

***How to Start and Run an Internet Business:
Everything you Need to Know***



by

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Disclaimer

This book is based on years of successful business experience and months and months of research. I have done my very best to make sure that this book will take you through every step of starting and running your own internet business and tell you everything you need to know.

In an effort to make a point I'm explaining easier, I sometimes provide screenshots to illustrate the point. These screenshots are from third party web sites. Although I try to stay on top of these and catch them when I can, if the third party changes their web site it could result in the screenshot you see being different from what you see when you actually go to their web site.

During the course of the book I provide my understanding of certain legal, tax, business and financial matters, but I don't practice law and I'm not an accountant. Since I don't want to get sued if my understanding is not correct, your reliance on any of my statements is solely at your own risk.

Throughout the book, I mention places where you can get items to help you. I have personally used every company I mention and I like them, but you don't have to use them if you don't want to. I'm professionally associated with less than two percent of the companies I mention so it doesn't matter to me which companies you decide to go with. These just happen to be the ones I like and use myself.

Although I like all the companies mentioned here and have had good experiences with them, if you use them and don't like them I take no responsibility for it, but please do let me know your experience as it might cause me to remove them from the book.

I have done my best to make sure all the information contained here is accurate, but despite my best efforts some of it may not be. I also can't be responsible if a change to the internet at some point negatively affects some of the advice I give here.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
CHAPTER 1: THE 3 BIGGEST MYTHS	10
Myth #1	10
Myth #2	12
Myth #3	13
CHAPTER 2: BUSINESS IDEAS	14
Affiliate Marketing	14
Starting a Business Scams	25
5 Indicators of a Scam	25
Specific ‘Opportunities’ to Avoid	27
The 3 Required Buying a Business Criteria	31
CHAPTER 3: WEB SITE BASICS.....	34
Do you need a web site?	34
Web Site Options.....	34
The Three Elements All Web Sites Share	36
The Pros and Cons of Web Site Builders	37
Choosing your Web Host	39
How to Find a Good Web Host	40

Pay vs. Free Web Sites – Why Pay is Better	41
Domain Names	43
CHAPTER 4: HOW TO ORDER YOUR WEB SITE	47
How to Select a Domain Name	47
How to Order a Web Store.....	52
How to Order a Web Builder	57
How to Order Web Hosting	69
CHAPTER 5: WEB SITE DO'S AND DON'TS	65
The Seven Do's and Don'ts of Building a Site	65
The Biggest Mistake Most Newcomers Make	67
The Most Important Information on Your Site	68
The Two Most Common Web Site Legal Issues	69
CHAPTER 6: BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE	72
CHAPTER 7: EMAIL.....	73
Web Mail.....	73
How to Set Up Your Email in Outlook Express.....	75
Two Great Ways to Protect Yourself from Spam.....	79
A Final Word on Email	81
CHAPTER 8: HOW TO ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS.....	82
The 3 Ways You Can Accept Credit Cards.....	82

Why You Should Care about Fraud.....	86
Four Possible Indicators of Fraud.....	86
What to Do if You Think an Order May Be Fraudulent....	88
Fraud Wrap Up.....	89
CHAPTER 9: GET VISITORS TO YOUR WEB SITE	90
CHAPTER 10: HOW TO GET LISTED IN GOOGLE	92
CHAPTER 11: HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GOOGLE RANKING	94
Optimizing your Web Site.....	94
Inserting Meta Tags on your Web Page.....	99
Insert Your Keywords into Your Content	101
Additional Optimization Resources	102
Ways to Get Links to Your Web Site	103
Good and Bad Web Site Links	104
Beware! Watch Out! Danger!	111
CHAPTER 12: HOW TO GET LISTED IN OTHER SEARCH ENGINES.....	113
Yahoo.....	113
DMOZ.....	114
MSN.....	116
CHAPTER 13: ADVERTISING YOUR SITE.....	117
The Most Important Advertising Rule.....	117

Advertising that Costs Money	118
Beware of Certain Ad “Opportunities”	130
Free Advertising	132
CHAPTER 14: SHIPPING YOUR PRODUCT	137
The One US Shipping Law You Must Know	137
Shipping Methods: Pros and Cons	137
Where to Find Shipping Boxes	139
CHAPTER 15: CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES	141
10 Ways to Win Points with your Customers	141
Dealing with Difficult Customers	149
The One Thing That You MUST Do	151
CHAPTER 16: TAXES AND LICENSES	153
Types of Business Structures	153
How to Choose Your Business Structure	155
Income Taxes	156
Sales Taxes	156
Do you need a Business License?	157
Do you need a DBA?	158
CHAPTER 17: BUSINESS BASICS	160
Keep Track of All Your Expenses	160
Do you need a Business Phone Line?	162

The Life/Work Balance.....	165
CONCLUSION.....	167
APPENDIX 1	168
Bonus Videos	170
My Resource List.....	170
Keywords Worksheet.....	171
Expense Tracking Worksheet_	172
Starting a Business Checklist	173
Tutorial: How to Build an Online Store.....	170
Tutorial: How to Build a Web Site	170

Introduction

Hello and welcome!

Starting your own business is incredibly exciting and just a tiny bit scary. Let's face it, any time you start something new and especially something as "real" as your very own business it can be intimidating.

This book will make your journey to full fledged business owner a lot less scary because it shows you exactly what you need to do. It breaks down the huge having-your-own-business process into a series of really simple to follow, easy steps.

I guide you step by step through each part of the process and show you how to do everything you need to do as easily, efficiently and affordably as possible.

Want to make money on the internet but don't have a product to sell? You can! I show you a great way you can have your own business even if you aren't selling your own product. I also tell you the scams to avoid.

Basically I tell you everything you need to know about how to start a business, how to run it, how to advertise it, the legal stuff you need to know about so you don't get in trouble, and much, much more. I tell you everything except what product to promote!

I show you the options you have available to you as you are starting your business. Whenever you have several options available, you will see a **p** next to one of them. That means that is the option I recommend for most beginners.

That way if you don't care about reading through the information on each of the options and just want to know what you have to do, you can skip ahead and just read the section about the option you want.

What I suggest is that you print this book out and read it all the way through one time, then go back and actually do the steps listed. I can't stress that enough. Read the book first, then do the steps.

You will see when you print it out that I've made the margin on the left a bit wider. The extra space let's you put the pages in a 3 ring binder and still see all the text. Putting the pages in a binder allows you to easily keep the book together so you don't have to worry about losing pages or getting them out of order.

There is a ton of great information in this book that will be incredibly useful to you, but if you take nothing else from this book please take this: yes, starting a business takes work, but it is very, very possible to not only do it but to be successful at it. Regardless of what anyone else says, you CAN do it.

A lot of people may try to discourage you or you may be unsure yourself if you have what it takes. Let me assure you that you do. You CAN succeed regardless of what your circumstances are right now, how smart (or dumb!) you are, how old you are, how young you are, how broke you are or anything else you or someone else thinks might prevent you from succeeding. It won't unless you let it. Don't let it. You have what it takes.

I know you can do it and it is my sincere wish that my book helps you on your journey to success.

Wishing you the very best,
Kip

Chapter 1

The 3 Biggest Myths

Before we get into specifics, I want to share with you three of the biggest myths out there about starting your own business.

It's almost a given that if the little doubting voice in the back of your mind doesn't mention at least one of these to you as you are starting out that a well-meaning friend or relative will.

I'm telling you these now so you won't sabotage yourself or let someone else sabotage your desire to have your own business. You definitely can have your own business if you don't fall into the trap of believing one of these myths.

The reason I'm bringing them up now is that if you don't know them for lies, what can happen is that when you are feeling a bit down about your ability to have your own business these thoughts can creep into your mind and discourage you. If you don't know they are false they can cause you to give up or to not do the things you need to do to succeed.

Since we both want you to succeed it's better to take a look at these now rather than when you are feeling a bit out of sorts. Here they are:

Myth #1

Other people are already selling my product. That means I can't be successful at it.

Wrong. If other people are selling your product it's a GREAT sign because it means that people are making money selling it. If they are making money, you can too!

Although it seems like you would want to sell something no one else is selling that is NOT what you want to do. Why? Because if

no one else is selling your product it means one of two things: a) no one is making any money from selling it, or b) there isn't a market for it.

What does it mean "there isn't a market for it?" It means there aren't buyers actively looking for the product. If you have a completely new product, you're going to have a much tougher time. People aren't even going to realize your product is there so won't even know to look for it or buy it.

It's a lot easier to sell people something they are familiar with, like soap or TVs or dog food, than to convince them to buy something they have never heard of and don't think they have a need for.

What's great about seeing that there are other people out there selling your product is you know there is already a market for it and you know your competition is making money from it because if they weren't making money they wouldn't be doing it.

Now, let's get to the personal part – your fear that even though all these other companies are making money with their business you won't make money with yours.

It's true that not all businesses make money. Why? Because a lot of people who start a business make a feeble stab at it then give up. They don't do what it takes.

Think of it like a mountain with all the people currently making money selling your product at the top and you at the bottom. In order to get to the top of the mountain you have to climb it.

You can't wish your way up to the top. You have to do the actual work that will get you there.

Now, looking up at the mountain from the bottom it seems like the top is so crowded people might fall off, but I'm going to let you in on a little secret:

There is ALWAYS room at the top of the mountain. Let me repeat that because it's so important - there is ALWAYS room at the top of the mountain and if you do the work and do what it takes to climb the mountain, you will reach the top.

So, if the number of people selling your product ever seems overwhelming, don't let yourself get discouraged. Keep working and learning and climbing the mountain. If you do, you will make it to the top.

Myth #2

I'm not very technical or business minded so I can't be good at this.

Wrong. If you made it to my web site and ordered this book you have all the technical smarts you need to succeed. Why? Because I walk you through everything you need to know about the technical stuff.

Although the techies try to make having a web site seem really tough and complex, it isn't. I cut through all the techie jargon and show you step by step in really simple language how to put up a web site. It isn't hard. If you can point and click your mouse you can set up a web site that you can sell your product on.

Regarding being business minded – again, this stuff isn't rocket science. You have bought something before so know the basic process: a buyer pays money for a product then the seller gives the buyer the product. You also know how much you like good customer service and how much you don't like companies that treat you badly.

And, if you aren't one of the lucky few who have an unlimited supply of money you already know the importance of keeping track of your inflow (salary) and your outflow (expenses and bills.)

Basically, don't worry that there is something out there that's going to be too tough for you to master. There isn't.

You have used all the tools you need for business in your personal life. Trust me, just by existing as an adult human being on this planet you have the technical and business smarts to be good at this.

Myth #3

You need a lot of money to succeed at business.

Wrong. I'm the first one to say that having more money never hurt anyone, but you don't need a lot of it to build a business.

It's like anything else, having money can sure make your life easier, but you don't need to have a lot of it to become successful.

You can spend a very little bit to get your business started then as little as \$10 a month on the actual running of it or you can spend as much as you like. It's all a matter of personal choice.

If you want to spend a bit more to have people do things that you don't want to do yourself, you can. Or, you can decide to do the things yourself and save money. The choice is yours.

Let's take an example from the real world. A friend of mine hires someone to come in and clean her house for her. My friend could certainly clean the house herself, but for her it's worth it to pay someone else to do it. (It's worth it for her husband too since they no longer fight over whose turn it is to clean up!)

That's the same thing in business. If you can't afford to hire someone, you don't have to. You can do what you need to do yourself.

So if you're concerned about not having a lot of money to work with, don't worry. While it doesn't hurt, you can succeed without it.

Okay, now let's get to the fun stuff!

Chapter 2

Business Ideas

If you already know what business you want to have, then please skip ahead to Chapter 3.

If you want to start a business but don't have a product to sell or know what type of business you want to start, this chapter is for you.

If you don't have a product to sell but you want to earn some extra money with a web site, you have several options available to you. Unfortunately, most of these options are scams or questionable business opportunities.

Later in the chapter I will show you how to recognize a scam so you will know what opportunities to avoid. For now, let's look at the option that I recommend for anyone who wants to start an internet business but doesn't have a product to sell.

Affiliate Marketing

In affiliate marketing you don't physically sell a product to the customer. You aren't a merchant. Instead, you are a middleman who refers people to the merchant's web site.

If the people you refer buy from the merchant then you get a percentage of each sale. The more people you refer who buy from the merchant, the more money you make.

Affiliate marketing is the cheapest and easiest way that I know of to start an internet business if you don't have a product to sell. You still need to do all the things a regular merchant does as far as setting up your web site, getting visitors, etc., but you don't have to worry about a lot of the issues that merchants face (such as setting up a credit card account, etc.)

How do you refer people to a merchant's web site? There are several ways you can do this:

- Ø [Banner Ads.](#) These aren't recommended since most people are so used to seeing banner ads that they don't really focus on them.
- Ø [Email.](#) This isn't recommended either since if you send email to someone you don't know you can be charged with sending junk email (spam) which, under US federal law, is now illegal.

Even if Uncle Sam doesn't get you if a merchant finds out that you are spamming (and they will) they will cancel you and you won't get paid.

- Ø [From your own Web Site.](#) This is the way I recommend.

How this works is that you create a web site about whatever topic that interests you. You then find merchants who sell the products that the people who visit your web site would be interested in buying.

For example, let's say you like golden retrievers and you put up a web site about them. You would look for merchants with affiliate programs that sell dog products that a golden retriever owner would like to buy for his pet.

Every time someone clicks through your web site and buys from one of the merchants you are affiliated with, you get paid a percentage. The percentage varies by merchant.

The 5 Steps to Creating an Affiliate Web Site

1. Select a Web Site Subject

It's important that you select a subject that interests you. If you aren't interested in it, you will get bored with it and it will show on your web site.

If you're interested in a lot of different things, make a list of all your interests and choose the one you like the most.

Don't pick an interest by whether or not you think you can make money with it. That is the worst thing a beginner can do. The reason is that what someone who hasn't had an internet business before thinks will make money is usually the completely opposite of what really does make money.

If the subject that holds the most appeal to you is too broad, narrow it. The trick with affiliate marketing is that the narrower your focus, the better chance you have of succeeding.

For example, let's say that you love dogs. Creating a web site on "dogs" is tough because there are so many different breeds plus you will be up against a lot of competition. The more competition you have the harder it will be to get a good ranking in the search engines.

Since "dogs" is such a broad topic you would want to narrow it. A good way to narrow it is to get specific. So instead of choosing dogs you may decide to go with a specific breed of dog – like a golden retriever, a toy poodle or a chihuahua.

Don't worry if you have nothing to say on this topic or have no clue right now how you would create a web site about this topic. You will shortly.

2. List Products of Interest to Your Visitors

You will have a greater chance of selling a product of interest to your visitors than you will have selling a completely unrelated product.

For example, almost every visitor to your golden retriever web site will be interested in golden retrievers but only a small percentage of them may be interested in dental insurance.

Golden retriever owners would probably be interested in: dog food, dog toys, dog training, dog beds, flea products, etc.

Write down any product you can think of that you think your visitors would be interested in.

3. Find Out if there are Merchants for your Topic

These days almost every topic has a merchant with an affiliate program. We're talking even the most obscure ones (ex: vibrating tongue rings.)

Still, it's best before you actually start building your web site to make sure there are merchants that sell products related to your topic who have an affiliate program.

A quick way to see is to go to Google.com and do a search for each of the products you have listed to see if there is an affiliate program offered for at least the majority of them.

For example, sticking with our golden retriever web site you would go to Google and type in Dog Bed Affiliate. This should bring up information on merchants that sell dog beds who also have affiliate programs.

I like to see at least 3 merchants for each product I'm looking at.

Note to non-US residents: not all US based merchants accept non-US affiliates. Make sure that at least two of the merchants in the categories you are looking at accept non-US affiliates. It will usually say in their terms if they don't.

The reasons not all US based merchants accept non-US affiliates?

Some don't want to have to deal with mailing checks to another country. Others have the idea that if you aren't based in the US then your web site won't appeal to American shoppers. I know. It's seems crazy to me too.

4. Create your Web Site Content

Why should you create your web site before you have signed up for a merchant's affiliate program?

Because most merchants require you to have a web site before they will accept you into their program. This way they can check your web site out to make sure you don't have a porn site or a hate site or any other type of site that they, as a company, don't want to be associated with.

Even though you don't have any merchants yet, you can still create your content. This way you can have the content you want in there and can just add the merchant's information when you get it.

The type of content you create will depend on how you want to structure your web site.

The three basic affiliate web site structures are:

- Ø **Comparison Web Sites**. In this type of web site, you compare the affiliate merchant's offerings.

For example, let's say you choose to do your web site on golden retrievers. A comparison web site would compare certain products that would benefit golden retrievers.

Let's say that you decide to promote dog food merchants, you would write a paragraph or two about dog food. You don't have to know a lot about dog food.

Although you can't copy you can usually get a lot of good information about the product from the web sites of the merchants with affiliate programs you researched in Step 2.

You can then formulate the information you find into your own words. Again, you can't copy someone else's text. You must put it in your own words.

With a comparison site, it's best to put 1-3 paragraphs at the top which explain what the product you are promoting is and how to find a good one, then the links to the merchant web sites and then 1-3 paragraphs at the bottom which talks about why it's important to have whatever you are promoting.

For example, your content may be along the lines of this, except yours will be much better and not in italics:

The best places to get dog food for Golden Retrievers

Pamper your golden retrievers with the best and healthiest pet food. Pet food with all natural ingredients can help protect your pet's health and enable it to lead a much happier, healthier life.

It's important to provide your golden retriever with nutritious dog food. It will not only make your pet look better with a glossy coat and pretty teeth, it will make your pet feel better too.

If you start out a young dog on healthy dog food you can reduce it's problems in old age which can save you money on expensive vet visits. The best healthy dog foods are those with all natural ingredients. Look on the ingredient list to make sure there are no preservatives.

Best Place to Get Dog Food:

[Joe's Pet Store](#) – Recommended! This is a great store with cheap prices on all the best dog foods like Nutro, Web Science Gold, and more.

[Mary's Pet Store](#) – Also good, but they don't have as wide a selection. Still, if you need Pet Diet Blend they have it for a good price.

Pet foods high in artificial products are just like fast food for humans and can lead to similar problems such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and also cause extra stress on the hips and joints.

You would continue this for the number of products you wish to promote. I would make each product its own separate page and compare no more than 3 merchants.

Ø **Content Web Sites.** These web sites are purely talk about whatever topic you are interested in. You would put text ads up on your web site that are of interest to your visitors.

For example, you may talk about golden retrievers, how to care for them when they are young, how to care for them when they are old, etc. Sprinkled throughout your text you would have text ads for your merchant's products.

For example:

Golden retrievers are great. They are wonderful. They make the best pets ever, blah, blah, blah.

[Healthy Pet Food](#) – Get a 25 pound bag of healthy pet food with free shipping. Click here!

Golden retrievers love to catch ball. They are ball crazy and so on and on.

Obviously that is really bad text, but you get the idea. Put a little bit of text and then break it up with a text ad that would be of interest to your visitors. Put 6-8 paragraphs of text per page.

Don't disrupt the flow of your text just to put an ad in there, but I would put at least three text ads on each page.

Ø **Shopping Web Sites.** With a shopping web site you would put up a paragraph or so about the product then list the merchants that offer products that would appeal to your visitors.

You should also put 1-3 paragraphs below your list which talks more about the product.

For example, you may have a page like this:

Pet Food Stores

The following pet food stores offer a wide selection of pet food products that are good for your golden retriever.

Each pet food store offers nutritious and healthy pet food snacks. Order some pet food today!

Joe's Pet Food Store Banner	<u>Joe's Pet Food</u> . Joe's Pet food offers free delivery on all sales over \$25. They have a good supply of foods and toys.
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Mary's Pet Food Store Banner	<u>Mary's Pet Food</u> . Mary's Pet food store offers a wide selection of nutritious products to keep your golden retriever healthy.
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The importance of a good, nutritious pet food can't be overstated. Feeding your golden retriever a diet high in the recommended doses of vitamins and minerals can keep him happy, healthy and strong even into old age.

Most vets recommend feeding golden retriever puppies 2 cups of dog food a day and older dogs 3-4 cups depending on their weight.

5. Find Merchants to Promote

Okay, now you're ready to actually sign up with merchants. There are companies out there that you can sign up with that have a list of merchants with affiliate programs. These are called affiliate networks and they are all free to join.

Tip: Never pay to join an affiliate program. There are too many you can join for free. Plus, having to pay is usually an indicator that a program is a scam.

The top 4 affiliate networks are:

Commission Junction (<http://www.cj.com>)

ShareASale (<http://www.shareasale.com>)

Link Share (<http://www.linkshare.com>)

Be Free (<http://www.befree.com>)

I recommend you start out with Commission Junction since it's the biggest and has the most merchants. Plus, its system is the easiest to use and you can get paid faster.

With affiliate marketing you usually get paid once a month in each month you have accumulated at least a certain amount of commissions. The amount varies by each affiliate network, but it's usually around \$25. Most affiliate networks require you to make at least \$25 with a merchant before they will pay you, but Commission Junction aggregates their merchants' payments.

What this means is that at the end of the first month you have accumulated at least \$25 from all your Commission Junction merchants combined (ex: \$5 from one merchant \$10 from another and \$10 from another) you get paid. You don't have to wait to get to the \$25 threshold with each individual merchant like you do with some of the other affiliate networks.

All of these affiliate networks work about the same and you will follow the same steps for each:

1. **Sign up.** The sign up process is very straightforward. You just fill in the information they ask for.
2. **Look for merchants that fit with your web site topic.** After you sign up you will have access to all the merchants that are promoted by the company you signed up with.

Last time I heard, Commission Junction had a few thousand merchants so you will have a lot of merchants to choose from.

3. **If you see a merchant you like, request to join that merchant's program.** This is easy to do. All you have to do is click a button that says Join this Merchant's Program or something similar.

Sometimes you will be approved automatically, but other times the merchants like to review your web site first. It all depends on the merchant.

4. **Choose a link or banner from the merchant.** Once the merchant approves you, you will be given access to all of that merchant's text links and ad banners.

You choose the ones you would like to use on your web site and click a button that says something like Generate Code.

This will generate a code which has your affiliate code in it. The affiliate code tells their system that you are the one who sent the customer. It's how you get credited for your commissions.

5. **Copy and paste the code into your web site.** If you are using your web host's web site builder, this is usually in the insert html section.

Repeat steps 2-6 until you have as many merchants as you like for your web site. You can use the same merchant on more than one page.

So, for example, if you have a shopping web site, you could use the same merchant on your dog beds page, your dog food page and your dog toys page if you want. You don't need all new merchants for each page of your web site.

Don't worry if any of this seems a bit overwhelming right now. I cover all the specifics that you need to know to do the steps listed in this section later in the book and in the bonus tutorials and I go over them in step by step detail.

For now just know that affiliate marketing is a great way to have an internet business without actually selling a product yourself. It is the cheapest and easiest way that I know of to start an internet business without having an actual product.

Starting a Business Scams

Okay, let's say that you decide you still want an internet business but for whatever reason you don't think affiliate marketing is for you. You decide you want to do something else.

If you are going to do something else, you need to be aware of the scams out there because there are a lot of scammers just waiting to take your money.

5 Indicators of a Scam

Almost everyone has heard stories of people making a lot of money on the internet and it is possible. I'm living proof of it.

The problem that comes up though is that if you aren't sure what type of business you want to have – you just know you want to make money with it – there are a lot of people out there ready and willing to take your money.

