a cent to distribute!

Opt-in incentive #5: Run a contest

Alternatively, you might want to consider setting up a monthly contest. This is a time-tested way to gather information about customers offline, and it works just as well for online businesses.

A contest at your web site works on the same principle as dropping your business card in a jar at the local diner in hopes of winning a free lunch for your office. The diner gets to collect information about its customers, and the customers get the chance to win a valuable prize. Both parties get something of value, and it doesn't really cost the diner anything more than a few burgers for the winner.

Of course, there are some situations where running a contest can actually be very bad for your business. If, for example, you run a site that is selling just one product — a kit to build your own birdhouse, for example — you'll definitely want to stay away from a contest that gives visitors the chance to win a free birdhouse-building kit. The reason for this is that your visitors will enter the contest — and then not buy your product! After all, why BUY the kit when you might WIN it at the end of the month?

3. How to write a compelling subscription offer

If you really want to attract the highest number of opt-ins, it's important that you know a thing or two about how to write a subscription offer that motivates your visitors.

We've worked with some of the best (and highest-priced!) copywriters in the business, and here are the three hard-and-fast rules they use when writing an opt-in offer:

Rule #1: Emphasize benefits, NOT features

To persuade visitors to subscribe to your newsletter or opt in to your mailing list, you NEED to answer their biggest question: "What's in it for me?" The best way to do this is by always emphasizing the benefits of your product or service, as opposed to the features.

Here's an example: Suppose you are offering an eBook on your real estate site. If you were to write "Download our FREE eBook, written by a state-certified housing inspector," you'd be advertising a feature. You are telling your visitors a fact about your eBook.

Here's how it reads if we emphasize benefits instead of features:

Buying a home?

Certified Housing Inspector John Smith
Reveals the **10 things you MUST look for**
To avoid costly repairs down the road!

Click here to read this FREE eBook!

That's a pretty dramatic difference, isn't it? You've hooked your visitors by letting them know how **THEY** will benefit by signing up for your offer — promising to help them avoid costly home repairs, for example.

Rule #2: Include a call to action

Okay, we know this one seems obvious, but we're always amazed when we see subscription offers like "Subscribe to our FREE Newsletter that's full of hot tips guaranteed to help you save thousands on your car every year!"

Sure, you've emphasized the benefit of your newsletter, but you haven't told your visitors what you want them to do!

You want to make things as simple as possible. This includes telling your visitors **EXACTLY** what action you want them to take. Here is the same subscription offer reworded to include a "call to action":

Click here now to subscribe to our FREE newsletter that's full of new tips every week that are guaranteed to help you save thousands on your car every year!

As you can see, a call to action is text that tells your visitors **EXACTLY** what you want them to do. Leave nothing to chance. If you want them to enter their names and email addresses, you must tell them, "Enter your name and email address in the fields provided." If you want them to click through to your subscription page, you must tell them, "Click here now to subscribe."

Rule #3: Include a link to your privacy policy

A lot of people still feel a bit reluctant to hand over their personal information to someone they've never met before. The best way to ease their fears is to include a link to your privacy policy whenever you ask for personal information. In fact, you should have a link to your privacy policy on every page of your site!

This lets people know that you are committed to protecting their privacy, and makes them feel safe leaving their email address with you.

It's a small thing, but it will play a HUGE role in reassuring your visitors that you're a reputable company.

Every e-commerce site should have a clearly written privacy policy. But whatever you do, don't make the mistake of copying and pasting a privacy policy from a well-known company onto your own web site. Your privacy policy needs to be specific to YOUR business.

Your privacy policy should state explicitly what information you collect from your visitors and how you intend to use it.

But don't worry — you don't have to create your own privacy policy from scratch! There's an easy-to-use "privacy policy" generator at:

www.the-dma.org/privacy/creating.shtml

This site will ask you some specific questions about how you collect and use information from your users and then generate a privacy policy for you — FREE! It will even write the HTML code for you and email it to you, so you can just copy and paste the code onto every page of your site.

4. Where to put your offer to maximize opt-ins

We're always shocked when we visit sites that hide their opt-in offer, leaving us searching around to find their newsletter subscription page. Sometimes there's a little "Newsletter" link down at the bottom of the page, next to the link to the legal disclaimer. Other times, "Newsletter" will appear in the navigation bar, between "Links" and "Contact Us."

Don't make that mistake!

Opt-in email addresses are one of the most valuable marketing tools an online business has. You **MUST** place your opt-in offer in a prominent place on your site. If you don't, you're guaranteed to lose potential opt-ins by the truckload.

