eMarketing In-a-Box

How to attract, retain and monetize your web site customers

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EMARKETING-IN-A-BOX: HOW TO ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND MONETIZE YOUR WEB SITE CUSTOMERS

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www.eMarketingInaBox.com

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1. INTRODUCTION TO E-MARKETING IN-A-BOX

So you want to start an online business? Well, it can be very exciting – and often, overwhelming.

E-Marketing-In-A-Box was designed to ease your pain, eliminate your doubts, and maximize your odds of success when building and operating your online business. It's a combination of a detailed checklist and step-by-step guide along with product and service suggestions that will help you avoid the pitfalls and leverage the tools that will speed you to online success.

Following is a brief overview of the most common business preparation, planning and execution steps that you'll learn as you go through E-Marketing-In-A-Box.

- Determining your online e-business model;

- Conducting a competitive analysis to discover opportunities on the Web and competitive landscape;

- Focusing on a profitable niche and identifying targeted market segments;

- Crafting an Internet marketing strategy;

- Getting training you need to become self-sufficient in online marketing operations;

- Getting effective domain for your business;

- Choosing Web site publishing tools;

- Designing effective site navigation and structure;

- Selecting the best look-and-feel for your site;

- Writing effective online copy;

- Automating your site with autoresponders, email newsletters, and an effective shopping cart;

- Deciding the marketing tactics you should use to drive low-cost, targeted traffic to your site, such as search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, email campaigns, lead generation tactics, and online public relations.;

- Developing traditional marketing materials to promote your Web site offline;

- Optimizing your landing pages to maximize conversion so that all the time, money and effort you spend in sending traffic to your site is not wasted;

- Maximizing your effectiveness with free online marketing tools; and,

- Keeping ahead of your competitors by keeping up with online marketing trends through the books and other publications that we suggest.

The number one stumbling block to online success that we find as we speak around the world is that people don't know how to get started. And if they have started, they don't know what to do next. Well, it's our job in the rest of this book to eliminate that excuse. We are going to make it as easy as possible to get up and running – and making as much money as possible in the shortest amount of time with the least amount of effort.

So let's get started…

2. CHOOSING A VIABLE E-BUSINESS MODEL

In our opinion, the main reason for the Internet crash in the year 2000 was that most online businesses didn't think through their business model. They didn't know what business they were actually in. Simply put, they didn't know how they were going to make money through their Web sites in the long run.

Savvy marketers knew how to attract visitors – also known as "traffic" or "eyeballs" – but they didn't know how to monetize those visitors to their Web sites – that is, maximize the money they made per visitor.

They simply equated eyeballs with dollars. And investors measured success in a similar fashion. The more traffic your site attracted, the more it was worth – or so the theory went for a while. (Interestingly, we see the same thing happening again, but admittedly on a smaller scale, since savvy investors who survived the first Internet wave aren't going to be burned a second time.)

Two Simple Steps to Web Success

As you will see, there are basically two steps to an online business: (1) driving traffic to your site; and (2) converting those visitors into cash. That's it. But as with everything, the devil is in the details.

That's why we suggest that you start with planning. Almost all successful entrepreneurs, regardless of the type of business they're in, started off with drafting comprehensive business plan.

Of course, you can do it on the back of a napkin like so many famous entrepreneurs claim to have done. But we'll bet you that the far majority of those "plans" end up with all of the other paper napkins – in the trash where they belong.

With that said, we recommend you spend some time on planning before you start anything else, and the best way to keep your thoughts organized is to use a business plan software. For our recommendation, visit our suggestions page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

So make the investment, which will, in turn, force you to plan out a clear strategy instead of just starting to do things that will waste your valuable time, energy, and money.

The Five Basic Models of Online Businesses

Just as the Greeks said, "Know Thyself!" we recommend: "Know Thy Business!" And there are only five main business models that we think you should focus on for making money online.

1) The Brochure Model
2) The Subscription Model
3) The Advertising Model
4) The E-Commerce Model
5) The Affiliate Model

2.1 The Brochure Model

By far the most prevalent business model on the Internet is using a Web site simply to promote an offline business. You might be a graphic designer showing your portfolio of work online; an attorney trying to generate leads by putting up a new type of shingle in the form of your Web site; or any other kind of service provider that is simply maintaining a site to make it easier for prospects to find out about your services and contact you.

We don't mean to belittle this strategy. It is the simplest model, but it might be the most effective for your business. We are in a service economy, and so for many of you, the Brochure Model might be the way to go.

As the World Wide Web has become a major source of information, many small and mid-sized businesses just simply cannot afford losing all those customers who are looking online for the service they provide. Nowadays, having a presence on the Web and being found on search engines, such as Google or Yahoo!, is just another core component of every business strategy.

The keys to such a site are:

(1) Easy navigation so that visitors don't get confused and click away; and,

(2) Clear and concise copywriting (the words on your site) so that visitors quickly understand who you are, how you can help them, and how to find out more.

The ultimate goal is to "monetize," or convert, the casual browser on your site to a paying customer. If you don't sell online, you should assign another non-cash objective to your Web site, such as getting someone to sign up for a newsletter subscription or information inquiry about your product or service. This will allow you to measure your Internet marketing success, which you should always try to quantify. So think through your Web site objective first before you decide to embark on a full-scale online marketing blitz.

In order to accomplish your Web site goals you need to get visitors to your site, and you also need effective copy so that you keep the visitors reading your site, and then taking some action to move them closer to buying from you. Web browsers are typically impatient. They have the "power" to click on the "back button" in your browser. So make sure your content is interesting, and clearly lays out benefits that your product or service can provide to your prospective customer.

The Brochure Model is all about clarity and credibility. Your enemy, when pursuing this model, is the clutter of the Internet. Everyone tries to position themselves as the best attorney in their field, or the most creative graphic designer.