So, what are some indicators that a business you are looking at is best avoided?

1. **If you are guaranteed any income, leads or work if you take the offer.**

These aren't realistic guarantees and if anyone does guarantee you any of these three things, run fast.

2. **If you have to pay money to find out what the business is.**

Some times people say they have a "Hot" new business that's wonderful and fabulous, but they can't share it with everyone because if they did then everyone would do it and the business wouldn't be as valuable.

To get around this they only want people serious about the opportunity to know how it works. For a small fee they will share the information with you about the business. At that point you can decide if you want to continue with it or not.

If someone really had a way to make money that was so wonderful do you really think they would be trying to sell it to people they don't know? Neither do I.

If it was a legitimate offer that worked they would be doing it themselves or giving it to all their family and friends to do.

3. If the business sounds too good to be true.

If the business sounds really easy, don't believe it. Any business, even one on the internet, takes hard work.

4. If there is a picture of money, nice cars or fancy houses on the business opportunity's web page.

Real businesses take hard work and while it's nice to think about the good things that doing well in the business can bring you, legitimate business offers or those that don't reek of scamminess, don't try to "wow" you with rich pictures.

5. If you see other ads promoting the same business opportunity.

If you see a lot of different ads that want you to join a particular business, you have to wonder why.

After all if the business opportunity was that good do you really think they would have to heavily advertise it? No. People would be beating down their doors to try to become part of it.

Now that you know what some of the indicators of a bad business are, let's look at a couple of specific opportunities you should steer clear of.

Specific 'Opportunities' to Avoid

Not all of these deals are scams in the true sense of the word, but they are opportunities you would do well to avoid. They are what I call "sucker" business opportunities.

If you ever come across any of the following opportunities, in my opinion you should just keep going. Save your money. You will be a lot better off.

Ø Pre-packaged Businesses.

There are several variations of this one. The most common variation has every aspect of the business already set up for you: your product, delivery of the product, a web site, your web hosting. The company will even arrange it so you can accept credit cards on your new web site and they will set that up for you too.

How it works is that company A, the company selling you the business, has arranged for another company, company B, to deliver the products to your customers.

You advertise the web site, sell the product, collect the money, then submit an order to company B. You make a profit on the difference between the price you sell it for and the price you pay company B.

Sounds great, right? Everything is already set up for you. Why shouldn't you give it a shot? Several reasons:

- A lot of times Company B doesn't actually deliver the product or it takes them a looooooong time to deliver

it. When the customer does receive the item it's usually cheaply made and not the high quality item that you thought you were selling.

Your customers get mad at you because you are the company they are dealing with and they want their money back. You have no choice but to pay them. If you don't pay them they can request a refund from their credit card company.

You've already paid out the money for the product to Company B. You can try to get your money back from Company B, but the way they have it structured it's usually almost impossible to do.

- The "deal" that Company A got you so that you can accept credit cards usually involves a stiff upfront fee as well as a monthly fee.

The contracts for these usually run for 1-2 years and you are locked in. Even if you decide to shut down that business, you are stuck with the monthly fees.

If you decide not to pay they can take you to collections which can wreck your credit rating.

As part of the set up, you pay Company A a fee for hosting your web site for you. This monthly fee is usually much steeper than you would pay anywhere else.

I'm not saying that each of these bad things will happen if you buy one of these pre-packaged businesses, but I'm saying it has happened to others and it very easily could happen to you.

Ø Multi-Level Marketing Businesses that you Pay to Join.

These businesses require you to pay to join them and have what's known as "downlines."

With these businesses, your membership fee allows you to earn a commission on all the products you sell (the products are usually overpriced and a really tough sell.) Your membership fee also allows you to recruit people to the membership. You get a percentage of the sales of each person you recruit and each person they recruit and so on down a certain number of levels.

The people you recruit and all those beneath you are called your "downline."

This sounds great, right? After all for a small fee of around \$50 you get a percentage of what everyone who signs up under you makes and for every person they sign up.

In reality, here is how it usually ends up working:

You pay the \$50 and try to interest a few people in the products. The products aren't that great and they are overpriced so no one will buy anything.

You try to get people to sign up under you. After all that's where the big bucks are, right?

The problem is that's hard too because this smells like a scam and there are thousands of variations of this same membership arrangement type "business" on the internet.

If you can get someone to sign up under you and pay the membership fee (which, again, is tougher than it sounds) they do the same thing you do. Very few people actually make sales or recruit new members because it's so hard.

Usually very few people outside of the people that start these businesses make decent money with these.

Ø Get Paid to Surf, to Read Email, to take Surveys, etc.

Although not technically a business a lot of people who want to make money on the internet fall for these.

How these work is that you get paid to visit other people's web sites, or to agree to accept email from certain advertisers or to fill out surveys.

It sounds okay. After all, they just want you to spend time doing things that you would probably do anyway.

The problem is that these aren't okay. What happens is that:

- these companies set a fairly high threshold for payout so it takes forever to reach the level you need to get paid.
- If you do spend hours and hours doing this and get near the payout amount, they will usually accuse you of cheating so it gets them out of having to pay you.
- The work required is incredibly time consuming. Your time would be much better spent developing your own web site and promoting your own product or other people's products via affiliate marketing.
- You will get put on every spam list coming and going and get inundated with spam mail.

Ø Medical Billing Businesses. Medical billing is a legitimate business. The problem is that if you don't have any prior experience with it, your chances of having someone hire you to do it are slim to none.

How this one works is that you are offered everything you need to start your own business: software, contacts, a training class to teach you how to do it, the works.

Sounds like a good deal, except that usually:

- they charge you hundreds or thousands of dollars for “special” software that you can get for less than \$100 from almost any software store,
- the contacts they provide you are just a list of doctors in your area,
- the training class they give you isn’t very good, and
- they pretty much disappear after they get your money and give you the class.

Medical billing is a legitimate business, but unless you have prior experience with it, I wouldn’t waste your time with it and I certainly wouldn’t waste your money on this business ‘opportunity.’

Let me wrap up this section by saying that if someone tries to sell you a ready made business or any other business opportunity, always ask yourself, “If this business is so great why aren’t they just running it themselves?”

Don’t fall for whatever story the person selling it tries to make you believe as to why they aren’t doing it themselves. If the opportunity was THAT good they would be.

The 3 Required Buying a Business Criteria

Let’s say that even after all I’ve said and the fact that I **very strongly** recommend that someone without internet business not buy a pre-made business, you really, really want to buy one.

You know about the scams to watch out for and you’re ready to buy. So what should you look for?

The business you are considering **MUST** meet the following three criteria. If it doesn’t, you are asking to get taken.

Ø It must be a business that the person is actually running themselves.

If it's just a web site the seller created because they were "going to run it" but then something came up, don't buy it. Whatever line they hand you about how great it is and how they really want to keep it, don't believe it. Keep looking.

Ø It must not be a cookie cutter web site that hundreds of other people also bought and are trying to promote.

How can you tell if a site is a cookie cutter site? Do a search on EBay (www.Ebay.com) for business for sale. If you see a business and web site that looks very similar to the one you are considering, keep looking.

Ø The business must currently and consistently be making money AND the seller must provide you with proof of this.

If a business is currently making money then it's a good sign that you can make money with it; however, this isn't always foolproof since some business 'opportunities' show sales by having a few friends buy from them.

To confirm that a business is consistently making money you should ask to see the following information:

- The Business Bank Statements for the last 6 months.
- Web Stats for the last 6 months which show the web traffic of the site. The key number to look at on web stats is the number of visits, not the number of hits.
- Itemized list of business expenses for the last 6 months.

If the seller won't provide you with ALL of these items, keep looking.

If a business hasn't been running at least 6 months then it's a good indication that the person just threw the business together and is trying to make a quick buck.

If the seller can't give you any of the information I've mentioned, keep looking. Every legitimate business can provide these and would expect to as a part of the selling process.

If the seller tries to give you a hard time because you want that information, keep looking. Again, a legitimate business expects to provide this information.

If the business meets each and every one of these criteria, then you may want to give the opportunity further consideration.

Okay, now that you know how you can start an internet business without actually having a product and you know the top indicators of a scam and some specific opportunities to avoid, let's look at what you have to do to create your web site and build and promote your business.

Chapter 3

Web Site Basics

Do you need a web site?

Yes! The answer is most definitely yes. A web site gives you an online presence and this has three major benefits:

1. It allows customers to find you 24 hours a day.
2. It allows you to make sales 24 hours a day.
3. It allows you to reach a lot more people than you could if you were just marketing off line within your community.

Without a web site you must actively go out and reach your customers. With a web site you can be out at the movies with your kids and can still make sales. It's the best feeling in the world to know that while you are out having fun, you are making money from sales on your web site.

There isn't a single business I can think of that wouldn't benefit from having a web site. If you are serious about having your own business you need a web site. It's as simple as that.

Web Site Options

Now, that you have decided that you need a web site, you have a choice to make. Do you ...

- p** 1. Build your web site yourself?
2. Or, do you pay someone to build it for you?

I recommend that people just starting out build their own web sites, but I want to go through the pros and cons of paying someone so

you can have all the facts you need to make the decision that's right for your business.

Paying Someone to Build Your Web Site: Should you or shouldn't you?

What's nice about paying someone to build your web site is that they do the actual building of it. You don't have to do anything except provide them with the information you want to be used on your site.

Obviously they aren't going to build you a web site out of the goodness of their hearts so you have to pay them. How much? Usually you can expect to pay at least \$2,000 for a basic web site. The price goes up depending on your needs.

I have seen full service web site assistance offered for less but a lot of times (not always) there seems to be extra fees crop up when they suggest that you need this extra or that extra and before you know it the price has added up to around the \$2,000 mark for a basic site. (Again, I'm not saying this happens with every cheaper web designer out there, but it does happen.)

Also, a big issue with hiring a web designer is what happens when you want to make changes to your web site? You can't make them yourself since you don't have the software or, in most instances, the know how to make the changes so you will have to pay the web designer to make them for you.

They will of course charge you for this. The usual charge is around \$35/hour – some are a bit more, some a bit less. That means that every time you want to make a change to your site, you have to pay someone to make the change for you.

Just like in everyday life where you can depend on some people more than others, the same is true for web designers. Some web

designers will take a couple of days to make your changes and others you may never hear from.

I recommend that if you are just starting out with your first business that you build your own web site and not hire someone. If you do decide to use a web designer I have had a really good experience with www.WebDesignStudio.com. You may want to check them out.

The Three Common Elements All Web Sites Share

Before we get into the actual building of your web site, we need to cover just a few basics that you need to know first.

There are three common elements that all web sites share. Without these, you are not able to create a web site and put it on the internet. To create your web site and have it be visible for everyone to see you need a web site builder, a web host and a domain name.

A **web site builder** is the software that you use to build your web pages. It allows you to add your content, images and everything else you want on to your web page.

A **web host** is a company that stores the web site you've built and makes it visible on the internet. They store your web site on their servers. A server is just a fancy computer that "serves up" your web site to the internet.

A **domain name** is your web site address. It's what comes after the www. For example, the domain name of my web site is StartMyInternetBusiness.com. The domain of Yahoo is Yahoo.com.

Don't worry if you aren't clear on what these are right now. We are going to look at each one in turn and I'll explain what you need to know about them.

Right now as a matter of fact ...

Choosing Your Web Site Builder

In order to build your web site yourself, you will need web site building software. This is the software that actually allows you to create your web pages and add your content.

You have two choices for software:

- p** 1. You can use the web site builder provided by your web host, or
2. You can buy a web site building software program.

Here are the pros and cons of each so you can decide which will be best for you:

The Pros and Cons of Web Site Builders

[The Web Site Builder at Your Web Host.](#) I recommend that most beginners use the web site builder provided by their web host.

Why?

Because it's SO much easier. You don't have to learn a lot of technical code or deal with templates, codes, tables or anything else. All you have to do is point and click and add your content. That's it.

Plus, if you run into problems and can't figure out how to do something you can just call and get help. You don't need to

muddle through it on your own or do a lot of searching on the web for information on how to solve the problem.

Also, the templates offered by the web site builders at some of the better web hosts are really nice so that your site will look very professional. People looking at it won't be able to tell that you did it yourself.

The one con of using a web site builder at your web host is that if you decide you don't like your web host anymore you can't move your web site with you to a new web host.

That's why if you choose this option it is very important that you choose a web host that is reliable and has great support. (We will get into how to choose a good web host in the next section.)

Even with that con, I still believe that it's best for most people starting out to use the web site builder at their web host.

[Web Site Building Software](#). If you decided to use your own web site building software instead of your web host's web builder, there are quite a few software programs available. The two most popular are FrontPage and Dreamweaver.

These are very difficult for beginners with no prior web site building experience to master. Also, if you run into problems and need help with doing something there is no one to call for help. You will have to search through the internet on your own trying to find the answer.

One other thing is that unless you know what you are doing and have experience with one of these programs, most of the web sites built by beginners using these look really bad. They look like beginning web sites. They don't look professional at all which is not the image you want to convey to your customers.

The benefit of using your own software is that you have complete control of your web site at all times so if your web host turns out to be a lemon you can move your web site to another web host without any difficulty.

Choosing your Web Host

Now that you have decided which option you want to choose you will have to select your web host. This is the company that will actually store your web site for you and make it visible on the internet.

It is SUPER important that you choose a good web host. Good doesn't mean expensive. Good means reliable with great support.

Why is it so important to choose a good web host? Because if your web host has a problem with it's servers your web site won't show up on the internet. If your web site doesn't show up that means no customers can see your site or buy your product or services.

That's why it's so very important that the web host you choose is reliable.

Great customer service is just as important. If you have trouble or your site goes down, you want someone to fix it right away. You don't want to have to send email after email and hope that someone will get back to you. You want to call someone, tell them the problem and have them help you right away.

This is your business. Every minute that your site is down is a minute that a customer can't buy from you.

You also don't want to have to deal with customer service reps that are rude or treat you like an idiot for not knowing the answer. I don't know about you, but I have to deal with enough difficult people in my life, I certainly don't feel like paying someone to be a jerk to me.

Okay, so now you're convinced that finding a good web host is really important. How do you know if the web host you are looking at is good or not?

How to Find a Good Web Host

Let's face it. How do you know if a web host is good or not? They all look pretty much the same and they seem like they know what they are doing, right? Well, there is one thing you can check on before you sign up and luckily it's one of the most important things.

When you choose a web host, **make sure they have excellent support**. If you have a problem with your web site you want help now, not in a day or two.

Personally, I refuse to choose a web host that I can't get on the phone in an emergency. Some web hosts are sneaky and they put a phone number on their web site, but it's just for show. They don't always answer or they advertise 24/7 support but are actually only around Monday-Friday.

When I first started out, my site went down on a Friday afternoon and I called ALL weekend and all I got was hold music. They put me on hold, but no one was there! Needless to say that was it for that web host.

So, how can you tell how responsive the web host you are considering actually is? You test them. If they have a phone number (and they should) call them late at night or on weekends to see if they are really there.

Also, send an e-mail to their support e-mail address (not their sales e-mail) and ask them a basic question like "How many e-mail addresses am I allowed?" or "Is there a limit on the number of autoresponders I'm allowed?" and see how long it takes them to get back to you.

For a non-emergency email like that I think up to 12 hours is acceptable. If you send the e-mail on Saturday and they don't get back to you until Monday, that isn't good. If they take more than 12 hours and either don't have phone support or aren't answering, keep looking.

I know money is tight for a lot of people and I've had several people write and ask me whether they could go with a free web host or this or that super cheap web host to save money. (I consider hosts under \$5/month super cheap.) So for these people I've added the following section.

Pay vs. Free Web Sites – Why Pay is Better

I'm not one of those people that throw money around. I had to really watch my pennies when I was growing up and although I don't need to watch them as closely these days thanks to the success I've had with my various businesses, I still don't like paying for something if I don't have to.

I am all for free whenever possible but free web sites and free domain names just aren't worth it. They can end up costing you FAR more than they can save you. That holds true for a lot of the super cheap web site services too.

Free website services are typically unreliable. Your site may be up for a week and down for two. If your website is down, they don't care. Why should they? You aren't paying them anything.

They can shut down at any time. Nothing is worse than spending hours creating and promoting a website and then have it just be gone. You have no recourse. You are just out of luck.

You have no control over what advertising they put on your site. Think pop ups are annoying? So do your visitors. Would you go back to a site that has a pop up when you enter, when you go to another page and when you leave? Neither will your visitors.

Another reason that free web sites aren't good is that they can hurt you in the search engines. The higher you get in the search engines the more visitors you will get to your site. Most search engines put pay domain names ahead of the freebie ones so if you have a free one you are going to be further down the search engines.

It will cost you sales. Let's face it. If someone wants you to buy something and give them your credit card information are you going to trust your information to someone who can't even afford \$10 for their own web site account? No. Your customers won't either.

Basically, free web sites and free domain names will make your life a whole lot harder in the long run so it's best to go ahead and pay for them.

Special Note if you already have a domain name: although you should check with your domain company to be sure, in most cases you don't have to host your web site at the same company you have your domain with. All you will need to do is point your domain name to your new web host's name servers.

This sounds 'techie' but it really isn't. It's a simple process that will take you about 2 minutes to do. After you have selected who you would like your web host to be, your new web host will provide you with their name server information.

You simply go to the company where you currently have your domain name and look in their FAQs section for a question like "How do I change my name servers?" or "How do I change my DNS?" They should have instructions for how to do this. Just follow those instructions and you will be fine.

Each domain company is different, but all you usually have to do is just type in the name server information that your new web host gave you and click a save button.

Once you have made a name server change it takes about 24-48 hours for it to be processed through the various systems it needs to go through. After that, if you've got your web site set up it will be visible on the internet.

Domain Names

As I mentioned above, your domain name is your address on the web. It's the information that customers type in to find your website. It's what comes after the www. in www.domain.com.

A domain name can be any combination of letters and/or numbers up to 63 characters. There are no spaces in a domain name but you can put a dash – in a domain name. The official domain name extensions are .com, .net, .org, .biz, .info, .us and .ws.

There are also other extensions like .tv and .tk but don't waste your time with those. Stick with a recognized one.

How to Choose a Good Domain Name

Here are some guidelines and tips to help you select the best domain name for you:

Keep it short. The shorter, the better. It's best to keep your domain name less than 15 characters if possible. A shorter name is easier for people to remember and it also reduces the likelihood that your visitor will mistype it or spell it wrong. For example, BuyIt.com has a lot less chance of being mistyped than isellthispleasebuyitfrommetoday.com.

Keep it sweet. The more memorable the name, the easier it is for people to remember. You can have the best site in the world, but if people can't remember your domain name it will cut down on your

return visitors. It's hard enough to get traffic on the web without "losing" visitors that want to come back but can't find you.

Keep it simple. Make sure the domain name is easy for people to spell. Don't spell words unusually. Unless you have incredible branding, people will type in the common spelling of your domain and your competition will get visitors who were looking for you. For example, BlueRight.com is much better than BluRite.com

Choose a domain name that reflects your business. Don't just choose a random name. For example, if you sell horse supplies, you should choose a name that has the word "horse supplies" in it such as YourHorseSupplies.com. Or, your domain name should refer to horses in some way, like whoa.com. The former will help you in the search engines. The latter will be memorable.

When in doubt, choose a .com. If you are debating between several different domain names, go with the .com. It's what most people think of when they are typing in a domain name. It's true the best names are gone, but you can still find a good .com if you look. Thousands of .coms expire and are released back in the market each month so there is always a steady supply of new domains coming into the market.

Domain Name Legal Issues

You need to be aware of certain trademark and domain issues when you buy your domain. These can be really confusing but I've done my best to try to make it as simple for you as I can.

You can't buy a domain name that is trademarked.

This means that if another company has trademarked the domain name you want, you can't buy the name or you could be sued. For example, you can't buy Pepsi.net, Yahoo.org or any name that has a trademarked name in it.

You also can't use a company's trademarked name in your domain name if the trademark is distinct and not commonly used in everyday language. For example, you can't use MembershipAOL.com or EverythingMickeyMouse.com because AOL and Mickey Mouse are distinct enough that everyone associates those names with their respective companies.

If you do buy the domain name and use it, the company's attorneys will likely find out and will either sue you or take you to arbitration where you will likely lose and be forced to give up your domain name. It's just not worth it so don't buy a domain that could infringe on another company's trademark.

Usually unless you are adding a word to a distinct trademark that you know about and recognize (like Mickey Mouse or Pepsi) if the .com is still available the name most likely isn't trademarked and you don't have to worry.

So, how can you find out if a company has trademarked the name you want? Easy. You can look it up online for free at the government's trademark office at www.uspto.gov.

To do a search:

1. On the left side of the page under the word Trademark, click on Search.
2. Click New User Search Form (Basic)
3. Enter the name you want to look up.

This will show you if someone else has it or not and, if they do, what they sell.

What happens if someone has the company name that you want to use?

See if they sell the same products or services you do. You can see this information when you lookup the trademark information above. If they don't sell the product you want to, you can get any available

version of their domain name. If they do sell what you want to sell, then it's best to choose another name.

For example, let's say you want to sell computers and want the domain name RedRover.com.

If the domain name RedRover.com is taken AND RedRover.com is a computer store, then regardless of whether the name Red Rover is trademarked, I would choose a different domain name. Why?

Because if you put up a site selling computers at RedRover.net then the owner of RedRover.com can go to the domain resolution board and say that you are trying to infringe on his domain name.

He may win or he may not but again that's a hassle you don't need. It just isn't worth it to set yourself up for trouble like that if you don't have to. Choose another name.

What happens if RedRover.com sells pet supplies? You can buy RedRover.net and sell computers. No problem.

What happens if RedRover.com is taken but there isn't a web site on the site and the name Red Rover isn't trademarked? You can buy RedRover.net and use it.

If you do that I suggest that you backorder the RedRover.com domain (you can do this at a few domain companies.) That way if the current owner of the .com lets the domain expire the domain company will try to register it for you so you can get it when it comes back on the market.

I know all this may have your head spinning, but believe me that was the toughest section of this book. Compared to this section, the rest of this book is a breeze.

Chapter 4

Ordering Your Web Site

Now that you have decided whether you want to use your web host's web site building software or your own and you know how to choose a good web host and good domain name, let's take a look at how you go about ordering your web site and what you need and what you don't.

First you will need to use the tips I gave you in the web hosting section above to pick which company you want to go with. There are literally hundreds of thousands of companies to choose from.

I recommend Act Now Domains (www.ActNowDomains.com.) They are cheap and reliable and have everything you need (domains, web hosting, web site builder, etc.) I like them a lot and have over 100 domain names there.

I've tried a couple of other places but never could get help when I needed it at those places. Act Now Domains has people available 24 hours a day by phone and email. Plus, it's just really easy to use and you can get everything you need for your web site in one place.

Since I'm familiar with Act Now Domains and like them I will walk you through ordering your web site account with them so you can see the steps required. No matter what company you decide to go with the basic process will be about the same. It's really easy.

Step 1 – Getting Started

In the domain search box, type in the domain name you want to register. Click the Go button.