So where is the best place for you to put your offer if you want to maximize opt-ins?

There are basically two schools of thought on this...

If your homepage contains a long salesletter, you'll want to put the opt-in form somewhere around the second "page" of text. By this point, you'll have grabbed your visitors' attention and shown them that your site offers some valuable information. They'll be more inclined to give you their email address once you've established your credibility as a resource than if you had just placed the form at the top of your homepage.

If your homepage DOESN'T have a long salesletter, you'll want to place your opt-in form prominently within the "first fold." (This is the first screen that is visible to a visitor without scrolling.) People's eyes are generally drawn to the top left-hand part of a page first, so the top or left is a good place to put your opt-in form.

We also encourage you to place the opt-in box in the same place on every single page of your site. The more chances you give your visitors to opt in, the higher your conversion rate is going to be. Of course, you don't want to overdo it... one opt-in offer per page is plenty!

5. Ten ways to profit from email marketing

All right... now that you're ready to start collecting your visitors' email addresses, what do you do with them?

Here are 10 ideas you can use to launch your own email marketing campaigns. These ideas are just a starting point — once you realize just how easy it is to drive sales using email, you'll be able to think of all kinds of new ways to put the power of email marketing to work for you!

1. Announce regular specials

Once you've started collecting the email addresses of the visitors to your web site or store, you can send them regular updates letting them know what your specials are... weekly, biweekly, monthly, or whatever works for your customers.

Make sure that your specials really ARE "special." Even if you don't make as much profit as you'd like to from your specials, you'll make it all up — and more — with the additional sales you'll make to those customers down the road!

2. Host "Subscriber Only" events

One of the best ways to capitalize on the lifetime value of your customers is to reward them with special subscriber-only events.

Suppose you own a restaurant, and you've been collecting the email addresses of your customers. You could send each of them an email invitation to an exclusive wine tasting evening for regular diners only.

If you own an online business, you can set up a special page on your site that is

accessible only to customers — and then send them an email telling them how to take advantage of the specials you advertise on that page!

3. Send appointment reminders

If you are running a service business, as opposed to a retail business, you can still capitalize on the power of email marketing. One of the best ways to do this is to send appointment reminders to your clients.

If you're a karate teacher, you could send your new clients an email three days before their first lesson, reminding them where you are located, and when they need to arrive. In that same message, you could include a coupon that offers them 25% off their karate lessons if they bring a friend with them to enroll as well!

4. Follow up with your hottest leads

You can use email to follow up with those people you have spoken with personally, but who have not made a purchase. Offer to answer any additional questions they may have, and let them know that you are available to speak with them at their convenience.

You can dramatically increase your chances of closing a sale by providing your leads with extra information they're not expecting. For example, if you sell cars, you could send them an article from a leading car magazine that contains a review of the vehicle your potential customer was thinking about buying.

5. Offer electronic "loyalty coupons"

This is a great way to get your existing customers to buy from you again and again. Simply send each of your customers a coupon that they can print and bring with them into your store on their next visit. Or, if your business is strictly online, tell them they can use the coupon the next time they visit your site.

Remember: It is always a good idea to make your coupons valid for a limited time only. This motivates your customers to take action right away and make a purchase from you as soon as possible.

6. Send follow-up offers to your customers

Follow-up offers are one of the most powerful ways to build a profitable business. You've already spent the money to get visitors to your web site, built a relationship with them, established your credibility, and closed the initial sale — so you've overcome the obstacle of gaining their trust!

How profitable can follow-up email be? Well, we have a large database of people who know and trust us. We sent this database of customers a follow-up email,

introducing them to a product that we thought they might like.

The entire process of writing the email and sending it out took about 20 minutes — and that was all the investment it took to make over \$74,000 profit!

That's \$74,000 profit for just 20 minutes of work! Whatever the size of your customer list, you can see how a small investment of time can reap big rewards!

7. Develop relationships by offering free information

One of the best ways to help your subscribers get to know and trust you is to send them something valuable — for free!

You can offer a free newsletter, a free report, a free download, a free trial version of software... whatever you think your subscribers would like!

Of course, once you've captured their email addresses and established your credibility by offering them valuable information, your chances of making sales to these people increase exponentially. Just think about it: Aren't you more likely to make a purchase from a business that has proven to you that they really VALUE you?

8. Encourage "Send To a Friend"

Email is a great way to encourage referrals! Because email is easy for people to forward to their families, friends, and co-workers, you can grow your business faster than you ever could before the Internet.