But rather think of it this way, you're looking for people in pain – people with problems – that you can solve. If you want to find out more about how to position yourself more effectively, check out our book**, FEAR Selling**. Just go to www.WhatWeSuggest.com and scroll down to our recommended Books and Other Publications.

The problem is that most people focus on themselves and their own business, and how great they are rather than what they can do for those who might need their service.

In a nutshell, what you want to do is: focus people's attention by showing that you understand their problem; and then build credibility through your bio(s) and customer testimonials as well as by showing them how you've solved the problems of others like them.

How do you do this? By creating a special section on your site were you provide case studies about the work you've done to solve your clients' problems.

As you present your portfolio of case studies, keep in mind that they aren't about flexing your muscles but rather subtly showing that you can help your prospects by proving that you've solved problems for people just like them.

As you present your bio(s) and case studies, think of the P.A.R. acronym. Lay out:

- **P** - what your previous customer's **Problem** was;

- **A** - describe the **Action** you took on your customer's behalf or recommended them to take; and

- **R** – the **Results** that your actions achieved – being as specific and numerical as possible so as to be credible.

Best Web Site Development Solutions for a Brochure Site

Even though we cover Web design and development later, we'll quickly discuss it here in case you want to get going right away on your site. For a Brochure Site, the most important thing is not the graphical design (although it should look professional), but rather the text on the page. And so, you might simply want to set up a blog, which is short for "web log."

A blog is just a fancy name for an online journal, which is usually used by someone who is writing successive entries on a particular subject. Nowadays, however, many people use a blog to put up simple yet effective Web sites. You can find the Blog Solution we recommend by visiting www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Based on your product/service, you may want to develop a site with more functionality that you can start using as your business grows. We'll cover this in more depth in the section on *Automating Your Site*, but if you want to develop a site that is more robust than a simple blog, check out our top recommendation for a Web Site Development Solution at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

2.2 The E-Commerce Model

The E-Commerce Model is arguably the model which is the easiest to understand. Visitors to your e-commerce site buy your products simply by indicating their desired purchase in an online shopping cart and then pay you, usually via credit card.

You can sell digital products such as e-books or physical products such as clothing. All you need is a Web site with shopping cart functionality. In effect, E-Bay, the online auction site is one big e-commerce site which helps buyers and sellers find each other. Just as in any business, if you want to accept credit cards, you must open a merchant account. For our latest recommendation regarding merchant accounts and/or for our recommended Shopping Cart Solution, check out the Merchant Account Solution and/or Shopping Cart Solution on www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

2.3 The Subscription Model

The best example of the Subscription Model we can give is our client, *The Wall Street Journal Online*, which is the number one subscription site on the Web. This is basically the electronic version of the venerable print paper by the same name. Basically, you subscribe to this online version much as you would the print subscription, but instead of the physical paper showing up on your doorstep in the morning, you simply access the Wall Street Journal site with your log-in and password in order to read the business news every day.

Digital products like *The Wall Street Journal Online*, electronic books (aka e-books), and electronic newsletters that are for sale have proven to be very profitable businesses. Instead of incurring the high costs of printing and distributing a paper product, you simply make it accessible online. The profit margins can be huge. The only real costs of producing a digital product are the writing.

With simple software such as Adobe Acrobat and a simple email solution, the cost of digitization and distribution of electronic products is next to nothing. If you are in the e-book business or delivering some other form of digital product, check out our Shopping Cart Recommendation at www.WhatWeSuggest.com. Our Shopping Cart Solution enables you to sell physical or electronic products securely online.

Subscribing to a Service

When you think of the Subscription Model, don't think narrowly – you can sell subscriptions to more than just publications. Many of the software packages that we recommend in this book are actually subscription services, including our Blog Solution, Shopping Cart Solution, and Autoresponder Solution – all of which you can find at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Instead of paying monthly for information in digital form as you do with a digital product such as an e-book, when you subscribe to an online service, you have access to that service as long as you keep paying for your subscription. In this way, you may keep your costs down by paying for the service only when you need it, instead of buying the service and then not using it.

You may hear the term ASP more and more in the coming years. ASP stands for Application Service Provider, which essentially means a vendor that provides an online service on a subscription basis.

Think of it this way. You may have bought a piece of software from Microsoft. You paid them a one-time fee to purchase the software, and they sent you a CD, which you used to install the software on your computer. Instead of buying software outright, you may wish to pay to "rent" the software. In other words, you buy a subscription to it instead and pay for it on a monthly basis. In this case, the software company is providing you with a software application or service, hence the name Application Service Provider (ASP).

2.4 The Advertising Model

Buying Traffic

We consulted to *The Wall Street Journal* by helping them "buy traffic." Let's explain this concept to you as it is key to all online models.

Building a Web site is only the first step. It's like putting up a lemonade stand in a desert. Unless you point people to that lemonade stand, no one is going to buy from you.

So you want to put up signs on the roads, directing traffic to that stand. You want to put those signs in heavily trafficked areas so as to maximize the number of people who see it.

Now, since you are in the desert, there might not be any heavily trafficked areas nearby for you to stick a sign in the ground and get a significant amount of traffic to your lemonade business. But on the Web, people are just a click away from any piece of online real estate – that is, they are only a click away from your Web site.

So you want to put your advertising signs up where there is traffic that is "qualified" to buy your product. In this case, "qualified" means people that have the problem that your product/service solves, and ideally, you want them to be able to afford its purchase. Recent studies show that about 30% of all people who use the Web to search for a product or service actually intend to purchase that product or service in the near future.

When you buy advertising online, you are basically trying to buy traffic. You are paying someone to put a sign on their Web site to redirect people to your Web site.

In the old days of the Internet, advertisers could only buy banners, which are just those big square or rectangular signs on Web sites at the top, bottom, right side, left side, or anywhere else that a Web site is willing to sell their space to advertisers.