The screenshot shows a domain registration website with the following elements:

- Header:** "WEB DOMAINS ACT NOW DOMAINS" on the left. On the right, a contact number "1-480-624-2500" and a price table for ".COM .NET .ORG" domains: "All .coms \$12.75 or Less!", "1 year \$12.75/year", "2 years \$12.50/year", "5 years \$11.95/year", and "10 years \$ 9.95/year".
- Navigation Bar:** A row of blue buttons: "HOME", "DOMAIN NAMES", "WEB HOSTING", "DESIGN A WEB SITE", "EMAIL ACCOUNTS", "DRIVE SALES & TRAFFIC", "SECURE SSL CERTIFICATES", and "INTERNET UTILITIES". Below this is a red bar with links: "Private Registration", "Forwarding & Masking", "Transfer Domains", "Backorder Domains", "FAQs", and "Support".
- Special Offer:** A blue box with "Limited Time Offer" and "\$3.99 Domains No Qty Limit". Text: "Register, transfer or renew domains for just \$3.99 with every web site, web hosting or private domain registration purchase!". A "Manage My Account" button is to the right.
- Main Content:** "Web Domains" heading, followed by "Web Domains - Fast, Easy, Affordable!". Text: "Looking for a great place to get affordable web domains? Our rates are about as low as you're going to find anywhere! We keep your information safe and secure and all web domains are registered in YOUR NAME not ours. Register your domain names today!". A "Search for web domains" link.
- Search Form:** A search box with "BestDomaininWorld" entered, a ".com" dropdown menu, and a "Go!" button. A blue arrow points to the search box.
- Footer:** ".COM .NET .ORG" and "1 year only ... \$12.75" on the left. On the right, "Build a Web Site Online in Just Minutes - Fast and Easy!" and "Build a web site and pay only \$8.95/month with our super easy-to-".

Step 2 – Select Your Domain Name

If the domain you entered is available it will show as available. Click the Smart Registration button and go to Step 3.

REGISTER A DOMAIN NAME ...

The following addresses **ARE AVAILABLE.**

These names are available...



- BESTDOMAININWORLD.COM
- BESTDOMAININWORLD.NET
- BESTDOMAININWORLD.ORG
- BESTDOMAININWORLD.INFO
- BESTDOMAININWORLD.BIZ **Limited Time Offer! \$9.95!**
- BESTDOMAININWORLD.US **Special Offer! \$9.95!**

[See more names like this...](#)



(Recommended)
[More Info](#)



[More Info](#)

If the .com you want is not available you have three choices:

You may decide to buy another version of that domain name such as the .net, .org, .biz, etc.

If I go with something other than a .com these days and I know I really want to develop the business associated with that domain, I backorder the .com domain.

What this means is that if the person who currently has the .com domain name doesn't renew it then you are telling Act Now Domains to monitor the .com and to try to register it for you if it expires.

That way you have a really great chance of getting the .com domain when it expires and it will save you from having to watch for it yourself.

Please note: you do not have to backorder the .com domain. It is by no means a requirement of having a web site. It is just something that I like to do. Only do this if you can afford it.

REGISTER A DOMAIN NAME ...

GOODDOMAINNAME.COM (already taken, click here for info)

Backorder this name - just \$21.95 ←

If this name expires or is cancelled by the registrant we'll try to grab it the instant it becomes available. [Tell Me More](#)

The following addresses **ARE AVAILABLE.**

These names are available...

GOODDOMAINNAME.NET ←

GOODDOMAINNAME.ORG

GOODDOMAINNAME.INFO

GOODDOMAINNAME.BIZ **Limited Time Offer! \$9.95!**

GOODDOMAINNAME.US **Special Offer! \$9.95!**

[See more names like this...](#)

Previously selected domain names:

→ **SMART
REGISTRATION**
(Recommended)
[More Info](#)

**CUSTOM
REGISTRATION**
[More Info](#)

If you decide you don't want a variation of the domain name you first entered and want to look for another domain name, you can:

Just keep entering domain names into the search box shown in Step 1 until you find a domain name you like, or ...

You can click on the [Advanced Search](#) text link and look for variations of the domain name you entered. That way you don't have to keep thinking up domain names on your own.



REGISTER A DOMAIN NAME ...

GOODDOMAINNAME.COM [\(already taken, click here for info\)](#)

Backorder this name - just \$21.95
If this name expires or is cancelled by the registrant we'll try to grab it the instant it becomes available. [Tell Me More](#)

The following addresses **ARE AVAILABLE.**

These names are available...

- GOODDOMAINNAME.NET
- GOODDOMAINNAME.ORG
- GOODDOMAINNAME.INFO
- GOODDOMAINNAME.BIZ **Limited Time Offer! \$9.95!**
- GOODDOMAINNAME.US **Special Offer! \$9.95!**

[Advanced Search](#) 

Previously selected domain names:

Please note: if you entered a domain name where all the possible extensions are taken it won't give you the [See More Names Like This](#) text link to click. You will need to enter a new domain and try again.

Click the Continue button.

If you will be selling more than 3 products on your website: you need to get the Online Store Builder. If you want to be able to optimize your web site so you get traffic you will also need to get a Web Builder. Proceed to Step 3A – Ordering the Online Store Builder.

If you will be selling fewer than 3 products on your website: you only need to get the web builder. Proceed to Step 3B – Ordering the Web Builder.

If you will be using your own web site builder to build your own web site and store (such as Front Page): you only need to get web hosting. Proceed to Step 3C – Ordering Web Hosting.

Step 3A – Order your Web Store

Note: if you will sell less than 3 products OR will be building your store with an offline web builder you do NOT need a web store. See page 52 for what you do need.

To order your web store:

After you have selected the domain name you want, select Build a Website on the top navigation bar. Click on Quick Shopping Cart.



On the Quick Shopping Cart page, select the shopping cart you want, then click Add to Cart. The shopping cart you select will depend on how many products you will be selling.

You can always upgrade your shopping cart later so I would choose the number of products you have now and not the number you plan on having later when your business grows.

IF you want to be able to optimize your web site so you can get traffic to your store, then go up to Build A Website again and click Web Site Tonight.

On the Web Site Tonight page select the number of pages you want for your web site. You can always upgrade later so I would choose the cheapest option you know you will need for now. There is no need to pay more money until you need to.

Web Store Check Out

The checkout process has several parts to it. It's pretty easy, but there are a couple of areas you may have questions about so I've included the steps here also.

In Step 1, you will select the button for "I want a new Act Now Domains account" then enter your information and click the Continue button.

Domain Registration Information

► **Select Domain Registration Account**

Login to an existing account *(this will also populate your registration information)*

Enter Customer # or Login Name: Enter Password: **Secure Login**

I would like to create a new Act Now Domains account.

► **Create your domain registration information:**

* Required information

First Name: *

Last Name: *

Email Address: *

Important information about email accounts

Company Name:

By checking this box you certify that the Company Name specified above is the legal registrant of this domain name.

Address 1: *

Address 2:

City: *

Country: *

State: *

This brings you to [Step 2](#) the Registration screen which looks like this:

Registration and Checkout Options

1. Domain Registration Preferences

Your Domain Names (1)	Registration Length Pricing	Contact Information	Add Privacy & your domain is just \$3.99'	Auto Renew	Add Email Account & your domain is just \$3.99'
Domains on this order Edit Details for Each Domain	2 year	Test testing	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private \$19.95/yr	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Auto <input type="radio"/> Manual	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$14.95/yr

If you're hosting these domains elsewhere, click here to set nameservers.
Don't have hosting? [Help me choose.](#)

2. Select Checkout Preference:

Show me exclusive offers that will help me get the most from my domain.
Note: You will qualify for \$3.99 domain pricing with each additional product you buy.

Quick Checkout.

CONTINUE ▶

▶ [Save my registration info](#) and shop for more domain names

There are several areas here that you need to be aware of:

[Length of Registration](#) - You can select the length of registration to any year between 1 year and 10 years. It's cheaper the more years you buy, but I usually only buy one or two years at a time. That way if I decide to move on to something else I won't have spent money that I didn't need to.

[Standard Registration or Private Registration](#) - A private domain registration is similar to an unlisted number. It hides your name, address, phone number, etc. from spammers and telemarketers.

If you just have the standard registration these creeps can and do get your information and then bombard you with stuff you don't want or need.

I used to not get the private registration but now I usually do just because it cuts down on the junk mail and email I get. Plus, there

are a lot of kooks out there and I just don't like the idea of someone I don't know being able to get my address.

It's a personal choice on whether to get it or not. There isn't a good or bad or right or wrong on this choice. Whatever you decide, will be fine.

If you have been the victim of a stalking, are in a profession where you don't want people to know your address (ex: therapist, police, etc.), or for whatever reason don't want people to have your address and phone number then I strongly suggest that you get a private registration.

If you decide to backorder a domain you also have the choice to make it standard or private. I always make the backorders standard because if for some reason I don't get the domain then I'm not out the extra bucks for the private registration fee. I can always make the domain private after I get it.

Speaking of backordering domains – if you don't get the backorder domain you request you can keep backordering different domain names for the same initial fee. You don't have to pay again. You can keep backordering until you are awarded an expired domain name which is pretty nice.

Auto Renew – always set this to yes. That way if you forget to renew your domain when it comes up for renewal you won't lose it. You can always change this later if you decide not to keep the domain name, but starting out I would always select Auto Renew.

Okay, once you are done, click Continue.

You will now be on a page that has a lot of extras you can get.

Note: if you are getting the Store Builder and Web Site Tonight you DON'T need email. You get an email account with your web builder. If you are just getting the Store Builder you will need to order email if you want it.

IF you will be using Pay Pal to process your orders you do NOT need to get a SSL certificate and you do NOT need to get a merchant account. Pay Pal takes care of the security on their web site and processes the credit card orders for you.

Click the Continue button at the bottom of the screen.

This will take you to the checkout screen so you can pay.

See how easy it is to get your web store? It isn't hard at all. In fact it probably took you longer to read this than it will to actually order. Once you know what to do, ordering is a real snap.

Okay, you're done with this part! Let's move on to stuff that's more fun. Proceed to Chapter 5: Web Site Basics to learn some basic do's and don'ts for your website.

Step 3B – Order Web Site Builder

Note: if you plan to sell more than 3 products OR have an offline web builder you do NOT need to order a web builder. See page 52 for what you do need.

To order your web site builder:

After you have selected the domain name you want, click Build a Website on the top navigation bar. Select Web Site Tonight.

Home | Domain Names | Web Hosting | SSL Certificates | Email Accounts | Marketing Tools | Build a Website

My Account | FAQ | Support Phone: (481) 481-4814

Get a new domain name, transfer or renewal for just \$3.99* with each and every new, non-domain product you buy -- no quantity limit! Includes Quick Blog and much more! Sale price reflected in your shopping cart at checkout. Some limitations apply.

Your Domain Name Search Starts Here!

Check out our hot prices on .COM domains and other domain names -- from only

My Websites | Logout

WebSite Tonight

Quick Blog

Quick Shopping Cart

Traffic Blazer

My c-Site

My Cart

On the Web Site Tonight page select the number of pages you want for your web site.

You can always upgrade to a higher plan later so I would just get the account that fits the number of pages you know you will have starting off.

Web Builder Check Out

The checkout process has several parts to it. It's pretty easy, but there are a couple of areas you may have questions about so I've included the steps here.

In Step 1, you will select the button for "I want a new Act Now Domains account" then enter your information and click the Continue button.

Domain Registration Information

► **Select Domain Registration Account**

Login to an existing account *(this will also populate your registration information)*

Enter Customer # or Login Name: Enter Password: **Secure Login**

I would like to create a new Act Now Domains account.

► **Create your domain registration information:**

* Required information

First Name: *

Last Name: *

Email Address: *

Important information about email accounts:

Company Name:

By checking this box you certify that the Company Name specified above is the legal registrant of this domain name.

Address 1: *

Address 2:

City: *

Country: *

State:

This brings you to [Step 2](#) the Registration screen which looks like this:

Registration and Checkout Options

1. Domain Registration Preferences

Your Domain Names (1)	Registration Length Pricing	Contact Information	Add Privacy & your domain is just \$3.99'	Auto Renew	Add Email Account & your domain is just \$3.99'
+ Domains on this order Edit Details for Each Domain	2 year	Test testing	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private \$19.95/yr	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Auto <input type="radio"/> Manual	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$14.95/yr

If you're hosting these domains elsewhere, [click here to set nameservers](#).
Don't have hosting? [Help me choose](#).

2. Select Checkout Preference:

Show me exclusive offers that will help me get the most from my domain.
Note: You will qualify for \$3.99 domain pricing with each additional product you buy.

Quick Checkout.

CONTINUE ►

► [Save my registration info](#) and shop for more domain names

There are several areas here that you need to be aware of:

[Length of Registration](#) - You can select the length of registration to any year between 1 year and 10 years. It's cheaper the more years you buy, but I usually only buy one or two years at a time. That way if I decide to move on to something else I won't have spent money that I didn't need to.

[Standard Registration or Private Registration](#) - A private domain registration is similar to an unlisted number. It hides your name, address, phone number, etc. from spammers and telemarketers.

If you just have the standard registration these creeps can and do get your information and then bombard you with stuff you don't want or need.

I used to not get the private registration but now I usually do just because it cuts down on the junk mail and email I get. Plus, there

are a lot of kooks out there and I just don't like the idea of someone I don't know being able to get my address.

It's a personal choice on whether to get it or not. There isn't a good or bad or right or wrong on this choice. Whatever you decide, will be fine.

If you have been the victim of a stalking, are in a profession where you don't want people to know your address (ex: therapist, police, etc.), or for whatever reason don't want people to have your address and phone number then I strongly suggest that you get a private registration.

If you decide to backorder a domain you also have the choice to make it standard or private. I always make the backorders standard because if for some reason I don't get the domain then I'm not out the extra bucks for the private registration fee. I can always make the domain private after I get it.

Speaking of backordering domains – if you don't get the backorder domain you request you can keep backordering different domain names for the same initial fee. You don't have to pay again. You can keep backordering until you are awarded an expired domain name which is pretty nice.

[Auto Renew](#) – always set this to yes. That way if you forget to renew your domain when it comes up for renewal you won't lose it. You can always change this later if you decide not to keep the domain name, but starting out I would always select Auto Renew.

Okay, once you are done, click Continue.

You will now be on a page that has a lot of extras you can get.

Note: You do NOT need to get web hosting or email. Those items come free with your web builder account.

Click the Continue button at the bottom. You do not need to get email. It comes free with your web hosting account.

This will take you to the checkout screen so you can pay.

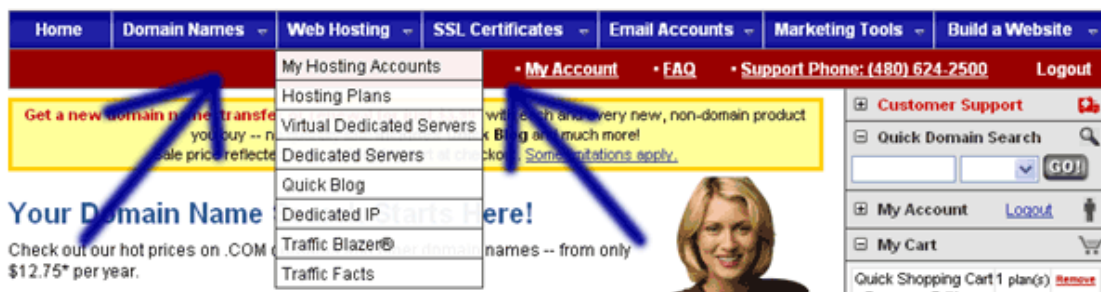
See how easy it is to get your account? It isn't hard at all. In fact it probably took you longer to read this than it will to actually order. Once you know what to do, ordering is a real snap.

Okay, you're done with this part! Let's move on to stuff that's more fun. Proceed to Chapter 5: Web Site Basics to learn some basic do's and don'ts for your website.

Step 3C – Ordering Web Hosting

Note: You only need to order web hosting if you are using your own web site builder (such as Front Page). If you don't have your own web site builder see page 52 for what you do need.

After you have chosen your domain name, select Web Hosting on the top navigation bar. Click Hosting Plans.



On the hosting plan page you can select the plan that you want.

I would go for the cheapest Linux plan for \$8.95/month. Most people overestimate the amount of space they need and there is no sense paying extra if you don't have to. You can always get more space if you need it.

Web Hosting Checkout

The checkout process has several parts to it. It's pretty easy, but there are a couple of areas you may have questions about so I've included the steps here.

In Step 1, you will select the button for "I want a new Act Now Domains account" then enter your information and click the Continue button.

Domain Registration Information

► Select Domain Registration Account

- Login to an existing account *(this will also populate your registration information)*

Enter Customer #
or Login Name:

Enter
Password:

Secure Login

- I would like to create a new Act Now Domains account.
-

► Create your domain registration information:

* Required information

First Name: *

Last Name: *

Email Address: *

[Important information about email accounts](#)

Company Name:

- By checking this box you certify that the Company Name specified above is the legal registrant of this domain name.

Address 1: *

Address 2:

City: *

Country: *

State: *

This brings you to [Step 2](#) the Registration screen which looks like this:

Registration and Checkout Options

1. Domain Registration Preferences

Your Domain Names (1)	Registration Length Pricing	Contact Information	Add Privacy & your domain is just \$3.99'	Auto Renew	Add Email Account & your domain is just \$3.99'
+ Domains on this order Edit Details for Each Domain	2 year	Test testing	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private \$19.95/yr	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Auto <input type="radio"/> Manual	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$14.95/yr

If you're hosting these domains elsewhere, [click here to set nameservers.](#)
Don't have hosting? [Help me choose.](#)

2. Select Checkout Preference:

Show me exclusive offers that will help me get the most from my domain.
Note: You will qualify for \$3.99 domain pricing with each additional product you buy.

Quick Checkout.

CONTINUE ►

► [Save my registration info](#) and shop for more domain names

There are several areas here that you need to be aware of:

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It's a personal choice on whether to get it or not. There isn't a good or bad or right or wrong on this choice. Whatever you decide, will be fine.

If you have been the victim of a stalking, are in a profession where you don't want people to know your address (ex: therapist, police, etc.), or for whatever reason don't want people to have your address and phone number then I strongly suggest that you get a private registration.

If you decide to backorder a domain you also have the choice to make it standard or private. I always make the backorders standard because if for some reason I don't get the domain then I'm not out the extra bucks for the private registration fee. I can always make the domain private after I get it.

Auto Renew – always set this to yes. That way if you forget to renew your domain when it comes up for renewal you won't lose it. You can always change this later if you decide not to keep the domain name, but starting out I would always select Auto Renew.

Click Continue. This will take you to a page that has a lot of extras you can get.

Note: you do NOT need to get email. It comes free with your web hosting account.

Click the Continue button at the bottom. This will take you to the checkout screen so you can pay.

See how easy it is to get your account? It isn't hard at all. In fact it probably took you longer to read this than it will to actually order. Once you know what to do, ordering is a real snap.

Chapter 5

Your Web Site: Do's & Don'ts

Before we dive in and start building a website, let's look at some basic information about them and what to do and not to do first.

The Seven Do's and Don'ts of Building a Web Site

Regardless of what software you use to build a web site, there are seven basic do's and don'ts you need to keep in mind. It's very easy to get carried away on your first site and do things that send visitors away which is most definitely not what you want to do.

When you build your web site:

Do keep your web site simple. Don't cram it full of clutter or pack it with lots of text. The less text, the better.

Do make it eye pleasing. No crazy fonts or colors. The standard fonts for web sites are Arial, Verdana and Times New Roman.

Not all computers recognize non-standard fonts, so if you use one you run the risk that their computer will convert it to a font which looks really bad or isn't readable. Whatever font you decide on, use it throughout your site. Don't alternate between fonts.

Don't use a Flash introduction. Have you ever been to a web site which has a bunch of cool pictures or a little movie introduction that usually takes forever to load and while it's waiting you have the option to "Skip Intro"? The pictures or movie you usually skip past is called a Flash introduction.

Web designers love these because it gives them a chance to show off and impress other web designers, but most people click off as soon as they see them loading. The object is to get people to see

your web site, not drive them away. It's hard enough to get visitors you don't want those you do get to leave before they even get to your home page.

[Don't put music or sound files on your site.](#) It startles people when they are surfing and suddenly hear music blaring out. Their immediate reaction is to back track immediately. You are selling a product or service and your goal is to have your visitor think you are a professional company. Music on a business web site isn't professional. Just don't do it.

[Don't put falling objects or a different cursor on your site.](#) Some web builders give you the option of putting falling snowflakes or other little objects on your pages or allow you to change the cursors of the people visiting your site to text or another object. That is really annoying, people don't like it and it isn't professional. Just don't do it.

[Don't put a lot of slow-loading graphics on your page.](#) No matter how pretty your graphics are, people aren't going to stick around and wait for them to load. You can optimize your images for free using the gifbot at www.NetMechanic.com.

What this means is that you load the image onto Net Mechanic's web page and they will condense the size of the image for you, then let you pick the image you like from the results. Usually you can reduce the size by 50% or more without there being a noticeable change in quality.

As a special bonus with this book I have created a video tutorial that walks you through how to do this.

[Don't use pop-ups on your web site.](#) Visitors find these really annoying. The less you annoy a visitor, the more likely he or she is to stay and turn into a customer.

[Special note to AOL users:](#) Don't build your web site by accessing your web site builder through AOL's browser. Use Internet Explorer instead to access your web builder. The reason

is that AOL's browser automatically converts images to another format and while the images look good on AOL they look bad to everyone else.

The Biggest Mistake Most New Web Site Owners Make

The biggest mistake most new webmasters make is to hide what they sell from their customers. Visitors must be able to tell at a glance on your first page what your web site is about. I can't stress that enough.

For example, if you sell teddy bears, make sure that's evident right up front. Make sure that as soon as people click on to your home page they know right away that you sell teddy bears.

Most people will leave a web site in the first few seconds if they don't think your site offers them what they are looking for. They aren't going to take the time to scroll around to see if you have what they need. They aren't going to read lots and lots of text to see if you have what they are looking for. No, they will click on the page, glance at it and if they don't see what they are hoping to see, they will leave.

Make it clear to them immediately what your site is about.

A lot of people think their web site tells what product or service they offer immediately, but their web site really doesn't. So how can you make sure that your web site makes clear to your visitor what product or service you offer?

Easy. Imagine you are talking to a friend and your friend asks "So what's this new business of yours?" You aren't going to go into a big long explanation of all the benefits of your product or service or tell them how to order your product or how to contact you. No, the first thing you are going to tell your friend is "I'm selling _____" or

“I’m providing consulting services for _____” or whatever you are doing.

Just as you tell your friend immediately what your business is about, you MUST tell your visitors. If it isn’t visible as soon as you click on your web site, put it on there. Your visitors don’t want to scroll down the page to see what your site is about. That’s too much work for them. They must be able to tell as soon as your web site comes up. If they can’t, they will leave. They aren’t going to stick around and search for it.

The Single Most Important Piece of Information on Your Web Site

It isn’t your product or service. It isn’t fancy graphics or the great text you’ve spent hours laboring over. Nope. The single most important piece of information on your web site is your contact information.

You must put at least one email address on your web site, preferably more, depending on what you are selling, so that your customers can contact you with questions or problems.

A lot of people will not buy from a company that doesn’t provide this information. Let’s face it, would you give your credit card information to some company that doesn’t provide you with a way to get into contact with if something goes wrong with your order? I don’t think so. I sure wouldn’t.

You must have your contact information visible on EVERY page of your web site except the order page. Every single one. What I usually do is put a Contact Us link on every page so that people can always click there to find out how to contact me.

Most people won't bother to click on that link, but just by seeing it there most customers feel a certain security knowing if they did have a problem they could get in touch with someone.