Make sure that every newsletter, offer, or special you send to your customers and subscribers reminds them that they can forward your message to anyone they think might be interested in what you have to offer.

Better yet, you could run a promotion that gives your existing customers and subscribers something for free every time they personally refer a customer to you!

9. Deliver your product electronically

By delivering your product electronically, you can DRAMATICALLY increase your profit margin!

Suppose you have written a self-help book, and you are currently selling paperback copies through your site for \$29 each. By creating a digital version of your book — which is WAY easier than you're probably thinking — you can simply email your book to your customers!

Even if you sell your eBook for less than your paperback version, you'll STILL be

making a bigger profit, since you don't have to worry about things like printing costs, warehousing, packaging, and delivery!

And your customers get a deal, plus instant gratification when they download their eBook.

10. Sell your knowledge

If you are an expert about a particular topic — and just about everyone is — then you've got a successful business just waiting to be born! There are literally thousands of people making a living online selling paid subscription newsletters about anything and everything.

Let's suppose you've had success in the stock market. Why not start an online newsletter that lets subscribers know what stocks you are buying and selling? You could easily charge \$29 per month for this kind of service, and even if you only managed to land 250 subscribers — which is EXTREMELY easy online — you'd still be pulling in over \$87,000 a year!

Remember: Opt-in email marketing really can work for absolutely any business model. Even if you have no desire to create and manage a web site, email marketing can still help you generate a substantial income. And if you do have a web site, or if you plan to take your business online, email marketing will be even more important!

Step #6: Drive swarms of cash-in-hand visitors to your site

Your site is ready is 100% ready to go... and you even have a compelling opt-in offer you can use to capture your visitors' contact information and build a close relationship with them with email.

Now... if only those darned visitors would come to your site!

Lots of website owners still believe that if they build a site, the visitors will automatically come. But there are BILLIONS of websites online – and the chances that people will find YOURS without a little help are practically nil!

The good news is, thanks to the free and paid search engines, it's easy to put your site right smack in the path of Web surfers who are looking for EXACTLY what you sell.

Search engines are the first place most Internet users go when they're looking for information. In fact, a top listing with a search engine like Google or Yahoo can introduce your business to thousands of potential customers.

But in order to get your site listed with the major search engines, you have to let them know you exist...

... And in this Step, we'll tell you how to do exactly that!

1. Optimize your site so your visitors find what they're searching for

Remember those keywords you discovered in Step 1, using research tools such as Wordtracker (www.marketingtips.com/wordtracker) and Keyword Discovery (www.marketingtips.com/keywords)?

Here's where they REALLY start to come in handy...

... These are the words and phrases that your target audience are typing into the search engines, when searching for a solution to the problem YOUR PRODUCT was designed to solve!

Now, in order to make sure your site ranks high in the search results for those keywords, you'll want to make sure they're embedded in strategic locations on your web pages, such as:

- Your domain name (if you haven't already got one)
- Your title tag
- Your headlines and subheads
- In your image "alt" tags

- In your description and keyword “meta tags”
- ... And of course, in your salescopy!

By “optimizing” your site properly for your top keywords, you let both your visitors AND the search engines know that your site has exactly what they’re looking for.

2. Create a network of links that’ll lead the search engines right to your doorstep

The search engines place a heavy emphasis on the number of links that point to your site from other pages on the Web.

In fact, the best way to ensure the search engines find your site fast and start listing it in their results is to lead them to your site via a network of links from other sites.

(These links are the breadcrumbs that will lure the search engine spiders straight to your site!)

However, these links can’t come from just any old site...

... In order to make the search engines sit up and take notice, you need to get links from authoritative web pages with content that relates directly to the content of YOUR site!

(By “authoritative,” we mean web pages with a decent search engine ranking that have a lot of high-quality links from other highly ranked, relevant sites pointing to *them*.)

For example, if you sell custom-made dog houses, a link to your site from your friend’s cousin’s little brother’s personal homepage isn’t going to help you very much. But a link from www.all-about-dog-houses.com will give your huge boost in the eyes of the search engines!

When determining whether a link is relevant or not, you need to ask yourself two questions:

1. Does the linking site have content that’s similar to yours? (e.g., does it contain the same keywords that your site has?)
2. Does the linking site have a decent search engine ranking? (e.g., is it in the first 20 results for your keywords?)

If you can answer yes to one or both these questions, then you’ve found a good potential link site!

So... how do you go about getting these links? Here are some strategies we’ve found to be incredibly successful:

- Submit your site to the Web's top directories
- Submit keyword-optimized articles to the Web's top article directories
- Simply ASK for links from other site owners!