As an advertiser, you buy banner space on a "per-thousand" basis. The term which you will hear if you buy banner space is CPM – which stands for Cost Per Thousand (M is the Roman numeral for the number 1000).

If, as an advertiser, it costs you a $5 CPM for a banner space on a site, that means that for every 1000 people that see your ad, you are paying $5 to the business that is allowing your ad to be displayed on their site. So you, as the advertiser, are buying traffic, and the Web site that is displaying your ad is selling their traffic to you.

The Evolution to Performance-Based Marketing

Now, as you might realize, even though 1000 people might see your ad for every $5 you pay, you probably aren't going to get 1000 people to click through that ad and come to your site. Rather, you'll probably get some small percentage that click through, also known as the click-through-rate or CTR.

Even though, banner advertising is still big business on the Web, many advertisers are shifting their online advertising budgets to what is known as pay-per-click (PPC) advertising or "sponsored links".

With PPC, advertisers only pay the Web site where their ad appears when someone actually clicks on the ad. So instead of paying advertising dollars for eyeballs that may see but never click through your banner ads, you are only paying for visitors who actually are interested enough to click on your sponsored-link PPC ads. You only pay on "performance," that is, when someone takes an action – in this case, clicking on your ad.

Size-wise, whereas banner advertising is the online equivalent of buying relatively large space ads in a newspaper or magazine, pay-per-click ads are like tiny classified ads.

There are usually no graphics associated with sponsored links – they are simply lines of text, promoting an offer or describing a product.

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, to see what sponsored links look like simply go to www.Google.com, search for any term, and you'll almost certainly see sponsored links listed along the right column of the Google search listings. These ads will be somewhat related to the keywords you typed into the Google search bar.

Pay-per-click ads might show up in Google's or Yahoo!'s search results or on Web sites that display the ads intermingled with other related content, which is a marketing tactic known as site-targeting or contextual advertising. For example, if you sell digital cameras online, you would probably consider placing your ad on a Web site or blog that offers consumer electronic product reviews, and you would also want your ad to be displayed on Google when the keyword "buy digital camera" is typed into the search bar. The first option is often referred to as "contextual web marketing" since your ad shows up next to contextually relevant articles, and the second is known as "search engine marketing".

The ability to get your customized message in front of interested buyers when they are searching for your product/service makes search engine marketing (SEM) a very cost-effective and targeted way to advertise. Again, keep in mind, studies show that around 30% of online searchers intend to make an online purchase – in other words, they are not just browsing around.

We'll talk more about PPC advertising in the section on *Reaching Out To Your Prospects.* But if you're in a rush to get started, check out the special deals on buying pay-per-click advertising through Google, Yahoo! and others by visiting the Pay-Per-Click Advertising Solutions on www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Back to the Advertising Model

So now that you understand the basics of buying and selling traffic, we can explain the Advertising Model. Simply put, businesses that are pursuing the Advertising Model are selling traffic. They are allowing a certain amount of the space on their Web site to be sold to advertisers that they allow to put up banners or sponsored links on their site.

It's very simple. If I have a site visited by people that you think are good prospects for your product or service, simply pay me, and I'll allow you to put up ads on my site that redirect visitors to your site.

Examples of those who are banking on The Advertising Model – at least in part – are news sites and other information sites as they can generate huge traffic from people constantly visiting them to find out what's going on in the world. If you go to www.msn.com or www.yahoo.com, you may see banner ads or sponsored links that they sell to interested advertisers.

If you want to pursue the Advertising Model, realize that you need a significant amount of traffic coming to your site. Now you might have limited traffic, yet very targeted visitors within a very specific demographic segment. In this case, relevant advertisers might be willing to pay you for your traffic because your visitors have a high likelihood for buying their products/services. But for the most part, you need a lot of traffic to generate revenue by selling ads on your site.

More likely, as a small business, you'll be buying traffic to get people to come to your site rather than selling traffic and trying to make money by sending people to others' sites. Whether you are buying or selling traffic, however, it is essential that you understand the Advertising Model.

2.5 The Affiliate Model

Pay-per-click advertising is just like it sounds. As an advertiser, you only pay if someone clicks on your ad. The Affiliate Model is very similar except instead of advertisers paying for clicks, they only pay when someone buys their product. You will hear the term CPA, which stands for Cost-Per-Action. In the Advertising Model, the action is simply a click. In the Affiliate Model, the action is an actual purchase.

In the Advertising Model, advertisers who want people to come to their sites buy traffic, and Web site publishers who want to make money from advertisers sell traffic – they sell their ad space (also known as ad inventory). In the Affiliate Model, you have advertisers (called merchants) paying Web sites (called affiliates) to actually promote their products.

Think of affiliates as a commission-only salesforce. You may be pursuing the E-Commerce Model by selling digital or physical products on your site yourself. But wouldn't it be nice to get others to sell your products from their Web sites and only pay them if they actually sell your products? Well, this is the heart and soul of the Affiliate Model.

As an advertiser-merchant, you want to increase the exposure of your product by enticing other sites to advertise your products and send you traffic. Instead of offering Web sites pennies or dollars per click, you might be selling a high-priced, high-profit-margin product that enables you to pay a relatively large commission.

For example, we have consulted to e-book publishers who are willing to pay sites up to 50% per sale if those sites will promote their products via links or banner ads.

In the Affiliate Model, you as an advertiser don't pay if someone sends you a visitor. You only pay if someone sends you a visitor who then actually purchases your product.

Sounds like a good deal, right? Well, it is.

If you have products that are in demand, and you are willing to share in your profits, you will probably be able to get many affiliates promoting your products on a commission-only basis. Alternatively, if you have great marketing skills but you don't have a product to sell, you could promote someone else's product online and be their affiliate and make money through affiliate commission program.