Should You or Shouldn't You?

A question I get asked a lot by people starting out with a home business is "Should I put my home address on my web site?"

It's a personal decision. Personally, there are a lot of kooks out there and I don't want anyone knowing where I live so I don't list mine, but if you feel comfortable listing yours you certainly can.

People do feel more secure knowing there is a real address behind the web site or a phone number they can call if there is a problem. Depending on what your business is, listing an address can help.

If you are in a business where you don't want your customers knowing that information (like a therapist, counselor, etc.) then I would most definitely not list it. (Again, if you are in such a profession I would strongly urge you to get private domain registration when you get your domain name. Otherwise, people can easily find out your home address and phone number.)

If you want to put an address and you don't want people to know where you live, you can rent out a post office box.

The Two Most Common Web Site Legal Issues

When you put up your web site it is important that you don't accidentally do something illegal or unethical.

The two most common mistakes made by a lot of beginning webmasters involve copying someone else's copyrighted material.

You aren't allowed to:

1. [Copy someone else's text](#). That means that if you see text someone else has written – on another web site, in a book or magazine or anywhere else – and you think it is great and want to use it, you can't just copy and use it. You can't use it unless the owner of the text gives you permission.

The text they wrote belongs to them and is their intellectual property. You must create your own text or change it to such an extent that someone looking at it wouldn't be able to tell it originally was their text.

[The exception to this rule](#) is information on a US government web site. Unless a US government web site indicates that its contents are protected by copyright (this notice will usually be at the bottom of a page) then it's okay for you to take it and use it any way you like.

The reason is that the government belongs to the people and any information compiled by the government also belongs to the people.

2. [You can't copy someone else's images](#). You can't go around the web just taking images that you like for use on your web site. Just like you can't take someone else's text, you also can't take pictures or graphics or images unless the person says it's okay.

[What images are okay to use?](#) Images on a government web site or that are produced by the government, any images that your web host makes available to you if you are using it's web site builder, any photos you take yourself, any images you buy at an image house such as www.istockphotos.com (really cheap) or www.Comstock.com (not cheap but really nice) or if you are selling a product someone else manufactured, like a computer or TV, you can use photos or images of those products.

Penalties

Let's say that you go ahead and copy someone else image or text anyway. What will happen?

Most likely what will happen is that the person who owns the material will find out and send you an email asking you to remove it. If you don't, then they will do one of two things:

1. If they are a small company or person, they will usually contact your web host and tell them that you are infringing on their copyright. The web host will investigate the matter and if you did copy it and are using it, the web host will either ask you to remove it or will cancel your account.
2. If it's a big company, they will either contact your web host or send you a cease and desist notice which means if you don't take down the material they will sue you.

Just don't copy. It isn't worth it.

Chapter 6

Building Your Website

The actual how to of building your web site depends on which web site building software you decide to go with – your web host's or your own.

If you are building a web store and are using your web host's store builder software, see the Bonus Tutorial: How to Build a Web Store. You can see how to access the tutorial at the end of this book in the section marked Bonus Tutorials.

If you are selling fewer than 3 products and are using your web host's web site builder, see the Bonus Tutorial: How to Build a Web Site. You can see how to access the tutorial at the end of this book in the section marked Bonus Tutorials.

If you are using your own web site building software like Front Page there are tutorials you can find on the web which will show you how to create a web site using that program. To find them, go to www.Google.com and type in Front Page tutorials or whatever the name of the web site building software you are using is.

Chapter 7

Email

Your web host will provide you with an email account. This allows you to send and receive email with your domain name in it. For example, you@yourdomain.com, support@yourdomain.com, etc. You can put anything in front of the @yourdomain.com that you would like as long as there are no spaces in the letters or numbers you put. Most web hosting plans allow you to put more than enough variations in front of the @ sign.

You will have one email address which is called your “default email address.” This is the email address that is your catch all email address. So let’s say someone puts something in front of the @yourdomain.com that you haven’t specified, it will go to your default address.

For example, let’s say you have set up Me@MyDomain.com as your default catch-all address and you also have set up the addresses Sales@MyDomain.com and Help@MyDomain.com. If someone sends an email to Admin@MyDomain.com it would go to your catch all address Me@MyDomain.com since you don’t have an email address called Admin@MyDomain.com.

This is great because it means you don’t have to specify each possible email address someone could send to.

Web Mail

Most hosting plans also provide you with what’s called a web mail account. This is just an email account similar to an email account that you can get at Yahoo.com or Hotmail.com only this one is an email address with your domain name on it.

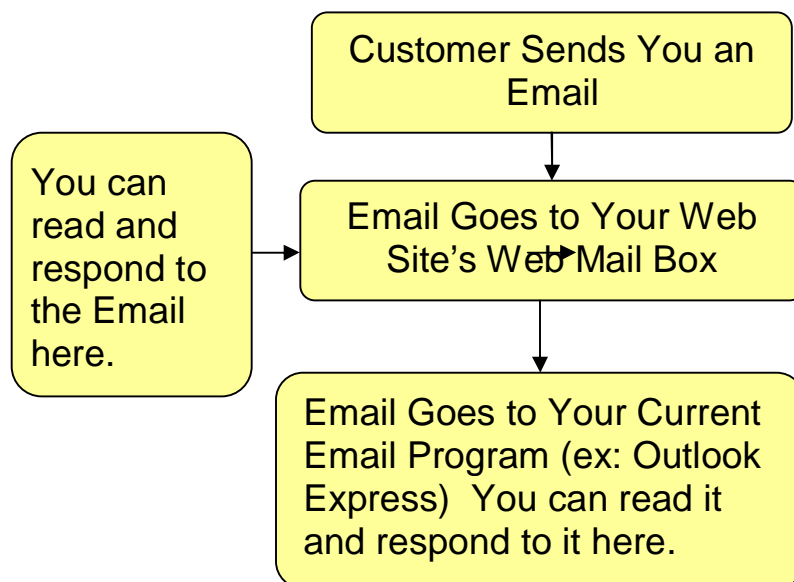
With a web mail account, you can check your email from any computer. So, if you have a home business but you also work, you can check mail to your web site from your work computer.

If you are used to checking your email or receiving your email in your Outlook Express mail program or similar program, it's usually a good idea to set up that mail program to receive email from your web site. This way when you are home you will be able to receive email from your web site directly into the current email inbox you are currently using.

The reason this is a good idea is that you are used to checking your email from there. At some point you may forget to check your domain name's web mail account. This way you will automatically receive any mail to that address.

If you set it up so you get your web site's email at your current computer, it doesn't mean you can't also check your web mail from another computer. You can. It goes to your web mail box first.

This may sound confusing but it is pretty easy in practice. Basically it lets you have two different ways you can get your email. You can get it by logging directly into your web mail account or you can set up your current email program and get it there.

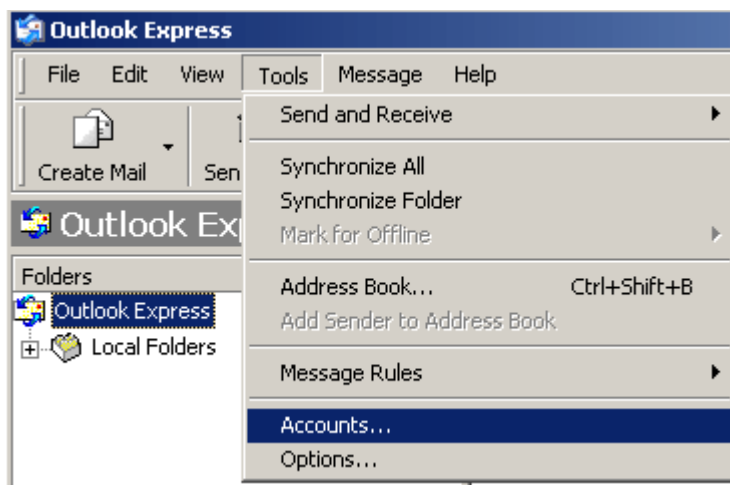


How to Set Up Your Domain Email Address in Outlook Express

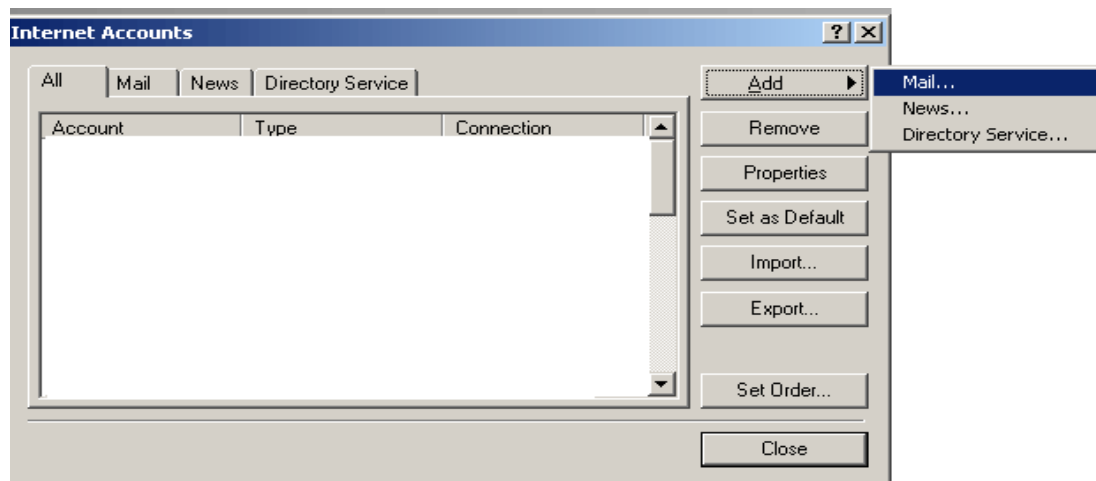
If you do want to set up your Outlook Express so you can send and receive email that comes in to your web site, it's really easy. It will take you less than 5 minutes to set up.

Here is all you need to do:

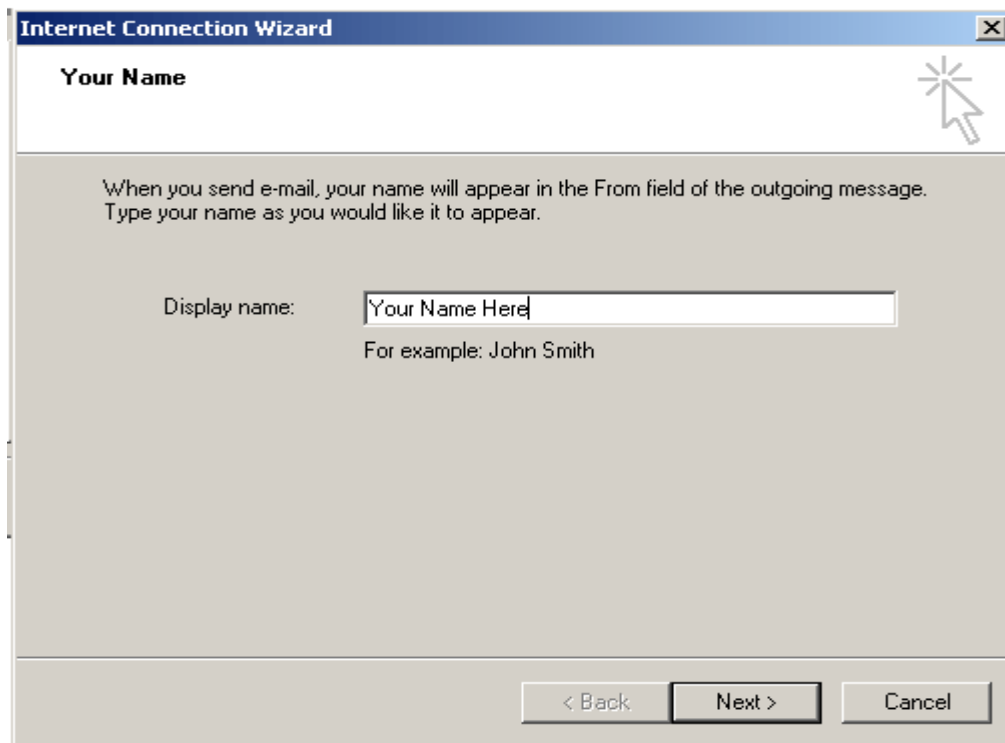
1. In Outlook Express, go to Tools and click Accounts.



2. Click on Add, Mail.

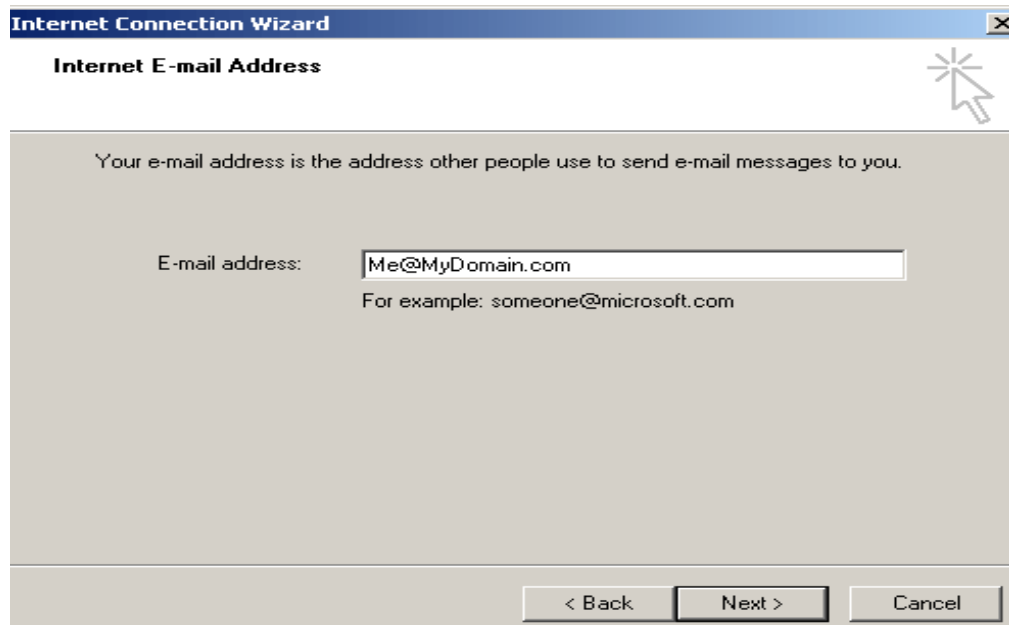


3. Enter the Name you want people to see (ex: your name, Support, Sales, etc.) Click Next.



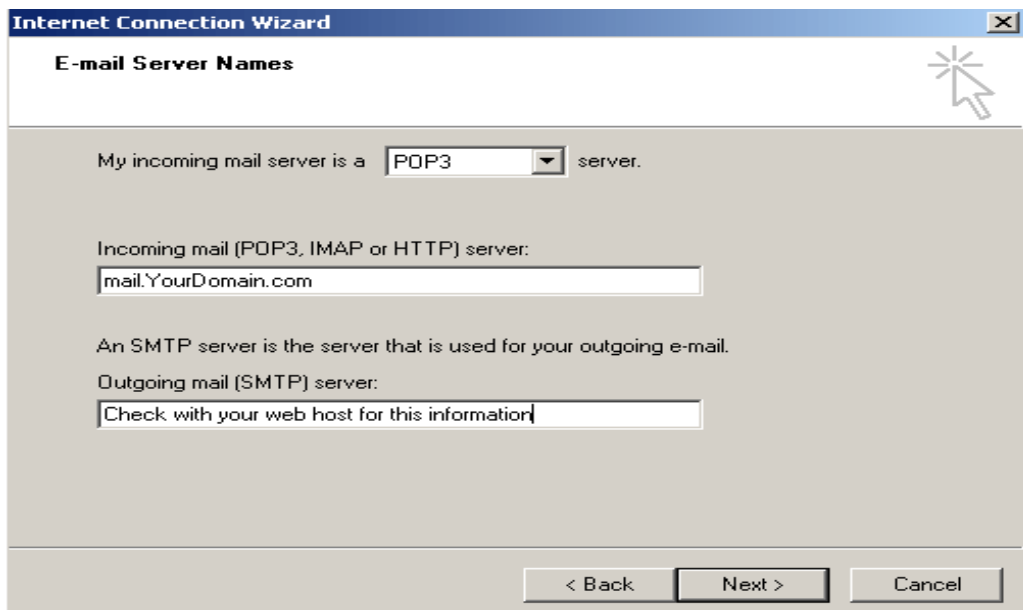
The screenshot shows the 'Your Name' step of the Internet Connection Wizard. The window title is 'Internet Connection Wizard'. The main heading is 'Your Name'. Below the heading, there is a text box containing 'Your Name Here'. To the right of the text box, there is a mouse cursor icon. Below the text box, there is a label 'Display name:' and a text box containing 'Your Name Here'. Below the text box, there is a label 'For example: John Smith'. At the bottom of the window, there are three buttons: '< Back', 'Next >', and 'Cancel'.

4. Enter the email address you have created to use with your web site. Click next.



The screenshot shows the 'Internet E-mail Address' step of the Internet Connection Wizard. The window title is 'Internet Connection Wizard'. The main heading is 'Internet E-mail Address'. Below the heading, there is a text box containing 'Me@MyDomain.com'. To the right of the text box, there is a mouse cursor icon. Below the text box, there is a label 'E-mail address:' and a text box containing 'Me@MyDomain.com'. Below the text box, there is a label 'For example: someone@microsoft.com'. At the bottom of the window, there are three buttons: '< Back', 'Next >', and 'Cancel'.

5. Enter mail.yourdomain.com as your incoming mail server. Check with your web host as to what you need to put for your outgoing mail server. It varies by web host. This information will usually either be in the welcome email you receive from your web host or it will be in your web host's frequently asked questions section.



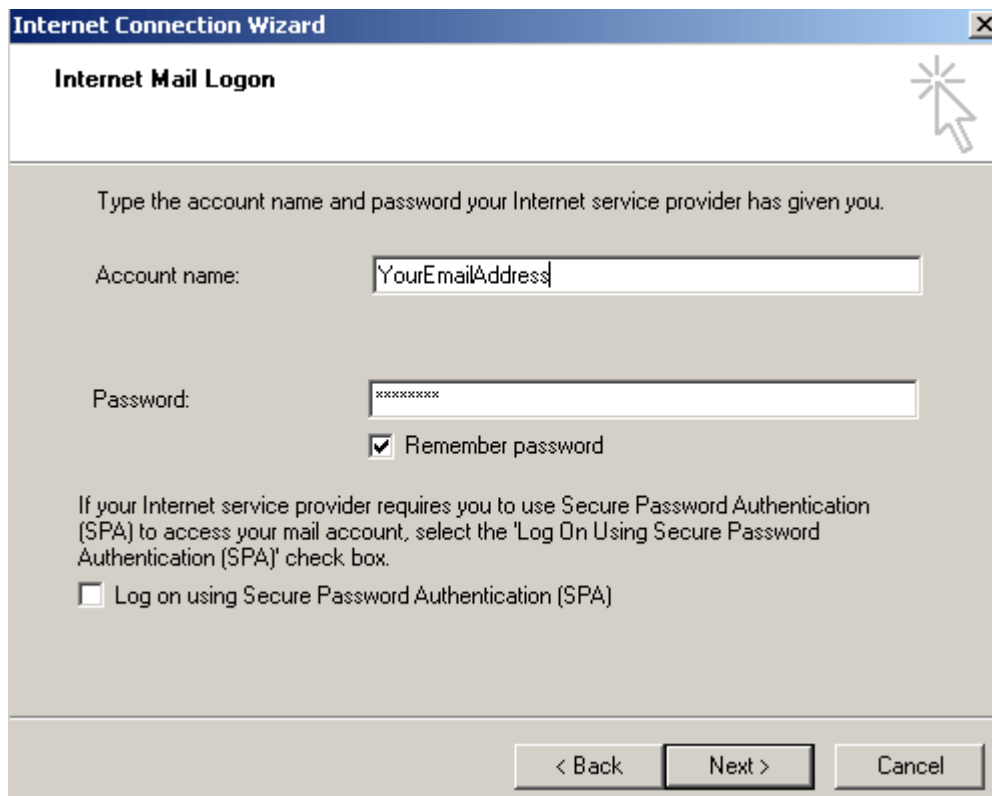
Please note: Some internet service providers do not allow you to use a web host's outgoing mail server to send email. This is to control spammers from using your isp's internet connection to send spam.

If you complete all these steps correctly and you can't send email this is probably the reason. Go to your internet provider's home page and look in their faq's section for the name of their outgoing mail server.

Put that in the box for outgoing mail server and try to send email. That should solve the problem. If it doesn't, contact your internet service provider.

6. Enter your account name and password. Your account name is usually the email address that will allow you to access your web

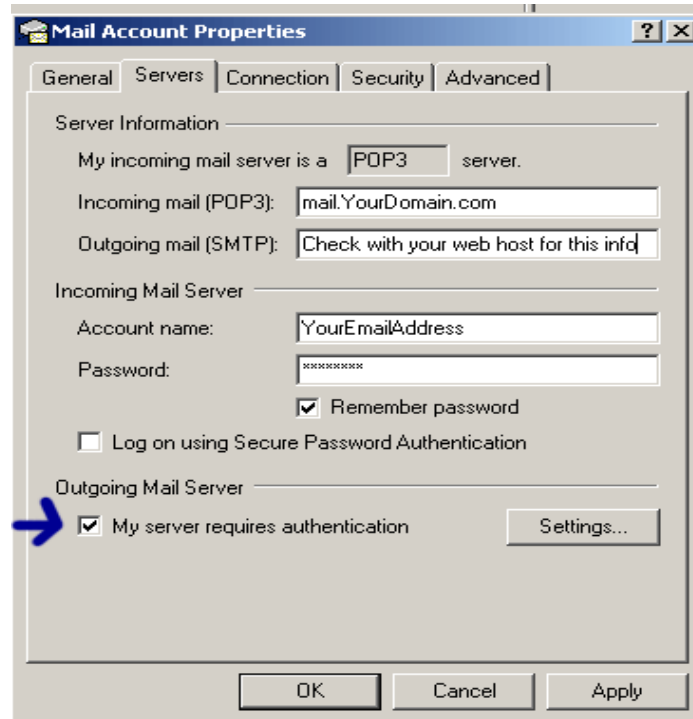
mail account. The password is usually the password that allows you to access your web mail account. Click Next.



The screenshot shows a Windows dialog box titled "Internet Connection Wizard" with a sub-header "Internet Mail Logon". The main text reads: "Type the account name and password your Internet service provider has given you." There are two input fields: "Account name:" containing "YourEmailAddress" and "Password:" containing "xxxxxxx". Below the password field is a checked checkbox labeled "Remember password". A paragraph of text explains: "If your Internet service provider requires you to use Secure Password Authentication (SPA) to access your mail account, select the 'Log On Using Secure Password Authentication (SPA)' check box." Below this is an unchecked checkbox labeled "Log on using Secure Password Authentication (SPA)". At the bottom are three buttons: "< Back", "Next >", and "Cancel". A mouse cursor is pointing at the "Next >" button.

7. Click Finish.
8. If your web host tells you that your outgoing mail server requires authentication then you will need to do one more thing. After you click finish, you will be returned to the email accounts screen. Double click on the email account you just created, then click the Servers tab.

Check the box where it says My server requires authentication.