These strategies will require some time and effort on your part... but the payoff will be HUGE. The search engines really do place THAT much emphasis on your incoming links!

3. Drive INSTANT traffic to your site with pay-per-click advertising

Getting a good ranking with search engines like Google and Yahoo can be a bit of a time-consuming process... you have to wait a while to see the fruits of your labor.

... But that doesn't mean you should sit around doing nothing in the meantime!

An excellent – and cheap! – way to start driving instant traffic to your site right away is by using the paid search services offered by Google and Yahoo ([Google AdWords](#) and [Yahoo Search Marketing](#)).

Pay-per-click programs work a lot like an auction: site owners bid money on specific keywords so their sites will appear at the top of the results when searchers enter those keywords into a search engine.

Then, when searches click through to your web site, you pay the search engine the amount you bid on that particular keyword.

There are three key advantages to using pay-per-click advertising:

1. You can get your site listed in the top search results in as little as 15 minutes
2. It can be a very inexpensive way to advertise your business
3. You only pay for advertisement that works!

Pay-per-click advertising can be a powerful way to quickly increase your web site traffic for relatively little cost. But the trick to using pay-per-click effectively is to make sure you keep a careful eye on your spending!

Here are some tips on how to make sure you run your pay-per-click campaigns as effectively as possible:

- **Find cheap, neglected keywords to bid on** – You may not get as many visitors, but if you choose your keywords right you'll get more TARGETED visitors – for a lot less money!

- **Create separate ads for every product you sell** – The more focused your ads are, the better
- **Monitor your site statistics to identify your best-performing ads** – The ads that drive the most visitors to your site are the ones you want to concentrate your spending on.
- **Split-test your ads to see which bring the best results** – By running two or more slightly different ads at the same time, you'll be able to see which variation appeals most to your target market.

Pay-per-click advertising can be an incredibly powerful source of qualified traffic for your web site – provided your ads appeal to your target audience, and don't drain your budget!

The best way to make sure they are effective is to track their results, and always make sure you're spending the most money on the ads that send you the most visitors that actually turn into paying customers!

By using pay-per-click advertising wisely, you can start sending customers to your site in just a matter of minutes!

Conclusion: Where do you go from here?

Congratulations! You now know the six essential steps you need to follow in order to build an online business that's guaranteed to be successful.

That puts you ahead of 90% of the online business owners out there – most of whom are scratching their heads wondering why their business isn't generating the kind of money they expected.

Make sure you don't share their fate!

All you have to do is the six steps outlined in this report, in the order they're presented:

- **Step #1: Find your niche market**
- **Step #2: Make sure you sell the right solution**
- **Step #3: Keep your visitors glued to your site with compelling salescopy**
- **Step #4: Design a website that leads visitors straight to the order button**
- **Step #5: Use an "opt-in" to collect leads and build customer relationships**
- **Step #6: Drive swarms of cash-in-hand visitors to your site**

Of course, all the information in the world isn't going to do you any good if you don't put it into ACTION.

When it comes to building your own successful Internet business, the best advice I can give is this: just GO for it!

You don't have to be a programmer, businessperson, or web designer to start taking action today. The fact is, *everyone* has the skills it takes to create a profitable Internet business. And there's never been a better time than NOW to start creating your own online success story!

Just please keep in mind that the information in this report is intended to provide you with an **overview** of the steps you need to take in order to guarantee the success of your online business.

I wanted you to have the "Cole's notes" version so you could absorb this information as quickly as possible and stop yourself from making any costly mistakes with your business.

However, there's a lot more you need to know in order to make sure you build your online business and start making great money in record time.

If you want to get the complete “full scoop,” then I suggest you check out my best-selling course, [*Insider Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet*](#).

This 900 page, two-binder, six-CD course is the complete “A-Z” encyclopedia of Internet marketing, and provides you with all the tools, tutorials, resources, and key strategies you need to grow a successful online business.

And right now, you can take it for a full 30-day test drive for just \$2.95, simply by clicking the link below!

<http://www.marketingtips.com>

It’s the ultimate risk-free way to get your hands on the most powerful Internet marketing information available on the Internet today.

Good luck! I wish you all the best in your business-building efforts.

Please keep in touch to let me know all about your victories and triumphs... your milestones and celebrations.

I can’t wait to hear YOUR personal success story!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Gehl". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "D" and a cursive "Gehl".

Derek Gehl, CEO
The Internet Marketing Center