One concrete example of a company that has been very successful with the Affiliate Model is the Sharper Image Corporation, which sells interesting gadgets. One of its most successful products is called the Ionic Breeze. This product is basically a fancy electronic air purifier. Just say you run a site about clean air. You can join the Ionic Breeze affiliate program for free, put up links on your clean-air site to direct people to the Ionic Breeze site, and make money for each person who clicks through to their site and buys one of their air purifiers.

You might be asking how you as an affiliate, promoting other people's products on your Web site, are guaranteed to receive the proper credit for selling products that are fulfilled through the merchant's (i.e., advertiser's) site. Well, there are companies that manage affiliate networks to ensure that the merchants pay the affiliates. These affiliate networks like LinkShare, Commission Junction, and

Performics, are paid a small piece of every transaction in exchange for tracking and reporting affiliate activity.

Combining Models

Please don't think that you have to follow only one of these Models. Many sites use a portfolio approach. They might be selling products or services by following the Subscription or E-Commerce Models as well as monetizing traffic by selling some of their traffic through the Advertising and/or Affiliate Models.

As with anything in life and business, you want to find the right balance between focus and diversification. As your business evolves, you might move from one model to the other, but the most important thing is to start by knowing what business model(s) you think you want to follow.

3. CHECKING OUT YOUR COMPETITION

Before you get started on your own site, you should check out your competition, if only to find out what you're up against. Too many people approach us with what they think is a brilliant idea that they think no one else has thought of.

We don't mean to be discouraging, but more likely than not, there is someone out there who has already thought of your idea – or something close to it. It's relatively easy to start an online business so the competition is fierce.

You should check out your competition, not only to find out who you have to compete against, but also to help you generate ideas as to what types of products/services to develop, what types of offers to test, pricing, how to position your products/services, and anything else you can find out that will help you avoid re-creating the wheel.

One very successful consultant we work with likes to use what he calls the CASE method. CASE stands for "Copy And Steal Everything." We're not suggesting that you really steal from others and infringe on their trademarks or copyrights. That could get you into a lot of serious legal trouble. What we suggest is that you learn from others before doing anything yourself.

Use the search engines, Google and Yahoo!, to find businesses that are offering products/services that are similar to yours, and learn as much as you can. This is one of the best pieces of advices we can give. Unfortunately, not many people follow it.

On the Web, you want know about your competitors' websites as much as possible. You need to know:

- top search terms they use,
- what websites link to and from them,
- keywords they advertise on,
- how much traffic they get so that you can benchmark your website,
- type of paid online media they use,
- and how successful they are so that you emulate what works and avoid what does not.

We always advise our clients, who are serious about online marketing, to invest into Online Competitive Intelligence (such as link and search term intelligence) in order to better understand the online competitive environment they are in or want to enter. Check out the Competitive Intelligence we recommend by visiting www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

4. AUTOMATING YOUR SITE

The question we get the most is: How do I begin creating my Web site?
Many people who don't have a site are starting to realize that because of the low-cost of creating and maintaining a site, they should have one.
And, in many cases, people that already have a site, realize that they need to redesign it to make it more effective. Or, they want to re-do their site so that they have more control over their content instead of having to pay for someone else to make every little change.

Now before we get started, we realize that we are discussing the do-it-yourself option, and that you might not have the time or energy or interest in developing or running your own site. In that case, visit our Web site, www.EyeCatcherInteractive.com , to find out more about how we create a custom site that fits your needs.

But if you do want to do it yourself, where do you start?

We have tried out dozens of solutions, and we've whittled it down to recommending either a basic Web Site Development Solution or a Blog Solution, both of which can be found at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

4.1 Web Site Design and Hosting

Blogs

A blog is short for Weblog, which is a Web site that displays in chronological order, the ongoing comments written by one or more individuals called bloggers. Think of a blog as an online diary where you can write about whatever you want. You can use a blog to promote a product, review products, express your political views, talk about your life, or whatever else you want to write about.

If you want a Web presence fast and inexpensive, we suggest a blog. There are many blogging tools, and it can be very confusing when trying to decide which one to use. Be careful as many of blogging companies don't provide very good customer service. For our latest recommendation, check out the Blog Solution at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Web Site

There are literally thousands of Web design and development tools out there. In our ongoing research, we look for Web solutions that meet three basic criteria: effective, easy-to-use, and inexpensive.

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There are some Web site solutions that are free. How can the companies that provide these sites afford to give you the tools free? Well, with these free sites, you typically don't have too much control over how your site will look, and the company will have the right to put advertising on your site. If you want to look professional, we recommend you stay away from such free solutions.

SiteBuildIt

After years of reviewing dozens of the top site-building solutions, we've come to the overwhelming conclusion that if you are serious about starting an online business, we suggest that you use SiteBuildItNow.

For one low annual cost, this solution provides you with:

- **A Web address**, which begins with www. It's also known as a URL (uniform resource locator).

- The ability to **design your site** with hundreds of different templates from which you can choose from a huge variety of look-and-feels for your site. You can make it very corporate-looking if you want to project a serious image, or a very playful design if you want your business to have an image of fun. SiteBuildItNow provides you with tons of choices.

- **Site hosting**, which is a service you need to maintain your site on the Web. Hosting provides you with the computer file storage capacity and ability to display your site online.

- **Search engine optimization (SEO),** is an online marketing solution, which helps you choose the write keywords for your site pages, place them correctly on your pages, submit them to the search engines like Google and Yahoo, so that when people search for your type of product or service online, they find you. It's basically a methodology that enables you to get traffic – visitors – to your site without having to pay for them.

- **Visitor tracking**, which is an easy way to see how many people visited your site, the pages they were interested in, and how long they stay on your site. This information is invaluable. If you know what people are interested in – and when people leave your site – you can change your site on an ongoing basis so you can try to keep people on your site and direct them to places that will help you sell your product and service rather than having them click away.