Click the Settings button, enter your account name and password (the same email address and password you entered earlier) and click OK.

Two Great Ways to Protect Yourself from Spam

As you know spam is out of control. The less spam, the better. Regardless of what you do, you will always get some spam but there are ways you can lessen it.

The two best ways are:

1. [Don't put your email address as a link on your web site.](#) There are robots (called spiders) constantly searching the web for information. They go from web site to web site. Some of these spiders are good. They are from search engines like Google.

There are other spiders that aren't good. Some of these spiders are sent by people who collect email addresses off web sites. They then package up all the email addresses they collect and sell them to spammers.

You want your customers to have your email address but you don't want spammers to get them so what can you do?

Well, here's a trick: if you put your email address up but don't link it then a lot of the bad spiders won't pick it up. This won't stop all the bad spiders but it will stop some of them.

What do I mean by 'don't link it'? Easy. You know how when you see an email address on a web site and you click on it and an email comes up ready for you to type in your question or comment to the company? That's what happens when your email address is linked.

Instead, you will just list your email address but remove the link (you can do this in your web site builder.) Your customers will see your email address and know how to contact you, but it will prevent the bad spiders from getting your email address.

It's a pretty neat trick. It doesn't work all the time but it does stop a lot of the bad ones.

2. Another way to prevent spam is to [ALWAYS create a new address when you give out your email address at other web sites or order something.](#) Since you can put anything you want in front of the [@yourdomain.com](#) you can create a new address any time you like.

The benefit of this is that you always know where your mail is coming from and if some place keeps sending you emails or the site sells your email address to spammers you can quite easily block all emails to that email address using your web host's spam blocker.

For example, let's say that you decide you want to sign up for a free course at FreeCourse.com. Instead of giving the main email address you use everyday Me@MyDomain.com you would create a new email address specifically for this sign up.

I like to make my email address the name of the web site I'm visiting so that way if I get a lot of junk mail from that place or they sell my email address to spammers I can block it. Plus, I will know who is sending it and I won't go back there.

So, in this example, I would create the email address FreeCourse@mydomain.com and give that email address when I fill out the order form at FreeCourse.com.

There is nothing to do other than that. You don't have to do anything with any of your email accounts and you don't have to add a new account each time you do this. Your default, catch-all email address will catch any emails like this for you.

A Final Word on Email

Once you put up a web site you will get a lot of offers from people who say that they can email your offer to thousands of people who really, really, really want your product.

Don't fall for that. You know the email addresses that those bad spiders collect? That's probably who those thousands of people are.

Even if they tell you that they are mailing to people who opted in to their email campaign don't do it. Save your money and a lot of hassle.

If you do go ahead with something like that you will be guilty of spamming, your web host will immediately cancel your account and you can face a hefty fine or criminal prosecution.

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

Chapter 8

How to Accept Credit Cards

If you are selling a product on the internet it is very important that you accept credit cards. Why? Although you can certainly accept checks if you wish, most customers aren't going to bother going to the trouble of writing out a check and mailing it.

You will drastically increase your sales if you accept credit cards instead of making people send in a check or money order. People like the ability to pay immediately.

The 3 Ways You Can Accept Credit Cards

There are 3 different ways you can accept credit cards on your web site.

1. You can set up your own merchant account.

- p** 2. You can use Pay Pal.

- p** 3. You can use a 3rd party gateway provider.

Setting up Your Own Merchant Account

I absolutely do NOT recommend this option if this is your first web site.

With this option, you are solely responsible for getting your customer's credit card information to the merchant account provider.

This means that you must set up your site to accept your customer's information, get a secure certificate so that your customer's information is secure, install the certificate, set up your own shopping cart, get a gateway provider and set the gateway up to work with your shopping cart. All of this is quite technically advanced and almost always over the head of a first time webmaster.

In addition, it is quite expensive to set up your own merchant account and there are a lot of companies out there that take advantage of new web site owners by charging outrageous fees.

Also, if you don't know what you are doing it can expose you to a LOT of fraud. You are responsible for all charges made on the account so if someone commits fraud via your site YOU are responsible for the charges. If you don't make good on the charges, it can damage your credit rating.

I do not recommend any business get their own merchant account until they are bringing in at least \$5,000/month in sales from their web site.

At that point, if you want your own merchant account, you can hire someone to set it up for you and you will be more familiar with fraud detection methods. You will also be more familiar with your web site's sales activity and can better detect fraud.

Even if you already have a merchant account for an existing business, I recommend that you do not use it initially with your web site. If you insist on using it, you will need to hire someone to build your web site and integrate your merchant account with a shopping cart. You may want to check out www.WebDesignStudio.com for this. I've had a good experience with them.

A Pay Pal Account

Pay Pal (www.PayPal.com) is the largest and most well established company on the internet that allows people to transfer

money. They are owned by the giant auction company, Ebay (www.Ebay.com)

It's free to sign up for a Pay Pal account and this is the option I suggest to most people starting out.

With Pay Pal you can sign up for a free account under their Merchant Tools section.

You will then create your product payment information by simply filling in a few blanks (ex: product name, description, price), then you click a button and they will generate a code for you.

You simply place this code in the .html code section of your web site and your product information will show up on your web site. There will be a buy now button and when the customer selects that button they will automatically be taken to the pay pal payment page.

As a bonus with this book, I have provided you with a short tutorial that shows you step by step how to insert this code into your web site builder. It is really easy to do. All you have to do is cut and paste and click a few buttons. It's very simple.

Besides being free to open an account (they deduct 3% of all sales you make as their fee), Pay Pal also has really good fraud detection mechanisms. Although you have to be somewhat aware of possible fraud issues, you don't need to really check each order over carefully like you would if you had your own merchant account.

This means that they will catch a lot of fraud so chances are slim that they wouldn't know the customer was paying by a stolen card. Also, because their fraud department is so good, most of the time it will save you from shipping a product that you won't get paid for.

It's perfectly fine to start out with Pay Pal and if money is tight I definitely would.

Third Party Gateway Providers

A third party gateway provider is a combination of Pay Pal and your own merchant account and gives you the best of each.

Although this is a good option and I do recommend it, for now Pay Pal is the best option for those starting out because there aren't any good, reasonably priced 3rd party gateways that I recommend at this time. The ones that are out there all seem to have major problems that you should probably steer clear of for now.

A third party gateway has their own merchant account and they are allowing you to use their account to accept credit cards.

Since you are using their merchant account they have an incentive to catch any fraud that may originate from your web site

The most well established third party merchant account provider is 2Checkout (www.2checkout.com).

2Checkout costs \$49 to set up and used to be really easy to use. They upgraded their system and it's now much harder for new users to use and their customer service has gone from really good to just plain awful. I used to recommend them. I no longer do.

Like Pay Pal, you pay a percentage of the total amount the customer pays plus a small transaction fee but you don't have to pay any monthly fees or anything else. After your account is set up you only pay when you make a sale. That's all you have to pay. 2Checkout has a reputation for being very good at catching fraud.

The order process of a third party gateway provider usually goes like this:

- A customer orders from your web site.
- The customer pays for it on the third party gateway provider's web page.
- The third party gateway provider checks the order for fraud and then if it's valid emails you with the new order.

The greater majority of the time your third party gateway provider will catch a fraudulent order, but not always. That's why it's important for you to be aware of what the indicators of fraud are.

Why You Should Care about Fraud

If a bad guy commits fraud on your site using a stolen credit card and you don't catch it you are responsible for paying a fee to the credit card company called a charge back. If you get a certain number of charge backs then your account will be canceled and it is very hard to get another one. Also, it can affect your credit rating.

Another reason you need to care about fraud is that if you don't catch the fraud and you ship the order, you are out the payment for that order, the products in the order, the shipping costs and a charge back fee.

Bad guys roam the internet looking for merchants they can take advantage of, if you are aware of the basic fraud indicators you can usually prevent yourself from being one of their targets.

Four Possible Indicators of Fraud

Okay, let's say whatever method of accepting credit cards you have decided to use tells you the order is valid. If you use Pay Pal or a third party gateway provider usually it's not a fraudulent order, but you still need to be aware of the red flags to look out for in case it is.

So how do you actually know if an order is fraudulent or not?

It can be difficult to know 100% of the time but there are certain things that you can watch for:

1. [Suspicious Sales Activity.](#) This is the easiest way to detect fraud. If customers usually only buy one or two of your

products at a time and you suddenly get a huge order of say, 5 or 10 products, that is a red flag. You should investigate it.

It could be that someone really did buy such a huge order (good for you!) or it could be an indicator of fraud. Either way, you need to check it out.

2. [Getting an email asking if you will ship to a country known for fraud.](#) Some of the countries that have a reputation for fraud are Korea, Singapore, China, the Philippines, Nigeria, and other African countries. Some third party gateway providers won't accept payment from these countries. For your own protection if you get such an order or email, I would suggest that you email the person and say that you require people from those countries to fax you a copy of their credit card (front and back), a copy of a photo ID and a signature authorizing you to charge their credit card.

If the person is legitimate and the credit card is valid, the person will. If it isn't, they won't.

3. [Different Bill to and Ship to Addresses.](#) I would suggest that you only ship to the same address as the card holder's address. If someone wants you to ship it to a different address you can request that they fax in a copy of their credit card, a photo ID and a signature authorizing you to charge their credit card and ship to a different address.

4. [Cashier's Check.](#) This is one that cropped up a while back. In this scam, someone contacts you (usually from one of the countries known for fraud) and tells you that either they don't have a credit card or they know that very few companies take a credit card from their country so they ask if they can pay you by a cashier's check.

Usually the order is a nice sized order so you say "Sure." They send you a cashier's check for a larger amount than the order. You take the check to your bank, it's accepted, you send the products and you send out a check to cover the

difference between the total sales and the amount the person paid.

You feel pretty good about the sale until ... your bank calls and tells you the cashier's check is a fake. You are not only out the money and the products, you have also paid out your own money to this con man.

What to Do if You Think an Order May Be Fraudulent

First, look at the phone number that the person entered. Go to www.google.com and type in the area code the person has given and the words "area code" so if someone has listed the phone number as: 310-555-1212 you would type in 310 area code.

This will return results which tell you that the 310 area code is the Los Angeles area.

Look at the city and state the person entered. If the person put down Beverly Hills, California then that's a good indication that the person has provided the correct phone number. You should call the customer and confirm the order with them (please be aware of time differences when you call – you don't want to call in the middle of the night.)

When you call just tell them that it's your company's policy to verbally confirm all orders and that you are doing so. Did they in fact just purchase this order of your product?

Most people will appreciate your call and it really impresses them that your company is concerned with security.

If they say, yes, they did place the order, you say thank you and ship the order.

If they say, no they did not, then you tell them that someone just placed an order and that they may wish to contact their credit card company and report the activity.

You would then contact your merchant account provider and tell them you suspect the order is fraudulent and would like to cancel it. Usually you can cancel it within 12 hours or so of when they notify you.

If the phone number you get is for a completely different state or area, then I would send an email to the customer informing them that there is a question about the validity of their credit card information and ask them to please fax in their signed authorization with a copy of their credit card and a photo ID. If you don't get a response, I would notify your merchant account provider.

Fraud Wrap Up

I don't want this section on fraud to scare you away from doing business on the internet or accepting credit cards. If you use Pay Pal or a third party gateway provider the overwhelming majority of sales orders you get passed through to you will be legitimate.

I just want you to be aware of the possibility that a fraudulent order could slip through to you and the ways you can protect yourself so you don't get taken.

Chapter 9

Get Visitors to your Web Site

Getting customers to your web site is absolutely crucial to your business' success. If people don't know about your web site they won't visit it and if they don't visit, they won't buy anything.

There are many ways you can get people to your website. Some of these are better than others. Here is an overview of some of the most popular ways to get visitors. We will look at each one in more detail later on in the book.

1. Get your web site listed high in major search engines. This provides you with a source of free traffic to your web site. The visitors coming to your web site are looking for your product so they are pre-disposed to buy your product.

This is one of the best ways to get visitors. The problem with this method is that other businesses want to be ranked high in the search engines too so it's very competitive. In order to have your site ranked highly you need to optimize your web site.

What this means is that you must set up your web site to give it the best chance to get a high ranking.

Some search engines such as Google.com provide free web site listings. Other search engines such as Yahoo.com accept paid listings. In the next chapter we will look at some basic optimization techniques as well as what search engines are worth being listed in.

2. Pay for Web Site Advertising. There are many different ways you can advertise your web site. The best way to advertise your web site is through Pay Per Click (also known as PPC) advertising.

With PPC, your ad is listed and every time someone clicks on your ad you pay a set fee for that click. You decide the amount you will pay (between \$.05 and \$19.99 per click.)

The more you are willing to pay, the higher your ad appears in the results. The higher the ad appears, the more chance you have of someone clicking on the ad.

There are several important things you should know about PPC advertising. If you don't know what you are doing you can really lose a lot of money with it. In a later chapter, I will show you what some of the good PPC advertising places are, how to set up an account, what some good PPC strategies are, and which PPC companies I don't recommend.

Because people are so desperate to get visitors to their web sites there are a lot of scams and questionable offerings that you will be bombarded with from people who want you to pay them to help advertise your site. Not all of these are bad, but the majority aren't worth the money. In the Web Site Advertising chapter I will also tell you which offers you would do well to avoid.

3. [Free Sources of Online Advertising](#). While money for advertising is certainly an advantage, there are some ways that don't cost money that you can use to get visitors.

We will explore the most effective of these and what not to do.

4. [Offline Advertising](#). A lot of people are more comfortable just advertising on the internet, but offline advertising can increase your sales too. Regardless of what your business is you can usually benefit from some offline advertising.

I know several people who have given their online sales a big boost through their efforts offline.

Chapter 10

How to Get Listed in Google

The greater majority of visitors to your web site will probably come through search engines. There are currently 5 major search engines and listing services that you need to be aware of (Google, Yahoo, DMOZ, Alta Vista, Inktomi), but the main one right now is Google.

Google is currently the largest search engine and over 60% of all searches done are made using Google's search listings. Google's listings also appear in AOL.

It's free to get listed in Google. Since Google accounts for such a large percentage of searches it is very important that you get listed there.

There are two ways you can get listed in Google.

1. **You can submit your site to it directly.** You can do this yourself by going to <http://www.google.com/addurl.html> and entering your domain name.

You have to enter it in this format:

<http://www.yourdomain.com>

Replace yourdomain.com with your domain name. If you ever have to fill out a form and they ask for your url, they want you to give your domain name in this format.

Do not submit your web site more than once a week to Google. They will think you are spamming them and it can delay your site being listed or even get it banned which you definitely don't want to have happen.

Google updates their web site listings about once a month so it can take a while for your site to show up in their listings.

2. **Google can find your web site on its own.** Google has several robot spiders which go from web site to web site on the internet. When one of these robots visits a web site the robot catalogs all the information about that web site.

Google uses the information it gathers from these robots to decide whether or not to list the web site in a certain category and to decide where the web site will show up within that category (for example, on page 1 of the listings or on page 110 or page 1000, etc.)

Google goes from web site to web site via links. A link is the name given to the text or pictures that you click on to go from one web site to another. For example, let's say you see the word [Yahoo](#) on a web site and when you click on that word it takes you to Yahoo's web site, then the word you click on would be a text link.

How do you get Google to visit your web site this way? If a link to your web site appears on another web site that is already listed in Google, Google will go from that web site to your web site and then gather the information from your site.

Using this option of getting your web site in Google can sometimes get your web site listed quicker than if you submit your web site yourself.

Chapter 11

Ways to Improve your Google Ranking

Since the higher your web site listing in Google, the more customers you will likely get, you will likely want to improve on your Google ranking. There are several ways that you can do this. The two most common are:

- Optimizing your Web Site
- Getting Web Site Links

Optimizing your Web Site

Google can tell what a web site is about by looking at the content of that web site. If a specific word or phrase appears in certain places throughout the web page, Google thinks “Ah-ha! The web page is about that particular word or phrase.” So Google will then rank that web page higher than a web page that doesn’t seem to be about that word or phrase.

The process of you placing these specific words or phrases (called “keywords”) on your web pages is called Optimization. The better optimized your web site the more likely you are to have a high ranking.

Let’s take a real world example. Let’s say you sell toy trains. People are likely to search for your web site by typing in toy trains. If you don’t have the words toy trains on your web page, Google won’t know that you sell them so it will rank other sites that do have the words higher than your site.

Some people think this means that you should put the phrase toy trains all over your site everywhere, it doesn’t. If you put the phrase you are targeting too many times Google thinks you are trying to get an unfair advantage so will penalize you.

How Optimization Works

In a nutshell, you tell Google through a variety of ways what your web site is about. At its most basic level this process can be broken down into three steps:

1. Determine your keywords
2. Insert your Meta Tags
3. Insert the keywords into your content

Before you can tell Google what your web site is about you need to figure out what word or phrase you want people to type in to reach your web site. This step is called determining your keywords.

Determining Your Keywords

A keyword is the name of the word or phrase that you want people to do a search for in Google or another search engine and find your web site.

You can use a different keyword or phrase on each web page.

How do you find a good keyword to target?

You do an easy three step process. I have included a worksheet at the end of this book to help you with this. All you need to do is go through the process and fill in the blanks on the worksheet.

Here is the process:

1. [Make a list of all the words or phrases that someone could use to search for your web site.](#)

For example, let's say that you're selling a cookbook. You would write down cookbook, recipes, cooking, kitchen, cook book, cookbooks, recipe, buy cookbook, good cookbook, etc.

Write down as many words or phrases related to your subject matter that you can think of.

2. [Find out how many people searched on each of the terms you have written down.](#)

To do this you use a great free tool that Overture.com has available. This tool is called the Search Term Suggestion Tool. It allows you to see how many times a particular word or phrase was searched on their system during the last month.

What's so great about this is that you can see if the words you want to target actually get traffic or not. Plus, it can provide you with other keywords that you may not have thought of that you also might want to use.

You can find the tool at:

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

This is what it looks like:

Search Term Suggestion Tool

Not sure what search terms to bid on?
Enter a term related to your site and we will show you:

- Related searches that include your term
- How many times that term was searched on last month

Get suggestions for: (may take up to 30 seconds)

Note: All suggested search terms are subject to our standard editorial review process.

To use it just enter one of the words or phrases from your list and it will give you the number of times people searched for that word on Overture last month.

For example, here are some of the results for soap.

Count	Search Term
154356	soap opera
74862	soap
32928	abc soap opera
26115	soap opera digest
25552	soap making
23626	soap city
16634	soap central
14739	abc soap
14158	natural soap
12531	french soap
11627	cbs soap
11578	soap opera update
11378	soap making supply
10923	handmade soap
9097	soap opera spoiler
8653	passion soap opera
7878	general hospital soap opera
7750	soap spoiler
7523	soap opera central
7383	soap mold
6696	day of our life soap opera
5565	soap recipe
5164	make soap
5066	homemade soap
4357	com city soap

Obviously not all have to do with soap, the product. You would make note on your worksheet of the keywords that you feel would be good to target and how many searches each one received. I like to note the keywords or phrases that have between 3,000 and 30,000 searches.

Anything more than that and the competition is usually too stiff. At least initially. You may decide later on to try to go for a larger target or a smaller one. To begin with though, I would try to stick within this range.

3. Determine the level of competition for each of your keywords.

Determining how much competition you would face under each of the keywords you are considering allows you to choose the keywords that give you the best shot at getting a high ranking.

To determine how much competition you might face for the keywords you are considering, go to Google.com and type in your first keyword.

Click on the first listing in the search results and see the page rank of that page. Write it down on your worksheet.

Click on the tenth listing in the search results and see the page rank of that page. Write it down on your worksheet.

If the 10th listing has a page rank above a 5 I would not try for that keyword initially.

I recommend that beginners try to optimize their web sites using keywords that the search shows the 10th listing has a 4 or less page rank.

Why? Because it means that if you can optimize your web site well and can get a page rank of 4 for your web site (which is quite possible to get) then you have a shot at getting on the first page of Google for that particular search term.

Why did you write down the page rank of the #1 listing? Because that tells you what page rank you probably need to achieve in order to reach the #1 listing for that search term.

I say probably because some times a well optimized web site with a lower page rank can be ranked higher in the

listings than a poorly optimized web site with a higher page rank.

The rankings change about once a month at Google so what is a top ranking one month might not be the next.

You should repeat this step until you have one keyword or phrase for each web page you want to optimize.

Okay, now you have the word or phrase that you want to put on your web page. Let's go to the second step for optimizing your web site

Inserting Meta Tags on your Web Page

Meta tags are techie codes that you put on your web page. These tags are hidden from public view. Meta tags tell Google or other search engines the title of your web site, a description of your web site and certain keywords that relate to your web site.

This helps the search engines figure out what your web site is about. Not every search engine looks at your meta tags but you should have them for the search engines that do.

Your web site title is no more than 5 or 6 words. It should include the keyword or phrase that you have decided to target on that web page.

Your web site description is 1 or 2 sentences that describe what your web site is about. You should include the keyword once in the first sentence.

In the keywords section you should include all the keywords that you are targeting throughout your web site.

Once you have this information, how do you put it on your web page?

If you are using your web host's web site builder:

If you are using your web host's web site builder then it's really easy to put the meta tags and keywords on your web site.

Most web builders have a form that asks for this information and you just fill in the boxes next to each area.

Some web site builders only allow you to do one title, description and keyword for the whole site and not each individual page. That's fine. You can still optimize your individual web pages with the keywords in your text.

Note: if you are using Act Now Domains' web builder, you can set up your keywords in Page Properties. Just click on the page you want to optimize and in the upper left corner will be the Page Properties button

If you are using your own web site building software:

You would insert the following code directly into your HTML right below <head>. Replace the words insert info here with your own information.

```
<title>insert info here</title>
```

```
<meta name="description" content="insert info here">
```

```
<meta name="keywords" content="insert info here">
```

Now you know how to do meta tags, it's time for the last optimization step which is to actually put the keywords on your web page.

Insert Your Keywords into Your Content

In this step you put the keyword you are targeting for the web page into the content of that page.

For example, let's say you are selling dog treats and your keyword for the web page is "dog biscuits" and this is what your paragraph currently looks like:

Each of our dog treats is made with the finest and freshest of ingredients. Most vets agree that you can improve your dog's health by feeding them natural products instead of processed dog food. We believe dogs are happy and healthier when they have the best ingredients in their food.

Okay, I know that paragraph isn't great but let's say that is what you have.

Since you know the importance of having your keyword show up on your web page, you would want to include the phrase dog biscuits throughout your page including that paragraph.

You would add the keyword into the paragraph and now it might look like this:

Each of our dog biscuits is made with the finest and freshest of ingredients. Most vets agree that you can improve your dog's health by feeding them natural products instead of processed dog food. We believe dogs are happy and healthier when their dog biscuits are made with the best ingredients available.

The big questions everyone wants to know is: How many times do you put a keyword on the page? And, where exactly do you put them on the page? There is no right answer.

The optimization required to get to the top of one search term listing may not be the same for another listing. In addition, Google

changes what the right answer is every so often to prevent people from figuring it out. The reason Google does this is to prevent people who figure out the answer from totally monopolizing the results. It levels the playing field so no one gets an unfair advantage.

Although there is no right answer to either of the questions, a good rule of thumb to start with is:

- Put a heading on your web page that includes your keyword.
- Put the keyword twice in the first paragraph. Bold the keyword once.
- Put the keyword twice in the last paragraph.
- Put the keyword once in all other paragraphs.

As you go along and see where your site is ranked in future Google updates, you can tweak the number and placement of your keywords as necessary.

Tip: When you are incorporating your keywords into your web page text make sure that it still reads well after you are done. Don't just stick the keywords in. Put them so people reading your text will think your text makes sense. Reword things if you have to. Remember: potential customers will be reading this page.

Additional Optimization Resources

Still aren't sure if you are doing it correctly? Act Now Domains offers a service called Traffic Blazer that will analyze your web page for you for a year and give you specific tips on how you can optimize it. If you want some direct feedback on whether or not you are optimizing well, ways to improve it, etc. you may want to check it out.

It also will submit your site to a number of the big and medium directories for you plus it will track which ones your site is listed in and which it isn't. It's pretty decent.

Want more in depth information on optimization? If you want more than the basic overview I've given you may want to visit a web site called Spider Food (www.spider-food.net) It has a lot of good information and it's presented well.

Recap of Optimization:

- Select your keywords.
- Insert your Meta Tags.
- Insert your keywords into your web page.

Okay, now that you know one way that can help you improve your search engine ranking, let's look at another way: getting links to your web site

Ways to Get Links to Your Web Site

Having links to your web site is very important to Google because the more links you have to your web site the more valuable Google thinks it is. The more valuable Google thinks it is, the better your ranking will be.

You can get links to your web site in several ways:

- **You can get a free link** which means that the person puts your link on their web site and you don't have to do anything in return. These are the best to get but they are hard to find.
- **You can exchange links with another web site owner.** This means that if you put a link to their web site on your site then

they will put a link to your site on their web site. This is the most common way to get links.

- **You can pay for a link on another person's web site.** I do NOT recommend this. Most of the time it's a waste of money. Sometimes it will get you in trouble with Google.

Good and Bad Web Site Links

Not all links are created equal. Some links are super to get and others are worthless. Don't waste your time or energy going after the bad ones.

Good Links

Here are the links that are good for you to get. You should try to get these:

- A link from DMOZ (this is another search engine, I talk about it in the next chapter.)
- A link from a web site that is about the same subject matter as your web site. For example, if you sell soap, then you would want links from other web sites that are on the topic of soap, making soap, crafts, etc.
- A link from a directory that is totally about or has a category that is about the same subject as your web site. For example, sticking with our soap example, the directory may be an arts and crafts directory or it may be a general directory that has a category for arts and crafts.

Although it's tempting to go out and try to get links from anyone and everyone don't do it. Stick with links from the sites mentioned above and you will be better off.

Bad Links

These are links that I consider worthless. Use your own judgment on these but I wouldn't touch them with a 10 foot pole:

- Free for All Pages. You can list on these for free or for a fee. These promise that your web site will be listed on thousands of pages. What they don't tell you is that Google ignores links from these pages and you will get buried with spam from them.

I did this when I was first starting out and I'm STILL getting spam from it.

- Link Partners – these are services that are set up to make exchanging links easier. You sign up with them and can search their database for people who are looking to exchange links. It sounds good, but in practice it isn't.

It only works as long as the people you are exchanging links with pay their fee. If they don't continue paying then their whole links section disappears including your link. These services also are known to sell your email address to spammers. Steer clear. You're better off doing it on your own.

- Directories that you have never heard of that want you to pay them to list your link. These aren't worth your money. There are enough free directories that you can list in. Even with the free ones, don't plan on getting customers from being listed there. The main benefit is getting a link from them to help boost your Google page rank.

How to Get Web Site Links

Getting links isn't hard but it does take time. It's best to set aside an hour or two to do this initially and then after you get the hang of it set aside a few minutes each week for it. That way you can steadily build up your links and it won't be a hassle.

Before you get started you will need the Google toolbar. This is a tool that will make your life a lot easier.

It's free and can be found at <http://toolbar.google.com>. You must have Windows to use it.

This toolbar has a feature on it that allows you to see how highly Google ranks each web page you visit. This feature is called Page Rank.

Google ranks pages on a scale of 1-10. The more links you have from highly ranked web sites the higher your own page rank will be. The higher your page rank the more chance you have of getting higher in Google.

Once installed, the toolbar looks like this:



You can see the actual page rank number (1-10 with 10 being the highest) by holding your cursor over the box with the green in it under the words Page Rank.

New web sites that aren't listed in Google don't have any green. Web sites that Google doesn't like or have been banned show as a gray bar.

What's great about the Page Rank tool is that you can tell at a glance by looking at a page whether it's worth your time to try to get a link to that page.

I usually try to get links to pages with a page rank of between 3 and 6. A lower page rank probably isn't worth the time or effort it will take to get a link on it. It's really difficult for a site that doesn't have at least a page rank of 5 to get someone with a page rank higher than 6 to link to your web site.

Okay, now that you know what links to look for and have a tool that will help you judge the value of each link you are considering, you're ready to get the links.

Here's the process to find web sites to link to:

How to Get Links from Free Directories Related to your Web Site Subject

Some directories provide free listings and don't require a link back to them. These are good to get.

To look for them, go to Google.com and do a search for "your subject directory submit url". Don't use the quotes and replace your subject with whatever your business is about.

For example, if you sell a dog training guide you would type in: dog directory submit url.

This will bring up a number of directories and their submission pages. That way you can tell right away if the directory is free or if it costs to submit a link and you don't have to bother with searching around for the information.

If it costs, keep looking. If it's free, then look for the category that best fits your subject matter and submit your web site.

[If the directory is just a general directory and isn't specifically related to your subject area](#) look at the Google toolbar. If the page rank of the page with your category's listings on it is a 2 or better submit your web site. If it isn't at least a 2, don't bother. Make sure when you look at the page rank that you are looking at the page that your listing would be on and not the general category page. Sometimes the rankings are different.

What do I mean by a general directory? Let's go back to our soap example and say that you are selling soap. A directory that only lists arts and craft related web sites is a directory related to your subject area. A directory that accepts listings for arts and crafts,

computers, music, health and everything else is considered general.

If you find a directory that is related to your subject area that will let you list your site for free I would go ahead and do it regardless of what page rank the listings page shows.

Also, you can do searches for other related directories. Using our dog example from above, you could also try a search for pet directory, etc.

Tip: Some of these directories require an email address. Give them theirsite@yourdomain.com For example, if their site is yoyodirectory.com you would put yoyodirectory@yourdomain.com as your email address.

This way if one of the sites you submit to spams you or sells your address you can easily block future emails from them.

How to Get Links to Web Sites Related to Your Web Site Subject

1. [Set up a Links page on your web site.](#) This is really easy to do. Just create a blank page and name it links.

This way if you come across a web site that requires a reciprocal link you can easily add them to this page.

2. [Write down the text that you want other web site owners to put on their web sites.](#) This is made up of a short title and a description that is 1-2 sentences long.

Make sure to include the keyword you use on the home page of your web site in the title. The title is linked to your web site and is given more weight by the search engines. This can help improve your ranking within Google's listings because Google figures that if

other people are linking to you with that term that must be what your web site is about.

For example, if you want to sell Italian food cookbooks and you have decided that a good phrase to target is Italian Cookbooks, then that is what you would put for your title. It would look like this:

[Italian Cookbooks](#) – want to prepare delicious Italian food? We have an amazing selection of Italian cookbooks. Visit us today!

3. [Starting with your first keyword, do a search in Google for: that word links](#). In this case you would type in Italian cookbooks links.

Most of the time when you click on one of the listings it will show the web site's linking information page. That way you don't have to search around to find it.

4. [Once on the web site, check the Page Rank of the page where your link would be placed](#). If it doesn't show a Page Rank, keep looking.

Tip: It's important to look at the page where your links would be placed. Sometimes the page which tells how to submit a link has a Page Rank, but the page your link would be on doesn't.

5. [If the links page has a Page Rank of at least 3 then look to see what their requirements are](#). Most of the times an exchange will be required. If they want money, I wouldn't pay. I would move on and keep looking.

If an exchange is required, then you put the information they provide you on your links page and submit the information you want them to put up about your web site to them.

You give them the title and description you created in step 3 above.

6. Follow up. Since sometimes people don't put up your link even after you've put up one of theirs, you need a way of checking to make sure they have listed it.

What I do is put a code on my links page when I'm putting their links on my page so I know which links are reciprocated and which I still need to check. You can use whatever code you like. I put the links that I need to check in bold and then unbold them after I've checked that the other web site owner has put my link up.

Every week when I work on my link exchanges I go back through my list and visit the web sites that I've put links to. If I see my link has been posted then I unbold the link. If I don't see my link I delete their link from my page.

A week is usually enough time for someone to put a link up, but sometimes I will get an email later from someone saying that they couldn't find my link. If that happens, I just put their link back up.

Warning: if you get an email like the one mentioned above, make sure it's for a web site that you wanted to link to or a site related to your subject area. A lot of people send out emails saying they put a link up to your web site but their web site doesn't have anything to do with your subject matter. If you get an email like this just ignore it.

Recap of Links:

- Only link to sites that are related to yours.
- Don't pay for web site links.
- Don't give your main email address.
- Avoid services that say they will list your web site on hundreds of web sites and services that will help you find link exchanges.

Now you know a couple of ways that can help you try to improve your ranking in Google, there's just one more last thing to discuss on this ... the scams.

Beware! Watch Out! Danger!

I know all this talk about optimization and keywords and linking may have your head spinning a little bit. You may even be thinking “I’ll just pay someone to do it for me.”

There are some very good people out there that will do this for you ... for a price. There are also a LOT of scam artists or people who don’t know what they are doing who are ready to take your money.

The best of the scammers take your money and do nothing. The worst of the scammers take your money, get you a good ranking for a month through bad tactics and spamming techniques, and you end up with your web site totally banned from Google.

Every business you see that offers search engine optimization says they are good at it. Every person who contacts you with an offer to help improve your web site’s ranking or get you more visitors seems believable.

So how do you know if you should waste your money or not on them?

If someone contacts you with an offer to:

- **Optimize your web site so you can get more visitors or a higher search engine ranking, or**
- **get you a certain ranking in Google or Yahoo, or**
- **get you more visitors, or**
- **guarantee you a certain number of visitors or a certain ranking**

DON’T FALL FOR IT!

Most of these offers are a total waste of money.

I'm sure some of the people who contact you mean well and aren't scammers, but I still urge you: Don't fall for any of these offers.

If someone really can do that stuff they aren't going to bother contacting people they don't know to try to sell them on it. They are going to have more work than they can handle or they are going to be setting up their own web sites and getting the good rankings for themselves.

Optimizing a web site and getting a good search engine ranking takes work and effort. It is possible and you CAN do it. Don't be tempted to "take a shortcut." You will just end up paying money for worthless offers.

No one that is good at this is going to do it for cheap, they aren't going to contact you directly and they certainly aren't going to spam you.

Are there people who are good at getting your site a good ranking in the search engines? Yes. Do these people come cheap? No.

There are a couple of companies that I consider to be good search engine optimizers. Their prices start at a couple of thousand dollars a month and a commitment of at least 6 months, more commonly a year, is required.

I've been around for quite a while and I just haven't come across someone who has a good service that delivers who charges less than \$2,000 a month.

If anyone offers you a service for less than that, save yourself some money and pass on the offer.

Although the information contained in this chapter isn't that complicated in practice, I know it might seem like it is just because of all the new terminology and the various things you have to do. Don't worry. It just seems complicated. When you start actually doing the optimizing and getting links it will go a lot smoother than you think.

Chapter 12

How to Get Listed in the Other Major Search Engines

In addition to Google, there are currently four other search engines and directories you should know about: Yahoo, DMOZ and MSN.

Yahoo

I do NOT recommend that you submit to Yahoo. Instead, I recommend that you optimize your website for Google and let Yahoo's spiders find your website through your links.

How to Submit Your Web Site to Yahoo

There are several ways you can get into Yahoo:

The free method is to do a good job at your site optimization and linking so that Yahoo's spider finds your web site and includes it in their search engine listings. This is the way I suggest.

I do NOT recommend that you submit your site for free via their submission page. The reason is that, at this time, it's much better for you if Yahoo finds your website on it's own by following the links from other sites to your own. Again, I do NOT recommend submitting your site for free on their submission page at this time.

There are several pay methods, which you can see here:

<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

I don't recommend paying, but if you do decide to pay, here are your options:

- 1) You can pay for a directory listing. For a fee of \$299 you can ask Yahoo to consider adding your web site to their directory.

Please note that this \$299 does not guarantee that your site will be added. It just means they will consider adding your web site. If they review your web site and decide not to include it, you are out the \$299.

I don't recommend this method. \$299 is a lot of money to spend on something that isn't guaranteed. If they don't let you in, you're out the money. You basically have no recourse and don't get a refund.

- 2) The second pay method is through a system called Site Match that is administered by a company that Yahoo owns called Overture. Site Match is a program where you pay \$49 a year for every web page that you want Yahoo to include.

You aren't guaranteed entry into Yahoo for this \$49. This fee just means your web page will be reviewed and if they think it's good and relevant they will include it.

The \$49 is not all you have to pay with Site Match. You must also pay a per click fee of either \$.15 or \$.30 per click. This means that every time someone sees your listing in Yahoo and clicks on it, you have to pay for that click. The amount you pay for your click depends on the topic of your web page.

You can read more about it here:

<http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/ays/sm.jhtml>

I haven't heard of a lot of people having success with it so I do not recommend it.

DMOZ

DMOZ is a human edited directory that can be found at www.dmoz.org. It is run by volunteers.

This directory is important because Google gives a listing in it a lot of weight so sites in dmoz will usually rank higher in Google than sites that aren't listed. Plus, because Google likes dmoz listings Google usually gives web sites listed in the directory a page rank of at least 4.

It can really help if you get listed in dmoz but it's really a hit or miss proposition because they don't take all sites that are submitted so if you don't get in it isn't the end of the world.

How to Submit your Web Site to DMOZ

The most important thing to do is make sure that your web site is completely finished and is the very best you can possibly make it before you submit it. Make sure all the links work, that there are no pages under construction, that everything is spelled correctly and looks nice.

You only get one shot at submitting your web site to this directory and you don't want to blow it.

Once your web site is as good as you can make it, select the category that best fits your web site. Once you find the category, click on the Add URL button you see there and fill in the form to submit your web site.

Tips for getting into DMOZ

- Do NOT submit more than once. This is very important. If you submit it several times, the editors will think you are spamming them and won't list your web site.
- Make sure to submit your web site to the right category.
- Do not put a lot of sales type language for your site description. The shorter, the better. Look at what language is used for other listings in your category and put that. Flowery sales descriptions are frowned on or severely edited.
- Put the keyword you are using for the home page of your web site in the description.

MSN

MSN is owned by Microsoft and is becoming a more important player in the search engine landscape.

How to Submit Your Web Site to MSN

There are two ways you can get listed on MSN.

The first method, and the way I recommend, is the free way. It's to do a good job at your site optimization and linking so that MSN's spider finds your web site and includes it in their search engine listings. This is the way I suggest.

The other way is to do Pay Per Click advertising on MSN Ad Center. I don't recommend MSN Ad Center for people just starting out. I recommend they stick with Google Ad Words to get the hang of it. We will cover this in more detail in the Pay Per Click chapter later in the book.

Chapter 13

Advertising your Web Site

In order to attract customers to your web site, you can rely solely on search engine traffic or you can also choose to advertise your web site.

Although some advertising costs money, other advertising can be done for free.

Regardless of whether you pay for advertising or generate it on your own, you need to know the one advertising rule that will make your life easier and help make you money.

The Most Important Advertising Rule

The easiest way to be successful is to target your advertising to people already predisposed to buying your product or service.

The more focused your advertising, the more visitors you will get who are interested in your product and the less money it will cost you because the visitors you do get will already be predisposed to like your product and are an easier “sell” than people who weren’t really looking for information on your subject area.

This is a super important concept to get. The sooner you learn it, the more money you can make.

Let’s take an example of this from the non-internet world. Let’s say you have a basket full of bananas to sell. You decide to walk up and down a city sidewalk offering your bananas to people who pass by. You may sell some bananas but it would probably take you a long time to sell all the bananas in your basket.

Why? The people passing by on the sidewalk aren’t interested in bananas right now. They probably have nothing against bananas

but they aren't thinking about shopping for fruit. They are on their way to work, to lunch, to shop for clothes, whatever. Some may decide to buy your bananas, but most won't.

Selling your bananas on the sidewalk is hard work.

On the other hand, let's say that you go to a farmer's market and offer your bananas for sale. Would you sell more? Yes. Would it be a lot easier to sell the bananas? Definitely.

The reason is pretty obvious. People who go to a farmer's market are already pre-disposed to buy fruit. Even if they didn't come for bananas, if they see your bananas looking so nice and ripe they will be tempted to buy them.

This same concept can translate to your business advertising. If you target people who are specifically interested in buying your product or are interested in a related topic then you increase your chances of selling your product.

If you don't target your advertising to people interested in your subject area, then you are in effect, walking down the sidewalk asking passersby to buy your product.

Okay, now you know how important it is to attract people already predisposed to buying your product, how do you find these people?

Advertising that Costs Money

Even if you don't have a lot of money, some of these methods don't cost a lot and you may want to consider one or more of these at some point.

Some of these are great and others aren't worth your money. I have listed "recommended" or "not recommended" next to each advertising method. You do not need to do all the recommended methods to have a successful business. I would start out with one

to begin with then move forward from there as your business grows.

1. **Pay Per Click** – **Highly Recommended.** This is the best and most targeted of the advertising methods. You can spend as much money or as little as you like on this.

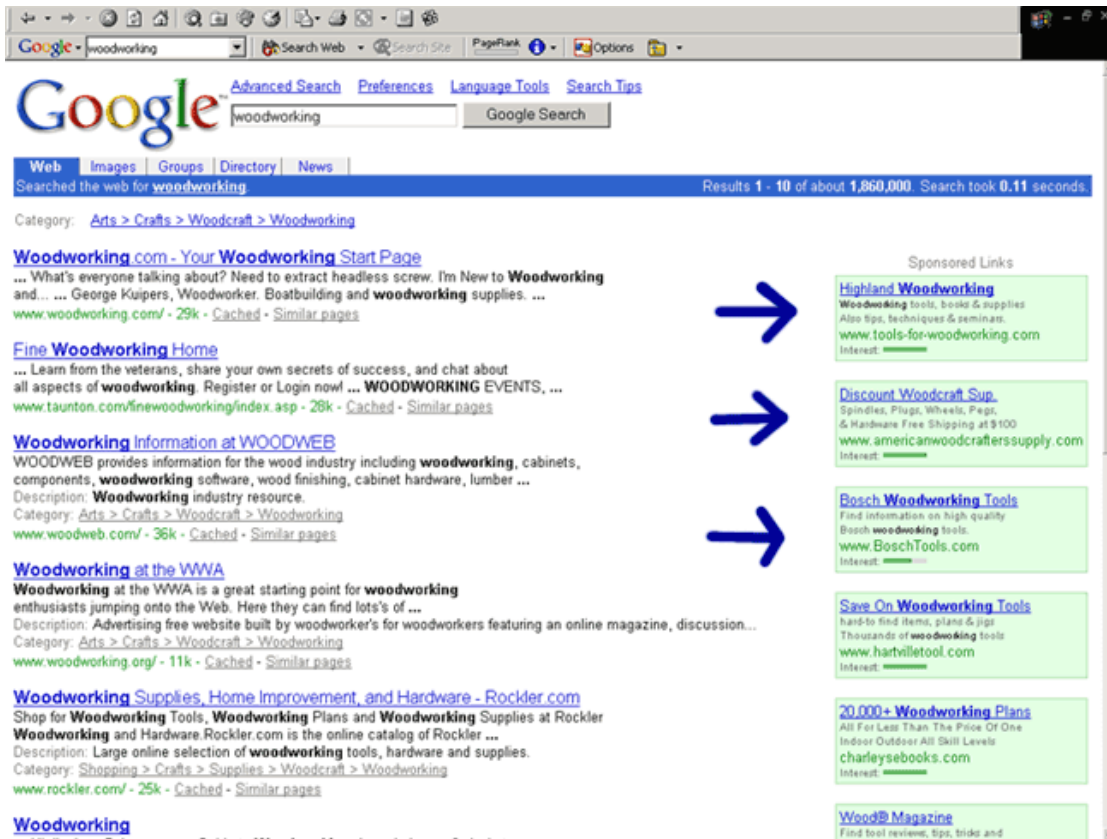
How it works is you create an ad and specify the search terms that you want your ad to come up under. The ad is placed in a search engine. If someone enters a search term you've entered, they see your ad. If they click on it you are charged a fee. You are only charged if someone clicks on your ad.

For example, in Google the ads that appear in the green boxes on the right side use Google's pay per click service.

Every time a person clicks a green ad, the web site owner is charged a fee.

You set the amount you are willing to pay for each click. The higher the amount the more likely you are to get one of the top ads. The amount of the fee usually depends on how many other people are bidding on ads for that search term.

Google's Pay Per Click service is called Adwords. You can see the green boxes in the picture below.



The three largest pay per click services and the only ones I would consider listing in are Google's Adwords, Overture and MSN Ad Center. There are a lot of other smaller pay per click services out there but from my experience they are a waste of money.

I recommend Google's Adwords for most people just starting out. The reason is that if you don't know what you are doing you can really lose a lot of money very quickly on Overture or MSN Ad Center without realizing it. When I just started out I opened an account at Overture and spent \$100 in less than 8 hours!

You are much better off getting a feel for how pay per click works and what search terms convert better with Google.

When you feel comfortable with Google, then if you choose to branch out with Overture or MSN you can.

I like Google too because you can better control your costs. You can tell at a glance which search terms are making you money and which aren't. Plus, their system is just a lot easier to use and it's fast. You can create an ad and a few minutes later you will it will start running.

As a bonus with this book, I've provided a video tutorial which shows you how to set up and run an account using Google's Adwords service and what to do and not do.

What is so great about pay per click and why it's the best advertising method currently available is that the people who come from a pay per click service to your web site are specifically interested in a product or service such as yours.

2. Banner Ads – **not recommended.**

Another advertising method is to use banner ads to promote your web site. How they work is you pay someone to put your banner ad on their web site and hope that the person's visitors click on your banner ad and visit your web site.

As I said, that's the hope. The effectiveness of banner ads is quite limited these days. Although they used to be a good way to attract visitors, because they are so plentiful most web surfers tend to block them out and concentrate on the text of the web site.

Most banner ad response rates average between .05% and 2% and it's usually at the low end of that (less than 1%) if your banner ad is on a web site not related to your subject area. This means that for every 1000 times your banner ad is shown on another web site you will be lucky to get 10 visitors from it.

In my opinion, pay per click will give you a much better return on your investment than banner ads so I wouldn't waste your time or money on banner ads.

3. **Text Ads** – Recommended **IF** the ads are on a web site in your subject area.

A text ad is just what it says, an ad in text format. The length of the ad is determined by the web site owner you are buying the text ad from.

An example of a text ad:

Joe's Computers – The best computers at the lowest prices.
Click here for a great computer deal!

When someone clicks on the text ad they will be taken to your web site.

These types of ads can be effective but I would only get one if it was on a web site that is on a topic related to yours. The people coming to the other person's web site are interested in your product area so they are more likely to be receptive to buying your product than if your ad was on a completely unrelated web site.

How to find web sites to advertise on

Go to Google and do a search on "your subject area advertising rates."