This is just the basic functionality of this solution. We can't possibly cover all the marketing tools that they've pulled together in their overall site-building solution – there are just too many – and SiteBuildItNow does a great job of explaining it all if

you just check out their site by looking at Web Site Development Solution on our recommendations page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

So, in conclusion, SiteBuildItNow is the only all-in-one site-building, site-hosting, and site-marketing tool that we have tested, used consistently with much success, and therefore can endorse wholeheartedly. The tool enables anyone with a small business to build – but more importantly, market - a professional, popular, and profitable business.

Site Design Solutions

Now, even though SiteBuildItNow provides you with what we think are quality design templates that are sufficient to launch a professional-looking site, we have been asked for suggestions on other design tools.

SiteBuildItNow allows you to use popular Web design programs like Dreamweaver (www.Dreamweaver.com) to have more control over the way your site looks. Again, this might be overkill for you, but you should know that it is an option. You could design your site in Dreamweaver and then overlay that look onto the powerful "backend" solution of SiteBuildItNow, which will provide you with its full suite of marketing solutions. It's extremely flexible.

You also can use pre-made Web site design templates as an intermediate solution. Such templates are not as complex as using Dreamweaver, but provide you with more designs than SiteBuildItNow.

Just like overlaying Dreamweaver designs on your SiteBuildItNow site, you can overlay a cool looking template with Flash designs or other special effects. (Flash is a program that enables you to create animation on your Web site.)

For the Design Template Solution we suggest, visit our recommendations page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Also, instead of hiring a designer to create your logo, which will be used on your site and on any offline promotions such as print brochures, stationary, business cards, etc., you might want to check out our recommended Logo Creator Solution by visiting our recommendation page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

For some of you, SiteBuildItNow's templates or other templates, might not be sufficient. If you really want a professional design or additional assistance with online marketing, visit our company's Web site at www.EyeCatcherInteractive.com, and we will design a custom Web site and/or online marketing program for you.

Buying Domain Names

If you are building a Web site from scratch, you need to choose and buy a Web address [also known as a domain name or URL (uniform resource locator)]. For example, our URL is www.EMarketingInABox.com.

Even though a solution like SiteBuildItNow allows you to choose a Web address as part of the cost of the Web development package, you may want to buy more URLs.

Why would you want to do this?

Well, imagine that your company's name is Joseph Smyth Corporation. You may want to buy many different URLs so that if people type in different versions of your company name, they will find you. You may want www.JosephSmythCorporation.com, www.JoeSmyth.com, www.JoeSmith.com, www.JoeSmythCorp.com, and any other combination that you think you should own, including misspellings.

Don't go crazy buying tons of URLs, but don't be cheap about this either as the cost of a .com domain is only around $ 10. Many of our clients didn't listen to our advice on this, and decided to only buy one URL, only to regret it later, when someone else snapped up related URLs.

Once you have these multiple URLs, you can redirect them all to your own main site – or various sites if it is appropriate – by following the simple instructions provided to you by your Domain Name Provider. So when someone types one of your URLs into a browser, you can send them to whichever Web site you want to.

For our recommended Domain Name Provider, check out www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

4.2 Basics of Site Content and Copywriting

Although design is important to present your company as professional, we suggest that you focus more on what your Web site says (the words on the page) rather than how it looks.

Too many people spend lots of money on design when they should be using that money to invest in a copywriter who can really help you market your business by crafting effective writing for your site. If you need help copywriting, visit www.EyeCatcherInteractive.com for more information.

Here are the basic things that you want to write about on your site:

Who We Are or **About Us** – you want to present yourself or your team. Write short biographies that will build your credibility. We also suggest that you put up professional photos of you and your team alongside your bios. People surfing the Web might be a little more comfortable if they see that there is a real face behind an otherwise-anonymous Web site. Remember, you are trying to build credibility through having a Web site. If you would like to see how we did it, visit the About the Authors page on our website – www.eMarketingInaBox.com.com/Bios.

What We Do – explain the products and services that you offer, and how they will benefit your prospects. For more on this, see the next section, *Basics of Copywriting*.

Our Clients – list some of your previous clients if possible. If you are a new business and don't have any clients yet, you might want to either skip this section, or explain the types of clients that you hope to service. So you might say that you provide your service to the financial industry, the healthcare industry, etc.

Case Studies – again, if you are new, you might not have a section like this, but if you do have clients, show prospects how you have helped others like them. Make sure you get permission from your clients to put their names in the case studies or else just say something like: "We helped a major financial institution by…."

Contact Us – make sure you put down a street address, emails, phone numbers. Some companies we've worked with want to remain anonymous and only provide an email address. We suggest against this. Again, you want to show that there are real people behind your site. It is the most powerful way to build credibility on the vast unknown desert of the Web. And consider making your contact information available on every page of your site – in a footer (a simple line at the bottom of every page of your site.) To see how we did it, go to www.eMarketingInaBox.com and scroll all the way to the bottom of any page.

Basics of Copywriting

The biggest mistake we see people making on their Web sites is not spending enough time on their copy (the words on the pages).

Part of the problem is that they spend their time – and the space on their pages – promoting themselves, boasting about how great they are and flexing their muscles about how they provide the best customer service.

This is all wrong.

What you should be doing is showing your prospective customers that you know what their problems, their pains, and their fears are, and how you can help them solve those problems, ease their pains, and calm those fears.

Of course, as we've said above, you should display: (1) testimonials – good things that your customers have to say about you; (2) case studies – to show that you've solved other people's problems in powerful and measurable ways; and (3) your and/or your team's biographies, so that you can show that you have good work experience, training, and education that can convince a prospective customer that they should check you out further.

But, you should mainly focus on your prospective customer.

How do you do that?

Think of this simple formula. Say:

"We can do X for you, so that you can achieve Y."

For example, if you are a Web designer, say something like: "We can design your site so that it looks good and increases the number of people who call you to ask you about your products or services."