So, if you had a new tool that you wanted to sell to woodworkers, you would type in woodworking advertising rates. This would provide you with a listing of places that cater to woodworkers and accept advertising.

Tip: I don't buy text ads unless they are going to be on the other web site's home page. This placement gives my ad maximum exposure to the other web site's visitors.

4. **Newsletters** – Recommended **IF** the newsletter is directly related to your subject area.

I'm not crazy about advertising in newsletters because I've never had any luck with advertising in them, but I know of cases where people have done well with them.

The only way I would advertise in one is if you find a newsletter that specifically reaches the people who would be interested in buying your product such as in the woodworking example above.

If the newsletter is on a more general topic and you think the people would sort of be interested in your product, keep on going. Most likely, advertising in that one would be a waste of money.

If you do decide to get a newsletter ad, the most beneficial placements are a solo ad (your ad runs all alone) and the first ad at the top of the newsletter. The reason is that a lot of people don't read through the whole newsletter so if your ad is at the bottom a lot of the newsletter readers probably won't see it.

To find a newsletter specifically related to your subject area, go to Google and type in your subject area newsletter rates and this will bring up a list of newsletters that accept advertising.

Sometimes newsletter owners can't sell space in their newsletters and so will offer the space at a discount price on a newsletter ad auction site.

The most popular of these is Ezine Ad Auction (www.ezineadauction.com)

How it works is the newsletter owner describes his newsletter and what type of ad he has available. If it interests you, then you bid on his auction. If you win, you get the newsletter ad for the price you bid.

Please remember, you have a bigger chance of success with your ad if you choose a newsletter that is directly in your topic area.

Tip: Only get a newsletter ad if you can afford it and have some extra money. If you don't, stick with pay per click ads.

5. **Blogs** – Recommended **IF** the blog is directly related to your subject area.

Blog is short for weblog. A blog is a web journal that the owner updates frequently. Some blogs are quite successful and get a lot of visitors.

If you can find a blog on a topic that is related to your subject area and you have some extra money, you may wish to consider it.

The most popular place to buy blog advertising is on BlogAds (www.blogads.com)

Just like with all the other ad sources, I would only consider advertising on a blog if it attracted people that would be interested in your topic.

6. **Email** – **NOT RECOMMENDED.**

Unless the person you are emailing specifically asked you personally to email them, then don't do it. I can't stress that enough.

You will get a lot of offers from people who say that you can send your email to millions of people or that the people really truly are anxious to get an email about your offer.

No one is anxious for spam and that's what it would be if you accepted any of these offers.

If email is involved just don't do it. If you do, you will be liable under the new anti-spam law and can be charged with a crime. You will also get kicked off your web host's servers.

7. EBay – Recommended.

EBay (www.ebay.com) is the largest internet auction site. Unless there is an auction site which deals exclusively with your topic area, EBay is the only auction site I recommend.

You can list products for sale on there and if people are interested in the item they can bid. The highest bid wins the auction.

If you have never used EBay before it is a good idea to set a reserve price when you list your auction. A reserve price protects you from having your item sell for less than it cost you. If the bids on your product don't reach the reserve price, then you don't have to sell the item.

Tip: When determining your reserve price please don't forget to factor in the fees EBay charges you for your auction.

I have listed EBay in the advertising section because you can generate visitors to your web site from your auction listing.

How?

Make your username your domain name. For example, if your domain name is BooksandMore.com then you would make your username of EBay *www.BooksandMore.com*

This way when you submit an auction people will see your web site name. Sometimes people who may not bid on your auction will see your domain name, visit your web site and buy something.

This advertising method isn't for everyone. It depends a lot on whether you sell a product, what your product is, how much the price is, etc.

Depending on your product you may want to give it a try at least once or twice and see if it gets any results. If it doesn't, you are only out the listing fees. The listing fees are a percentage of your reserve price.

If you have never used EBay before or listed an auction with them, they have several tutorials which will walk you through setting up an auction. I would also visit their auctions before you list an auction to familiarize yourself with how their auctions work.

8. **Car Stickers** – Recommended.

These are stickers which you can put on your back car window. The stickers can have your domain name and, if you like, a slogan or a brief description of your business.

These run about \$15-\$25.

9. **License Plate Holders** – Recommended.

Some people advertise their web site on their rear license plate holder. Like the car stickers these usually include your domain name and a brief description of your business.

These run about \$15-\$25.

10. **Magazines** – Only recommended if the magazine directly reaches your target audience AND if you have been very successful with your internet advertising.

I do not recommend magazines until you have been very successful advertising on the internet through pay per click ads or another method listed here.

The reason is that usually if your advertising isn't working on the internet you aren't going to be any more successful advertising in a magazine. Plus, magazine advertising is a lot more expensive.

Compared to the other methods this one is my least favorite. How many times have you read a magazine and then visited the web site of an ad you saw in that magazine? My guess is not many. Your potential visitors are the same way.

11. **Newspapers** – not recommended.

Newspaper ads are usually expensive and a complete waste of money for the overwhelming majority of businesses. Don't waste your time or money on these.

12. **Yellow Pages** – not recommended if you do not have a storefront or similar physical location.

Yellow page listings are very expensive and almost completely worthless for an online business to get. These include the online yellow pages as well.

If you have a physical storefront and your business is one that people do search for via the yellow pages (ex: a locksmith, a taxi cab service, etc.) then I would get one.

If you have a home based business or your business is strictly internet based, I wouldn't get one. Your money could be better spent elsewhere.

13. **Business Cards** – recommended.

It is a good idea to have business cards so that way if you meet someone that may be interested in your product you can hand your business card to them.

You can get 1000 business cards for around \$20.

You should include on your cards: your name, your company name, and your domain name. Whether you choose to provide a phone number and/or address is a matter of personal choice.

I use www.OvernightPrints.com for my business cards and have never had a problem with any of my orders (I've ordered 4 times from them) but I recently saw some reviews of them that weren't good so I'm not sure whether to recommend them or not.

14. **Community Advertising** – recommended.

Depending on what your product is, you can sometimes get a store in your area to give you free advertising. This is a great way to increase your company's visibility within your community.

How does it work?

Determine a few stores in your community that appeal to the type of people you hope to get to buy your product. Make sure that the store doesn't offer a product similar to yours and you wouldn't be in competition with the store. Call the stores and ask if they have a customer mailing list.

If they do have a mailing list:

Go into one of the stores and explain to the store owner or manager that you have a business selling _____ and you are trying to get people in the community to know about your business. Ask if he would be willing to work out a trade.

You will give him a free product that he can raffle off to his customers as a way to encourage people to sign up for his mailing list if he will put up a notice that you provide that says where the product came from and your business cards.

The benefit to him is that he will get to provide something free to his customers and if he is interested in getting names of customers to add to his mailing list he can use your product as an enticement.

The whole thing will cost you less than \$15 plus whatever the cost of your product is. This is for the notice, business cards and holder.

The notice should be very simple and say "Product courtesy of Name of Your Company" and it should list your domain name. (ex: Gift Basket courtesy of Gift Baskets and More www.GiftBasketsandMore.com) This notice should be nicely done and affixed to the product or on a stand nearby.

You can get a cheap business card holder at your local office supply store.

If the store doesn't have a mailing list:

Visit stores that have a mailing list first. If you go to stores that don't have a mailing list then just offer to give them a free product to raffle off to their customers. Most businesses like to offer their customers free stuff because customers love free stuff.

Let's look at an example of how this would work.

Let's say that you have started a gift basket business and you want people in your community to know about it. You may want to consider making this offer to one or more of the following types of stores: busy hair salons, gift shops, card shops, book stores, etc.

If you do this, make sure you take the very best representation of your product that you have with you when you meet with the store manager. That way if she says yes, you can give her the product right then.

Leave the notice, your business cards and holder in your car. That way you aren't juggling everything when you talk to the store owner. Plus, it doesn't seem so presumptuous on your part if you don't have them with you when you enter.

Beware of Certain Ad “Opportunities”

You will likely be approached at some point by people who tell you that they can get visitors to your web site ... for a fee of course.

A good, basic rule of thumb is this: **if someone approaches you with an offer to get you more visitors or more customers, it isn't worth the money.**

Why?

Because if someone really had a way to deliver good quality visitors they wouldn't waste their time trying to sell people on that

fact. Instead, they would set up a web site themselves and direct those good, quality visitors they say they have to their own web site.

I'm not saying these are all scams, but I have never come across one of the following "opportunities" that is worth anything.

I would avoid these offers:

- **Offers of Thousands of Targeted Visitors.**

This is an offer that a lot of unsuspecting new web site owners fall for. In this offer, you are offered thousands of targeted visitors for a fee.

Most people think, hey, if 10,000 visitors (or whatever) visit my web site I know a percentage of them will be interested in my product and buy.

This doesn't happen. Instead, what usually happens is that the company puts your web site up on a pop under so that your web site pops up underneath a high traffic web site.

That way every time someone leaves the high traffic web site, your web site is in a pop up window, usually along with as many as 7 or 8 other pop unders too.

What do you do when faced with 7 or 8 pop ups? I bet you close them right? Most people do.

So, while it's true that you have gotten the visitors they promised you, the value of these visitors is pretty much nothing.

- **Offers to Email your Web Site Ad.**

If someone wants to email your web site information to anyone, don't do it. As I mentioned above, email that people didn't ask for can get you in a lot of trouble.

It isn't worth the risk. Even if the people tell you that their email offer is legal because the people who signed up are "double opt in" (the safest email sign up you can have) don't believe them.

They may be telling the truth, but do you really want to explain it to a judge? Do you really want your web hosting account canceled because they lied to you and you believed them?

Any offer you get that involves emailing people isn't worth the risk. No matter how the people offering it dress it up, if it involves emailing someone that you don't know, don't do it.

Free Advertising

If you don't have any money at all to spend on advertising, don't worry. You can still get the word out about your business.

Here are some ways you can do it:

1. **Good Word of Mouth** – Highly Recommended.

This is the best free advertising there is. How does it work? Your customers tell their friends what a great company you have and based on this great recommendation their friends buy from you.

You get good word of mouth by having excellent customer service. I discuss this in more detail in a later chapter but for now just know that this is the most valuable free advertising you can get.

Regardless of how few customers you have, go the extra mile for each of them and they will tell your friends about your business.

2. **Search Engine Optimization** – recommended.

If you don't have any money this is a great way to get visitors to your web site.

The better you optimize your web site (the basic process of which was described in Chapter 10), the better your chance of getting a higher ranking in the search engines. The higher your ranking, the more visitors you are likely to get.

3. **Chat Rooms** – Recommended as long as you don't spam.

With this method, you figure out what group of people is most likely to buy your product or service and then become a member of the chat room that appeals to that group.

A chat room is where groups of people interested in a specific topic get together and chat about that topic.

To find a chat room that is about your specific topic visit

<http://groups.yahoo.com>

How this method works is that you become an active member in the community and contribute to the discussions as often as you can.

You will be able to set your signature to whatever you like when you sign up. Make sure to include your domain name in your signature. This way every time you are involved with a discussion the other members in the group will see your domain name.

If the group is targeted to people interested in your product then its likely people from the chat room will visit your web site and, hopefully, buy something while they are there.

Chat Room Do's and Don'ts

1. **Do make sure that the chat room you have selected is active.** If someone hasn't posted to it within the last day, that means that chat room doesn't get a lot of traffic. Don't bother signing up.

Look for a more active group.

2. **Do make sure that the chat room allows you to put your domain name in your signature.** Some chat rooms don't allow you to do so. If they don't allow this it will usually be stated in the rules which you can read before you sign up.

Also, you can usually see posts of people in the chat room. If you see someone else with a domain name in their signature line it's usually safe to put it in yours.

If they don't allow you to use your signature, then look for another group. Participating in that one won't benefit you.

3. **Don't advertise your business, your web site or your product in your posts to the group.** This is considered very bad etiquette and will do more harm than good as it will alienate a lot of the people who are interested in your product.

Your domain name will be in your signature. If people are interested in your product they will visit your web site from that. That is all you need to do. You don't

need to also make your posts be blatant attempts to get people to visit your web site.

If you do make such a post you will be spamming the chat room and you will likely get a lot of hateful mail about it and likely kicked out of the chat room.

Chime in to any discussions you feel you can contribute to but don't make your posts ads for your web site.

4. **Start Page Exchange Programs** – recommended, but not by much.

With these programs, you set your browser so that when you first access the internet, it shows you the home page of another web master's web site.

Every time you see someone else's web site your web site is shown to someone else.

You can also increase the number of times your web site gets shown by continuing to view other people's web sites.

This takes a lot of time and energy to do and I recommend this the absolute least of the free options, but depending on what your product is you could get some genuine visitors from it.

I would not pay these services any money.

To find companies who provide start page exchanges, do a search on Google for Start Page Exchange.

5. **Friends and Relatives** – recommended.

Send an email to people you know (and only people you know) and tell them you have a new business. Give a brief description of the business and your domain name. Mention how excited you are about starting the business.

Ask if they would please pass the email along to any of their friends who may be interested in your product.

6. Flyers – Recommended.

With this method, you print a bunch of flyers on your printer and distribute them within your community. You can post them on community bulletin boards or pass them out yourself.

This method isn't for every business. Its effectiveness depends a lot on what type of product you are offering and whether or not the group of people who will see your flyer is likely to buy your product.

Here's an extreme example. Let's say you are trying to sell expensive Persian rugs. You probably wouldn't put a flyer up in a Laundromat because most of the people in Laundromats can't afford to pay big bucks for a rug.

On the other hand if you were selling cheap long distance phone cards, you may wish to target people in Laundromats so it would be beneficial to put up a flyer there.

I'm not a big proponent of this method but it can work for certain businesses.

Chapter 14

Shipping Your Product

If you are shipping your product yourself, you need to decide the best and most economical way to ship your product. You also need to be aware of a key US law that deals with shipping product.

The One US Shipping Law You Must Know

The most important shipping law you need to be aware of states that unless you specify differently on your web site, you must ship the product within 30 days of receiving the order. If you don't ship the product within 30 days you must get the customer's consent to the delay.

In practice, you should never even get near the 30 day deadline. You should ship the product out within a day or two of receiving the order. It's just smart business to do so because people like instant gratification and when they order something they want it immediately.

You can really make a good impression on your customers if you ship their order out as soon as possible.

Shipping Methods: Pros and Cons

As you probably expect, the three most popular methods of shipping products is shipping via the US Postal Service, Fed Ex and UPS.

You will need to determine which one is right for your business. Each shipping method has its own set of pros and cons, but you

want to try and keep your shipping costs as low as you can because customers feel ripped off if they have to pay too much for it.

For example, unless customers specifically request faster shipping, most don't want to pay \$7.50 in shipping for a \$5.00 product. Make your shipping fees reasonable compared to your product prices.

Here are the Pros and Cons of each shipping service.

US Postal Service

Pros:

- Usually cheaper than the other methods.

Cons:

- It's a hassle to take a package to the post office and stand in line to get your package weighed.
- You have to pay extra for insurance and delivery confirmation.
- Things get lost more frequently in regular mail than they do with one of the shipping companies.

Federal Express

Pros:

- Reliable tracking so you know at all times where the package is.
- Delivery confirmation is included in the cost.
- Will pick up packages from your house so it saves you the time and hassle of going to the Post Office and standing in line.
- Will provide flat rectangle boxes for you to use free of charge.

Cons:

- They seem to be the most expensive of the options.
- Their online system isn't as easy to use as UPS.

UPS

Pros:

- Reliable tracking so you know at all times where the package is.
- Delivery confirmation is included in the cost.
- Will pick up packages from your house so it saves you the time and hassle of going to the Post Office and standing in line.
- They are cheaper than Fed Ex.
- Their online system is easier to use.
- Will provide flat rectangle boxes for you to use free of charge.

Cons:

- More expensive than the Post Office.

Regardless of which method you go with you may want to start out just offering the cheapest and longest Standard Delivery. With this option, the order will usually get to the customer within 7-10 days after you send it.

If you want to add an option for faster delivery later on, you can.

Where to Find Shipping Boxes

You can get small or medium flat rectangle shaped boxes for free from UPS and Fed Ex. You can get them free from the post office too, but only if you use Priority Mail or Next Day Delivery.

What if you need a smaller box or a bigger box?

There are a couple of places that you can get them:

- **Online**. There are several companies online where you can order shipping boxes and supplies like bubble wrap for really super cheap prices (we're talking really cheap – around .13 per box for small boxes and less than a dollar for a medium sized box.) They beat all the other places that I know of to get boxes by 30-50%. You can get some really great deals online.

I've used www.Uline.com before and really liked them.

- **Bulk Warehouse Stores**. Stores like Costco and Sam's Club.

If you already have a membership, you may wish to check out the boxes at these stores. Given how low the prices at the bulk warehouse stores usually are, it's surprising but you can usually find better deals online for shipping boxes than you can at these stores.

- **Office Supply or Moving Supply Stores**. You can also get shipping boxes at either of these type places, but these are usually the most expensive places to get them.

Chapter 15

Customer Service Issues

If a customer buys from you once you have a greater chance of them buying from you again and telling their friends about what a great company you have if you provide excellent customer service.

Conversely, if you don't treat your customers well, you won't get any repeat business and your customers will tell all their friends how bad your company is. On the internet bad word of mouth travels very quickly and to a LOT of people.

Regardless of what you sell – whether you sell and ship your own product or someone else's or you are an affiliate that solicits customers to other merchants – it is **very** important that your visitors and customers have a good experience with you.

So, what can you do to make their experience as great as it can be?

10 Ways to Win Points with your Customers

Most companies do the bare minimum that is necessary to make the sale. They don't do many of the little things that make the customer feel special or leave the customer with a good feeling about the company.

Don't just do what every one else does. If you go that extra mile for your customer, it will benefit you (and your business!) tremendously.

Not each of these ways will work every time, but they will serve to help build up good will for your company and make your customer's experience nicer than with most other companies.

A customer who feels valued will be loyal. It's easier to get someone who knows and likes your company to buy from you than someone who has never dealt with your company.

Here are 10 ways you can help generate that peaceful, easy feeling in your customers:

1. **Make your web site user friendly.** Make sure your visitor knows what you sell and that your site is laid out in an easy to follow manner.

If your web site is hard to figure out, people will think dealing with you is going to be difficult so most people will leave instead of buy your product.

For more help on what to do and not to do, you can revisit the section on Web Site Do's and Don'ts in Chapter 5.

2. **Check your email AT LEAST twice a day EVERY day.** If someone has a question about your product, they want an answer within a reasonable time period. The sooner, the better.

Even if business is slow at first, get in the habit of checking your email. It's a lousy feeling to be doing everything you can to get customers, then realize you forgot to check your email for a few days and there was an email from a customer willing and ready to buy but because you didn't get back to them they went elsewhere.

Once business picks up, still continue to answer the emails in a timely manner. No one likes to wait around for help. If you make people wait, they won't. They will go somewhere else.

3. **ALWAYS be professional when dealing with your customers.** What does this mean?

It means:

- **Every email you send to your customer should have a salutation (ex: Hello) and a closing (ex: Thank you, Your Name and Domain Name.)**

If you know the customer's name, then put that after Hello.

- **Always write using proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. Don't use slang or shorthand.**

Here is an example of an unprofessional email:

*u can get product ups if u need more info plz catch later
brb*

Don't laugh. I've gotten some almost this bad. Here is that example in a much more professional form:

Hello,

Thank you for inquiring about our product. We ship via UPS. Normally it takes 7-10 days to receive the order.

If you need further information please let us know. We are available 7 days a week from 7am-7pm EST.

Thank you,

You

YourDomain.com

- **If you speak with customers on the phone, be professional.** Most customers assume they are speaking to a company that is larger than just a one person show.

Speak as if you were talking to someone very important and wanted to impress them because you are. Your customer is the most important person to your business. If you don't

impress the majority of your customers you won't make money.

If you are on the phone with a customer:

- § If you call them, tell them your name, company and why you are calling.
- § Don't say "yeah"
- § Act interested in what they are saying.
- § Don't get distracted while you are on the phone. For example, don't yell at the dog, your kids, cook dinner, check your mail, watch TV, or anything else while you are on the phone with a customer. Your customer deserves your attention and if you don't give it to him, he will find someone who will.

4. **ALWAYS be polite to your customers.** Even if your customer is being a jerk, even if your customer is wrong, even if you just want to tell the customer to take a hike.

It doesn't matter. What matters is that you are polite to that customer. Many times just by being polite you can turn a bad situation into a good one and convert an unhappy customer into a good one. Strangely enough, those usually end up being your best customers in the long run.

5. **Get personal!** If a customer mentions a bit of personal information – such as he needs the garden mower you sell because he just bought a farm – follow up on that.

Mention that you just bought a farm too (if you did) or mention that you always wanted to buy a farm or whatever. You want to connect with your customer on a personal level. The more you can, the more likely your customer will be to buy from you or buy from you again.

Being polite and professional doesn't mean being a robot. No one likes getting form letters. If you have an opportunity to connect with a customer, take it.

Worried that if you get “personal” with a customer he or she will realize you are just a one person business and not the “company” you want people to think you are? Don’t be. People don’t need to know you are a one person business, but still that doesn’t mean you can’t be a small, friendly business.

Think about it. If you are in an office with 5 or 6 employees wouldn’t you be friendlier with customers than if you were in a company with 5,000 employees? Sure you would.

Most people will assume you aren’t a huge business anyway just because if you were they probably would have heard of it.

So, if you have a chance to get personal with a customer, do it!

6. **Don’t try to ‘oversell’ the customer.** This is usually a trap that new business owners fall into. Normally when you start out you are so desperate for customers that any time someone sends you an email or phones you, you try to sell them on everything you’ve got.

Even though you don’t mean too, you will come across as desperate and pushy. This will turn your customer off and you will lose the sale that you probably would have gotten if you hadn’t tried to oversell.

One customer isn’t going to make or break you. I know it’s hard when you don’t have very many customers, but don’t be desperate and look at any customer like a lifeline to your dream of having lots of money. The customer will sense you are pressuring him and won’t like it.

Be cool. Don’t oversell. You will get more sales that way.

7. **If you can't help your customer, recommend a company that can.**

This may seem like strange advice, but it's worth following. If it's obvious that you can't provide the customer with what they are looking for, then suggest a company that can.

Even if you have to search for the company yourself, do it.

The reason is that even though you may not have had what they were looking for this time, they may need what you offer at some point in the future.

If so, who do you think they will go to – a company they have never dealt with or a company that was nice and helpful to them?

8. **If you ship a product, ship it fast.** By this, I don't mean to send the product next day delivery, I mean actually get the product into the mail via whatever shipping method you use within a day or two of the customer placing the order.

People don't like to wait around wondering if their package is going to come or if they got ripped off. They want what they ordered as soon as possible.

Customers are much more likely to order from you again if they know they will get what they order sooner rather than later.

9. **Offer free shipping if you can.** Since so many companies charge for shipping you can distinguish yourself from the crowd if you offer free shipping.

Build the cost of shipping into your product prices and really spotlight on your web site that you offer free shipping. That "freebie" can often make the difference between a sale and a missed sale.

Obviously whether or not you can do this depends on what your product is, but if you can do it, it's worth doing.

10. **Say Thank You.** A lot of companies don't bother with this and those that don't are missing a great opportunity to gain another connection with their customers.