This is a concrete, measurable benefit. The key term here is "so that". Your product or service will do something for them so that they can, for example, save time, money, and/or energy.

For professional help in crafting your message, visit us at www.EyeCatcherInteractive.com.

4.3 Shopping-Cart Solutions

Here, we are talking about the online equivalent of the supermarket cart. You place your merchandise in the cart and then check out when you are all finished.

Just as there are many tools out there with which you can build your Web site, there are many shopping-cart solutions for those of you who are selling products like books, e-books, teddy-bears, clothing or any other tangible thing that you ship out to someone – as opposed to those of you who provide a service like plumbing or graphic design.

One of the best ways to increase the number of sales is to minimize what is called "shopping-cart abandonment." Many people will start to put things into your electronic shopping cart but then decide not to buy. Many studies of online shopping behavior have proven this.

So you want to make sure that you have a shopping cart that minimizes such abandonment. It must be easy for your customers to use, and easy for you to manage.

For our suggested shopping-cart solution, go to www.WhatWeSuggest.com and check out the Shopping-Cart Solution.

Here are some of the features we look for in shopping-cart solutions that we recommend:

- Secure payment processing so that your shoppers feel confident that their identities and credit-card information won't be stolen online;

- No software to add – as we discussed in the business model section earlier, we prefer ASP solutions – application service providers enable you to "rent" the service without having to purchase software;

- Ability to accept payments in any currency, which is important in the global marketplace of the Internet;

- Inventory tracking to make your business easier to manage;

- Ability to customize your look-and-feel to match the rest of your site;

- Ability to run multiple Web sites from the same account to keep your costs down and to make it easier to manage multiple sites;

- Capability to sell digital products so that you can sell high-profit electronic products like e-books or music files;

- Ability to have recurring billing, in case you run a membership site or subscription site where you need to bill people periodically, like monthly or annually, without having to remember to do so for each customer;

- Affiliate program capability, so that you can have others help you sell your products and give them incentives to do so by providing them with a commission;

- Ability to track every aspect of your online and offline marketing so that you can see where you should invest your marketing dollars so that you get the highest return on your investment;

- Offline credit card processing so that you can take orders wherever you are or if someone prefers to call you instead of ordering online; and,

- Good support, meaning a toll-free number, relatively long customer-service hours (not just 9 am to 5 pm), and knowledgeable, helpful people who will answer your questions when you need assistance.

So again, for our latest recommendation, check out the Shopping-Cart Solution at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

4.4 Autoresponders

Autoresponders are absolutely necessary to automate your site's functionality so that you can concentrate on marketing rather than fulfilling orders and requests for information from those who visit your site.

An autoresponder is an email solution that automatically sends a reply to an email message.

Autoresponders are used to send back boilerplate information on a topic or an electronic document, such as an e-book or e-brochure, without having the person requesting the information or product do anything more than email a particular address.

Plus, you don't have to do anything. It's all automated.

Autoresponders are also used to send a confirmation that a message has been received – in other words, you can send emails that thank people for ordering or telling them when they will receive their orders.

For our recommendation, check out Autoresponder Solution on our recommendation page, www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Tools to Increase Conversion

As we will discuss in the following sections, after automating your site so that you can effectively handle all the prospect leads that come to your site, you must reach out to potential customers via several different marketing tactics.

In some cases, you may be paying for traffic, that is, paying other Web sites to send you prospects through advertising on their sites. Or else, you might be using what is known as pay-per-click advertising with Google, Yahoo!, or other online advertising networks, which you can also pay in order to receive visitors to your site.

So before you go spending time, energy and money on driving people to your site, you want to make sure that you do everything you can so that you can convert your browsing visitors into paying customers.

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4.5 Digital Salespeople

One of the coolest new trends we're seeing in the marketplace is the use of digital salespeople on Web sites. Digital salespeople are animated speaking characters, which can be easily added to your Web site to pitch your products. They are eye-catching and have proven to be very effective in converting leads into customers.

There are several companies providing this type of application. Following are some of the features we suggest you look for when choosing a digital salesperson:

- Subscription-based service so you don't have to make a huge investment upfront in order to test whether a digital salesperson will be effective for you or not;

- Ability to create a wide array of animated speaking characters – men, women, young, old, and even animals depending upon what it is you are selling;

- Easy-to-use tools for you to design, manage and publish your digital salesperson;

- No knowledge of computer programming needed;

- Ability to create audio messages for your characters to speak using recorded audio, uploaded audio, computer generated speech and even professional voice-over talent; and,

- Ability to add artificial intelligence applications so that your characters seem more life-like and thus are more effective in selling your product or service.

New digital salesperson applications are coming out rapidly. This is one application that we search for on a weekly basis to see if there are better ones in the marketplace. Right now, for our recommended Digital Salesperson Solution, visit www.WhatWeSuggest.com and look under Digital Salesperson Solution.

4.6 Landing Page Optimization

A landing page is a page within a Web site which is where a person "lands" after clicking on your banner ad or sponsored link. It is the page that you are sending all your prospects to in order to try to convert them into buyers.

Too often, before we work with them, we see our clients spending significant time and money driving people to their site, but next to no time thinking about which pages are most effective to send their clients to.

Keep in mind that it is not often effective to send a person to your site's homepage unless that is where you initiate the action that you want them to perform. The most-desired action might be for them to make a purchase, sign up for an email newsletter or any other actionable objective of your campaign.

Therefore, make sure you are not just being lazy and sending them to your homepage when another page in your site is more appropriate to be the landing page.

Also, many marketers do not take the time to modify and test their landing pages so as to make sure that they are using the right words, offers, images, and page structure that most effectively turns visitors into cash.