There are many ways you can do this. Here are a few:

- § If you don't ship the product yourself: send an email to the customer thanking them for the order. It doesn't have to be a big deal. You may want to say something like:

Hello John,

*Thank you for your recent purchase at XYZ Company.
Your order will be shipped within 2 business days and you
should receive it within 2 weeks.*

Thank you for choosing XYZ Company!

Sincerely,

www.XYZCompany.com

- § If you do ship the product yourself: put a Thank You into the shipping box with the product.

Most companies don't do this one simple thing but if you do it will separate your company from the crowd and give your customer the warm fuzzies when he thinks of your company.

The two cheapest and easiest ways to do this are:

- Print off the customer's invoice to include with the product and hand write the words "Dear X, Thank you for placing your order with us. We hope you enjoy the product. Best wishes, The team at Your Domain Name" on the invoice.

For example, if you are shipping a candle to John Smith and your company name is Candles and More, you would write:

Dear John,

Thank you for placing your order with us. We hope you enjoy the candle.

Best wishes,

The team at CandlesandMore.com

This will only take a moment to write but will generate a lot of good will. Most customers will feel a connection with your company if you do this small thing.

Again, it's important that you hand write the note. That's more personal and will be more appreciated. If you type it, people will think it's just a form letter and resent it. You will lose the good will points.

- Put a Thank You card in the box. You can get plain, blank thank you cards at any discount store like Wal-Mart or Target. The outside of the card should be plain and just say Thank You.

The inside should be blank. Inside you can write the same message mentioned above.

- If you engage in affiliate marketing or don't sell a product directly to your visitors, if someone writes to you in your email back to them somewhere in the email say "Thank you for visiting my web site."

Dealing with Difficult Customers

If you are in business, at some point you are going to have to deal with difficult customers.

Have you ever lost your cool and then realized later you didn't behave very well? I think we all have at some point. That doesn't mean we're bad people. It just means we were having a bad day and for whatever reason we didn't handle things as well as we normally would have.

The difficult customers you deal with are going to be like that.

It's very important that you think of any difficult customers you may have to deal with as someone having a bad day, upset because of an error on your part, upset because of something they did wrong, or upset for an entirely different reason.

If you think of a difficult customer as a jerk then it's going to be really hard for you to help him. Your one goal is to help the customer and do what you can to make things right for him.

Difficult Customer Do's and Don'ts

Here are some do's and don'ts for dealing with difficult customers:

- Do keep your cool. Do not under any circumstances argue with the customer or try to prove that you are right.

You may "win" the battle, but if the customer leaves angry you will have lost a customer and that customer will bad mouth your company to every one he talks to.

If you or something that is within your control is at fault (for example, you misplace an order or the shipping company loses it):

- Do take full responsibility for the error, apologize and correct it, if possible.

If it isn't possible to correct the error, take responsibility for it, say that you are sorry, that you agree with the customer that it should have never happened, and that steps will be taken to make sure that it never happens again. Thank the customer for letting you know about it.

Offer to solve the problem to his satisfaction. Try to work it out so that he remains a customer (for example, offer to send him a replacement). If that isn't appropriate or you can't send him a replacement product, refund the customer's money.

- Always place yourself in your customer's shoes. If the same thing happened to you and some company screwed up what would you like that company to do?

If it's a refund, then offer the customer a refund. If it's an apology, give them an apology.

Even if you lose money on it, if you made an error or something within your control is at fault (ex: lost package), if the right thing is to refund the customer's money, refund the money.

If the customer is at fault:

- Do not accuse.

If you in any way blame the customer for the error then he will get even more defensive and even more determined to prove himself right.

- Do check into the situation before you respond to the customer to make sure that in fact the problem isn't your fault.

Sometimes we are sure we are right, but a closer look at the situation shows we aren't. Make sure that you in fact aren't in the wrong.

If it takes you more than a few hours to check into the situation, email the customer and inform him that your company takes all customer complaints very seriously and his issue will be investigated. As soon as it has been someone will get back in touch with him.

Nothing infuriates people more than if they complain and it seems no one is listening.

- If you find out that you aren't to blame for the customer problem, lay out the situation in a professional manner.

Even though you may feel like it, don't tell the person he is wrong, wrong, wrong! Instead, explain the process and where the confusion is.

Always be polite and professional. Don't be sarcastic, rude, argumentative or anything else. You WANT to help the customer and you WANT to solve his problem.

You want the customer to think that you are on his side instead of against him because you are. If you aren't on the customer's side, the customer will go somewhere else.

The One Thing That You MUST Do

If a customer requests a refund or is very unhappy, give him a refund. I can't stress that enough. If someone buys from you and they want their money back or are very unhappy, give them their money back.

If you don't, the customer can call up his credit card company and request a charge back.

Even if he is completely at fault and you did everything right, the overwhelming majority of the time the credit card company will issue a charge back.

Why? Because if it's an internet purchase you don't have the customer's signature authorizing you to charge his credit card. Without this, the credit card company will almost always automatically issue a charge back.

Charge backs are VERY bad for you, the merchant.

Very, very bad.

If someone does a charge back for a purchase they made with you, then you will not only lose the money the customer paid for the product, you will also have to pay a \$20 or \$25 charge back fee.

You are only allowed a very small number of charge backs. If you have more than a very few, the credit card payment system you are using to accept credit cards will think you are a bad company so they will cancel your account.

If your account gets canceled you get put on a bad list and it's very, very difficult to get another company to let you use their system to accept credit cards.

Basically, the consequences of having a customer unhappy with your service are so large and bad for you that you want all your customers happy.

If a customer wants a refund, offer to make the situation right for them, but if they don't want you to, give them the refund. Tell them you are sorry that it didn't work out and wish them well.

Chapter 16

Taxes and Licenses

Yes, here it is! Everyone's favorite subject: taxes. Alright, so taxes probably aren't anyone's favorite subject and it's a pain to have to think about them, but it's really important that you make sure that your business is in compliance with all local, state and federal tax laws and regulations. Otherwise, you can find yourself in big trouble.

If you run a business you must first decide how to structure it. The structure of your business will determine what taxes you have to pay and what licenses you need. This is true whether you have a business selling a product or you engage in affiliate marketing.

Types of Business Structures

The three main types of business structures are:

- **Sole Proprietorship** – this is the most common type of business structure. It requires the least work since you don't have to file any papers to create it. It is automatically created when you go into business.

With this structure you are personally liable if someone sues you over something to do with your business.

You must pay taxes on all profits (income from your business minus your business expenses) at your regular tax rate.

You must also pay a self employment tax.

- **Corporation** – this business structure requires the most work. You must pay to incorporate, hold annual

meetings, appoint a board of directors, and file certain papers with your state.

There are certain companies online that allow you to set up a corporation cheaply; however, I would check with an accountant about the specific tax considerations you need to be aware of.

With a corporation, you are not held personally liable if someone sues you over something to do with your business. Instead, the corporation is liable so if the person sues and the corporation doesn't have any money the person won't be able to collect on the judgment against it.

Corporations must pay tax on all profits. You would work for your corporation and if you get a salary from the corporation, you must pay tax on that salary at your individual rate so in essence the profits are being taxed twice: once at the corporate level and once when you are paid by the corporation.

Again, if you choose this structure, please see an accountant because if you don't know what you are doing and don't follow the rules then your corporation could be called a sham and you won't get any of the benefits of a corporation.

- **Limited Liability Corporation** – this structure falls in between a sole proprietorship and a corporation.

You have to file some papers with the state, but not as many as with a corporation. You also don't have to file as many papers on an annual basis as corporations do.

Like in a corporation, you aren't personally liable if someone sues your business. You can choose

whether you want to pay taxes at your individual rate or at a corporate rate.

Warning to California residents: California treats Limited Liability Corporations differently than the other states so I **strongly** suggest you check with an accountant before you set one up.

Okay, now that you know the different types of business structures you can choose from, how do you know which one you should choose?

How to Choose Your Business Structure

A lot of people think you have to incorporate in order to have a business. You don't. In fact, if you are starting up a business out of your home to try to earn some extra money, you most likely don't need it, at least until your business grows to a substantial level.

So, if you are just starting out, how do you know whether you need to incorporate or not?

My personal rule of thumb is that if you are just starting out with your business and aren't sure if you should incorporate or not, you should only incorporate or form a limited liability corporation:

- if your business is at high risk for lawsuits (such as child care, construction, car pool services, etc.), and/or
- if you make anything for a child or baby that they could possibly injure themselves with, and/or
- if someone is likely to sue you for a lot of money based on your business type and they can take something big from you like your house or you have a lot of money.

If you are just starting a home business to make some extra money and hopefully grow it into a full time business then personally I

don't think you need to incorporate unless you have a high risk business. (Please know though that this is just my opinion, don't take it as the business gospel.)

Income Taxes

If your business is not incorporated, you must pay the following income taxes:

- Federal income tax on your business profits
- Self-employment taxes
- City or State Business Tax (if applicable.) This is often the same thing as your business license fee.

If your business is incorporated, you must pay the following:

- The corporation must pay income tax on the business profits.
- The corporation must pay the social security tax, worker's compensation fees, unemployment insurance, etc. on all salary distributions to employees.
- You must pay personal income tax on salary distributions from the corporation.
- City or State Business Tax (if applicable). This is often the same thing as your business license fee.
- Your corporation must also pay any other fees required by your state. Sometimes states tack on extra fees to corporations so check with your state or an accountant to see if your state has any extra fees you have to pay that you might not be aware of.

Sales Taxes

There is no sales tax on internet transactions made to residents of other states or countries; however, most states charge a sales tax on all sales made to residents of your state if you sell tangible personal property.

For example, if you live in California and sell gift baskets, you must pay state sales tax on all gift baskets you sell to California residents.

Sales tax permits are usually free and you can get them from your state tax office.

I would check with your state tax department to see the requirements of your specific state and to see if you even need to get a permit or file taxes for your business. To do this, just go to Google and type in Name of State Sales Tax Permit (ex: California Sales Tax Permit). This should bring up the proper page for your state.

Your state government's sales tax page will explain what you need to do to get a permit and/or file your sales taxes.

Since you only have to pay sales tax on sales you make to people from your state it is **VERY** important that you keep excellent records of all your customer sales. This is so that if you are ever audited you can show the auditors that the sales you reported were in fact the only sales made to people from your state.

Do you need a Business License?

It depends on your state and/or city, but usually if your state doesn't require you to have a business license, your town or city will.

You can usually find out if your state requires one by going to Google and doing a search for Name of Your State Business License. (ex., Washington Business License) This will likely bring up your government's page on business licenses and will tell you what you need.

If it doesn't, then do a search in Google for Name of Town Business License (ex., Los Angeles Business License.)

If you still don't see anything in either place I would call your local government just to confirm that you don't need to have one. Better to be safe than sorry with this stuff.

Do you need a DBA?

A DBA is short for "Doing Business As." It must be filed if you are doing business as anything other than your legal name.

You do not need to file a DBA if you incorporate because you will be doing business in your corporation's name and you can get a bank account in your corporation's name.

You only need to file a DBA if you are a sole proprietor and want to do business as a company and get a bank account in the company's name.

For example, if you are a sole proprietor named John Smith who sells toy trains and you want your company to be called Toy Train Heaven you must file a DBA. A DBA tells everyone that you, John Smith, are also doing business as Toy Train Heaven.

If you just want to do business as John Smith, you don't need to file a DBA.

The main advantages of having a DBA are:

1. You can get a bank account in your company's name. If you don't have a DBA the bank won't let you get a bank account in your company's name.
2. It's a lot more professional to give your business a company name. People feel a lot more comfortable ordering products from XYZ Company than John Smith.

To file a DBA you just file a form with your state government and publish the form in a newspaper for a few weeks. You can do this yourself or you can pay someone else to do it for you. (Usually it's only a few dollars more if you pay someone so you may want to consider that option and save yourself the hassle.)

In order to find out what your state requires or to find a company that will file your form for you, just go to Google and do a search for Name of State DBA (ex., California DBA.) You can usually just print the form from your computer. The government's web page will also usually list the newspapers that will publish your dba statement.

Chapter 17

General Business Basics

In addition to the specific issues we've already covered that come with getting an internet business up and running, you need to be aware of certain basic general business principles and issues.

Keep Track of All Your Expenses

This is the most important thing you can do as a business owner to make your life easier.

If you keep track of all your expenses as they come up and keep all of your receipts in one place, it will be much easier when you do your taxes.

Just as important, it will ensure that you claim all the expenses associated with your business, not just the ones you happen to remember or can find receipts for when you are figuring out your taxes. Being organized can really cut down on your tax bill.

Ways you can do this:

Save all of your receipts. What I do is print off all of my receipts for purchases made on the internet and put them in a folder. I also keep receipts for store purchases I've made in that folder also.

I keep the folder in the same place so I don't have to hunt for it each time.

You should save all receipts for everything you buy to help you with your business.

For example, you would want to make sure to keep the receipts for: this book, your domain name, web hosting, any advertising you do, any office supplies you buy, any

computer equipment or software you buy to help you with your business, any fees you have to pay to buy or make your product, any books you buy about your business, and anything else that you buy that will help you start, run, grow or improve your business.

Organize your receipts. When I pay my bills each month, I put all the receipts that I've collected that month in the folder into a 3 ring binder.

I have the binder divided into the following tabbed sections:

- § Advertising Expenses
- § Recurring Fees (such as web hosting fees, etc.)
- § Product Expenses
- § Misc. Fees
- § Cash Purchases

I then put the receipt into the proper tabbed section. For store receipts I tape them to a blank page and put that page in the binder. This prevents me from losing them.

Keeping all of your receipts in a notebook makes them so much easier to keep track of and helps you when it's time to figure your taxes because they are all there and laid out nice and neat.

Keep track of your expenses and earnings. I use a simple worksheet to help me do this. It isn't fancy but it's really easy to use. I've included a copy as a bonus with this book.

I keep the worksheet with my 3 ring binder. I date the worksheet for the month the receipts are from.

Every time I put a receipt in the binder I add a description of the expense as well as the price to the worksheet.

When I'm done adding the expenses, I then put in my earnings that I have made during that month.

By doing this I can easily track how much I earned and spent during that month.

I put that month's worksheet at the front of the book. At the end of the year, I don't have to go back through each receipt when I figure my taxes, I have an itemized list already. It makes it much easier.

You can also get a software program such as QuickBooks to help you with this so you can keep track of all your expenses on your computer.

If you are just starting out, I recommend you just keep track of your expenses manually until your business takes off. It is a lot cheaper and is fine for most home businesses that are just beginning.

Once you start making over \$5,000/month it's a good idea to get an accountant.

Do you need a Business Phone Line?

If you are just starting out and your business is strictly web based or you are working out of your home, I would not get a separate phone line unless you absolutely have to or are in a business that requires you to be on the phone a lot. It's a big expense and I wouldn't get it if you don't have to.

If you really want a phone number for your new business and you aren't in a business that requires you to be on the phone a lot (ex: consulting), I would start out using a call forwarding service. It's a lot cheaper than paying the phone company for a separate business line.

Some people decide to just use their home line for business. I'm not crazy about that decision.

If money is tight and you can't afford the expense of a call forwarding service right now, then personally I wouldn't put a phone number up on your web site unless you absolutely have to.

Why? Two reasons:

1. On the web your business is open 24 hours a day. That means when you're sleeping your customers may want to contact you.

You aren't going to be thrilled at having customers call you at 3:00 in the morning and you sure aren't going to wow a potential customer with your professionalism if you answer the phone with an obviously sleepy "Hello."

2. Another reason is that if you are just starting out you likely are going to be really excited and vow to answer your home phone every time it rings with a very perky, friendly "Hello, Kelly's Jewelry, can I help you?" Or whatever the name of your company is. And, you are going to make darned sure that your kids don't answer the phone at all.

The problem with this is that it isn't realistic. If you have kids, they will answer the phone some times and would it encourage you to do business with a company that has a 6 year old answer the phone or a teenager who puts down the phone and yells "Mommmyyyy! Phone!"

You aren't home free if you don't have kids either because what's going to happen is that you will answer the phone very professionally with your company name the first week or two, but then when none of the calls are for your business you will fall back into the habit of just answering your phone normally.

As sure as I'm typing this, about the time you start doing that or the time you are certain that a friend is calling you and you pick it up with a "Hey there" that's the time you get a call from a customer or potential customer. You will

feel like a fool and they will be less than impressed. At least that's the way I felt when it happened to me. J

I use a call forwarding service and I recommend it if you are just starting out and don't have a business that requires a lot of phone calls, at least initially.

A call forwarding service provides you with a new phone number and allows you to forward calls received at that number to any phone you want or you can do what I do and send the calls directly to voice mail and receive the voice mail messages in your email inbox.

I use Kall8 (www.kall8.com). They are a good, reputable company and very cheap. I like them a lot. It only takes a few minutes to sign up and your new phone number is operational within the day.

For \$2/month you can get a toll free 888, 877 or 866 phone number. It's 6.9 cents per minute that you talk to your customer in the US and a bit higher for international rates.

Since I forward the calls to my email inbox, the calls don't last very long so it doesn't cost much at all.

I then call my customers back on my home phone using a phone card so regardless of what time of day I make the call it's cheap. It also let's me arrange a good time or quiet place that I can call from so I can be at my most "professional."

Kall 8's call forwarding service is pretty cool because you can set up your account so that you can have a voice mail box so the customer can press 1 for sales, 2 for support, etc.

This can make your company seem bigger than it is. It even lets you have hold music for your customer to hear while he or she is waiting.

Kall 8 also has 1-800 numbers you can get that are \$5/month.

I would suggest that you don't do what I did. When I got my number I thought an 800 number would make my company seem like it was a 'real' company and I was afraid one of the non-800 numbers would make it seem like my company was new.

It didn't make one bit of difference. In fact, going for the more expensive number was a total waste of money.

The people who were going to buy from me, bought. No one made their decision on whether to buy my products on the basis of me having an 800 number. It sometimes made a difference that I had a phone number, not what the number was.

If I had it to do over again, I would go for one of the cheaper 888, 877 or 866 numbers.

The Life/Work Balance

I'm the first one to admit I'm not great at this, but still it's important to at least try to balance the time you spend on your new business with the time you spend on your life.

It's hard to get a business going if you don't devote time and energy to it, but it can be hard to juggle the time spent with your family, friends and kids and the time you spend on your new business.

How do you do it?

The best way is to set aside a certain amount of time each day or week to devote to your business. This is your business time. All other time is family time.

This doesn't always work, but if you are firm about the time you need, especially in the beginning everyone will adjust to your new schedule.

You may have to be flexible such as have your business time be early in the morning before the kids are up and late at night when they are in bed. You may also need to carve out one or two nights a week where you don't do business at all, but don't be too flexible.

What I mean by that is that your family will usually support you until what you are doing interferes with what they want you to do. You will probably have to deal with some pouting, anger or other emotional outbursts at some point from either your husband/wife, your kids or whoever else might be affected by you spending time on your business.

Just say I'm sorry, I'm doing this for us. This is my time to work on this and I really need to get it done. Tomorrow night we can do something special.

Special Note: Usually your husband or wife only complains about the time (and/or money) you are spending when you are trying to get your business started.

Once he or she starts seeing the checks and realizes you are actually making money from this stuff, the complaining usually stops pretty quickly. J

Chapter 18

Conclusion

Congratulations! You now have all the tools you need to start and run your internet business.

You know how to:

- Ø Select your business structure
- Ø Get the proper business licenses
- Ø Create a web site
- Ø Accept Credit Cards
- Ø Practice Good Customer Service
- Ø Get Listed in the Search Engines
- Ø Improve your Search Engine Ranking
- Ø Advertise
- Ø Avoid Scams
- Ø And much, much more!

It is my sincere wish that all the information I've provided you makes your journey to internet success much easier than it otherwise would have been.

I wish you the very best of success in business and in life!

PS I welcome all feedback about my book. You can reach me at Kip@howtostartonlinebusiness.com I respond to all emails so if you send me an email and I don't respond please send it again.

Appendix 1

Bonus Section

Included in this appendix are the following bonus materials:

- Ø Bonus Tutorials:
 - How to Build a Web Store
 - How to Build a Web Site
- Ø Bonus Videos
 - How to Reduce the File Size of your Pictures
 - How to Create an Advertising Campaign
- Ø My Own Personal Resource List
- Ø Keywords Worksheet
- Ø Expense Tracking Worksheet
- Ø Starting a Business Checklist

Bonus Tutorials and Videos

As a bonus with this book, I have created several tutorials for you that take you step-by-step through the following processes:

- Ø How to Build an Online Store
- Ø How to Build a Web Site
- Ø How to Reduce the File Size of your Pictures
- Ø How to Create an Advertising Campaign

You can access these tutorials at any time by going to:

<http://www.abcwebsitedemo.com>

Password: netbusiness

Please note that you must use all lowercase letters to log in.

My Resource List

These are the companies that I personally use:

- Ø **Image Optimizer** – Free. This tool allows you to reduce the load time of your images so that your visitor doesn't have to wait so long for your page to load and your pictures to appear.

www.netmechanic.com/GIFBot/optimize-graphic.htm

- Ø **Business Logo** - \$149. I get my logos from this company.

www.thelogocompany.net

They recently raised their prices so if money is tight you may want to try www.gotlogos.com. There is no give and take you pretty much are stuck with the logo they give you but it's really cheap – just \$25. I've gotten a logo from them which was pretty decent.

- Ø **Toll Free Phone Number** – really cheap. I recommend getting a cheaper 866, 877, or 888 number instead of an 800 number.

www.kall8.com

- Ø **Domain Names, Web Site Builder, Web Hosting** – cheap. This company is also reliable and has great customer service.

www.actnowdomains.com

- Ø **Web Site Templates** – reasonably priced. (Please note: you don't need a template if you are using your web host's site builder.) These guys have a nice selection to choose from.

www.pixelmill.com

- Ø **Web Site Photos** - This has thousands of graphics and photos for you to choose from and most only cost \$1. I just found this site recently and I totally love it.

www.istockphotos.com

Expense Tracking Worksheet for Month: ____ Year: _____ Page: __

Description of Expense	Cost (circle if paid cash)	Description of Revenue (only list checks you've received)	Amount
Total Costs:		Total Revenues:	

Starting a Business Checklist

<u>Completed?</u>	<u>Business Step</u>
	Choose your business.
	Decide whether you want to build your web site yourself or have someone build it for you.
	If you are building your web site yourself, decide whether you wish to use your web host's web site builder or your own web site building software.
	Choose a web host.
	If you are building your web site with your web host's web site builder, order your domain name and web site. If you are building your web site yourself, order your domain name and web hosting.
	Decide whether you need a DBA. File the proper paperwork.
	Build your web site.
	Make sure the purpose of your web site is clearly visible on your home page (ex: Toy Trains for Sale)
	Decide if you need a business bank account. Open an account.
	Set up your web site email address(es) in your web host's control panel.
	Set up your web site email address(es) in your current email client (ex: Outlook Express).
	If applicable, set up an account so you can accept credit cards.
	Insert the credit card company's html onto your web site.
	Optimize your web site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Determine your keywords. Ø Insert your Meta Tags. Ø Insert your keywords into your content.
	Get links to your web site.

	Decide if you want a business phone line or toll free call forwarding. Arrange for the extra phone line or call forwarding.
	Get a Business License (if required by your town or city.)
	Get a Sales Tax Permit (if required by your state.)
	Submit your web site to search engines.
	Advertise your web site.
	Get customers; provide excellent customer service.
	Keep all receipts and track all expenses and revenues.
	Congratulations! You made it! You are now a business owner! J