So it might be helpful to think of your online marketing campaigns in two parts. First, you are pitching to your prospects with the actual marketing activities, reaching out to people in order to pull them into your site. But once you get them there, you need to capture and captivate them to do business with you or else they'll slip through your fingers and end up on somebody else's site, doing business with them.

So landing page optimization is the practice of preparing your site to receive and convert your prospects most effectively. You should definitely look into investing in a Landing Page Optimization Solution. Such tools perform a variety of essential activities range from helping you design an effective landing page; writing powerful copy; creating effective thank-you pages; testing appropriately; and modifying your landing pages based on the feedback from your testing.

This is one of the most important aspects of effective marketing online – and sadly, it is most often overlooked. If you don't seriously look into this type of tool, you are missing out on huge opportunities. Slight modifications in your pages might prove to increase your conversion rate by huge amounts, thus making the small investment in the tool much more than worthwhile.

For our Landing Page Optimization Solution, go to www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

5. REACHING OUT TO PROSPECTS

Okay, so you've figured out your business model(s), explored the competition, determined your marketing strategy, automated your site, and now, you're ready to make money. Again, it's all about driving traffic to your site.

How do you attract quality traffic quickly, cheaply, and easily? Well, hang on, and we'll review the top tactics you need to employ in order to get visitors that will convert to cash.

Here is an overview of the marketing tactics we will cover:

- Online Public Relations

- Email Newsletters

- Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising

- Offline Promotions

5.1 Online Public Relations

If you had a choice between getting a full-page story written about your company or paying for a full-page advertisement for your products/services in a publication, which would you choose?

Any marketer will tell you to go with the story that someone else writes (or seems to write) about your company because it's more credible in the eyes of prospects than if you buy an ad, which is seen as blatant self-promotion.

Just as with marketing in the offline world, you should spend a significant amount of time on public relations, no matter what your product is.

There are plenty of books out there on how to write good press releases. For some we suggest, visit our Books and Other Publications section at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Basically, you want to make sure that your press release is newsworthy, interesting, not too sales-oriented, and controversial, if possible, so that you can cut through the clutter and get some attention.

For the best way to distribute your press releases online so that they have the best shot at getting picked up by a journalist or a blogger and written about, check out the Online Public Relations Solution at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

In addition to using an online press release service, you will also want to blast out press releases directly to media contacts (publications, radio stations, TV stations). The best way to do this is to invest in an electronic fax service, which allows you to email press releases quickly and easily. For our recommended solution, visit www.WhatWeSuggest.com and look under Electronic Fax Solution.

5.2 Email Newsletter Solutions

You might want to use the tactic of email marketing to keep in constant contact with your prospects and customers. As any good marketer knows, repetition is the key to maximizing sales. We're not just saying you should send out sales pitches all the time, but rather send out email newsletters with good helpful advice to your prospects that helps you build credibility among your prospects.

Many marketing studies point to The Rule of Seven, meaning that you must hit your prospects on average with seven communications before you get them to buy. Remember, we live in a cluttered world with lots of advertising messages battering your prospects every minute of every day. To cut through that clutter, you should look into sending email newsletters.

We recommend using an Email Newsletter Solution that is:

- Simple for you to manage;

- Helps you stay out of trouble with the law by avoiding breaking the rules of the CAN-SPAM Act, which is legislation that protects consumers from spam (unwanted email);

- Enables you to customize the design of your newsletters; and,

- Lets you track all communication and consumer click-through behavior so that you can maximize the return on your investment for your marketing investments of money, time and effort.

For the Email Newsletter Solution we recommend, check out www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

5.3 Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising

As we discussed in the Advertising Model section above, pay-per-click (PPC) advertising [or search engine marketing (SEM) as it is sometime known] is a popular way to buy visitors (traffic) to your site.

The popularity of PPC advertising has skyrocketed in the past several years in part because you can easily track the return on your marketing investment and

also due to awareness created by the success of Google and Yahoo!, which run the two largest PPC advertising networks, which link traffic buyers (advertisers) to traffic sellers (sites that want to make money via the Advertising Model.)

We've already discussed how you can use the Advertising Model to make money as a Web site owner. Again, if you have a Web site with considerable traffic, you may be able to get advertisers to buy advertising space on your site. But in this section, let's look at it from the other side of the fence. If you want to drive traffic to your site, you are the advertiser, paying to attract visitors to your site.

Think Like Your Customer

You learned in your Marketing 101 class that you have to focus on the customer and meet their needs, solve their problems, ease their pain.

When people enter keywords into a search box like the one at Google.com, Yahoo.com or any other search engine, they have a pain. They have a need. They have a question that they want answered. They want to be served the solution in the form of information as to how they can resolve their problem. They are saying: "I'm searching for…." or simply "I need…."

Your job as a marketer is to put yourself in their shoes. You must ask yourself: What keywords are my ideal prospects going to type into their search boxes?

As we already explained, marketing strategy is about targeting and positioning. In the section on Automating Your Site, we discussed positioning your product or service to maximize the number of visitors that actually buy from you. But first, you must get the right kinds of visitors to your site. Visitors who are most likely to buy the product/service you are offering. How do you get such "qualified" visitors to your site? You have to select the right keywords.

If you don't select the right keywords, you simply won't get the traffic you want to your Web site. You won't get a chance to show that brilliant advertising copy that will motivate prospects to click through to your site, read your unbeatable offer, and then buy your product/service.

Building Your Keyword List

To start building your keyword list, you simply sit down (either alone – or better yet, with a group of colleagues), start brainstorming about the kinds of keywords that are relevant to your product/service, and then jot them down on a pad of paper or in a Excel Spreadsheet.

Start by thinking about what you are selling and then think of relevant words that people might search on in order to find your types of products and services.

Think of keywords as the bait that will lure prospective customers to your Web site. The keywords that you want to bid on are appetizers that you are hoping will whet the appetites of the right kinds of visitors – either visitors who are ready to buy now – or browsers that you can quickly convert to customers.

As in any brainstorming, it is best not to limit your thinking at this stage. Include any and all suggestions. You want to avoid missing any keywords that might prove to be valuable.

Your goals are to maximize visitors that buy from you and minimize visitors that don't buy from you. Later, when you start testing your keywords, you will see that the actual results of your campaign will determine which keywords work and which don't.

Measurement eliminates argument. Keywords that you might think are ridiculously irrelevant at this stage might prove to be winners later and vice versa.

Err on the side of having more keywords rather than less. And, as we will discuss in more depth later, don't just think in terms of one-word or even two-word keywords. You want to "own" niches, so you want to think in terms of "keyword phrases" so that you can dominate when a searcher looks for something very specific that is relevant to what you have to sell.

You might find that "red leashes for German shepherds" doesn't get any clicks, but don't make that determination yourself. Don't assume anything. That's what's great about the search engines. They'll tell you in a very cold and calculated manner if you don't get any clicks or conversions.

So assume nothing and test everything. The more keywords, the merrier.

Also, you will find that general keywords will probably be high-priced. You are looking for relatively low-cost keywords that convert well, and by testing, you will be able to home in on that subset of keywords where you should be spending the lion's share of your PPC budget.

So it's okay to test general terms, but spend more time looking for highly niched keyword phrases. Remember, you want to get rich in a niche. A general rule is that browsers are more likely to search with general terms, whereas people closer to the buying stage tend to be more specific in the terms they search on.

By choosing more specific keywords, you are more likely to attract higher-quality prospects at a relatively lower cost. You might not get much traffic on these more specific keyword phrases, but the visitors you do get are more likely to be ready to buy.

Remember, when building your initial keyword list, you are doing little more than guessing. Later on, by using the right online tools and performing the right analysis, science will replace guesswork.

Expanding Your List with Keyword Suggestion Tools

Choosing the terms that make up your initial keyword list is easy. And because it is so easy, it is often the downfall of many inexperienced marketers.

Many of our clients have had initial success with PPC advertising but then they get lulled into a comfort zone in which they think that they've covered all of their keyword bases. Usually, they make a big push to create a list without ever revisiting it. After creating the initial list, laziness or busyness usually takes over. This is a big mistake.

Most search engines provide keyword suggestion tools, which will generate related terms for any keyword you type in. So, after you brainstorm in order to come up with a list of common-sense, obvious terms that you should be bidding on, then use free tools – like Yahoo! Search Marketing's Keyword Selector Tool, which you can find at www.Overture.com, then click "Visit The Resource Center" and then Keyword Selector Tool. Or go directly to http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/rc/srch/ and click on the Keyword Selector Tool to expand your list a bit more by typing in a relevant keyword you have thought of yourself, and then let the engine provide you with a list of related words for you to try.

Take advantage of Yahoo!'s free tool but you might also want to check out paid keyword tools, which will probably give you more - and more relevant - keywords to use in your campaign. For our suggestion on a Keyword Selection Tool, check out www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Summary of Keyword Lists

Generating your keyword list is the first crucial step in launching your pay-per-click advertising campaign. Once you have an initial list, you must constantly monitor and modify it to keep up with the ever-changing search landscape.

When generating your list, keep in mind that you want to err on the side of testing more keywords rather than less. Also, you want to make sure to focus on multi-word keywords (keyword phrases), which are more likely to attract qualified searchers to your site.

Although you will start by generate an initial list through brainstorming on your own, you also should take advantage of the many free and paid keyword expansion tools available through the search engines and third-party vendors.

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Buying Keywords on Google and Yahoo!

So you might be asking what you do with all these keywords in your keyword list. Well, you want to bid on them and buy them.

What does that mean? Well, just say you are selling children's books. You might want to buy the term "children's books" so that when someone types that phrase into a search engine like Google or Yahoo!, your ad comes up on the right column (Google) or elsewhere (Yahoo!) on the search engine results page.

You only pay whatever you agreed to pay per click when you sign up on Google, Yahoo! or other search engines like MIVA, Ask.com, and others.

If you are new to pay-per-click advertising, we recommend that you visit the advertiser sections of Google and Yahoo! and read about how to participate in these programs.

For the best deals on PPC advertising, visit Pay-Per-Click Advertising Networks on our recommendation page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

5.4 Offline Marketing Tactics

You are starting a business online, but don't forget that many of your prospects will never find you on the Web, and many of them might not even be on the Web. So you have to do offline marketing promotions as well.

Just think traditional marketing. You want to make sure that you have a good professional logo (again, visit our recommendations page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com to see the Logo Creator Solution we suggest).

Once you have your logo, which includes your Web address and email address so that people can easily contact you, plaster it everywhere. Make business cards, postcards, bumperstickers, T-shirts, whatever you can think of.

For our recommended Promotional Items Provider, that can create coffee mugs, pens, sweatshirts and other clothing with your logo on it, check out the provider we suggest on our recommendations page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

For our recommended printer, check out Print Provider on our recommendation page at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Put your Web address and email everywhere – in your email signature file at the bottom of every email you send out, at the end of articles you write, on signs that you put in the windows of your car.

Think like an advertiser. Get your brand out into the world to drive people to your site. You never know who might see your logo, visit your site, and buy something from you.

5.5 FREE Online Tools That Will Make Your Life Easier

LogMeIn.com

Just say you are starting a business on the side, and you want to keep all of the files for your business on your computer at home instead of risking having someone find them on your computer at work. We certainly don't recommend working on your side-business during work hours, but in case you have to access your files at home, we recommend using LogMeIn.com, which enables you to go onto your desktop at home and open files. LogMeIn is a great tool that will give you access to your files from any computer as long as you maintain an Internet connection on your home computer.

FolderShare.com

Like LogMeIn.com, FolderShare.com (which is a free Microsoft product) is a file-sharing solution. In this case, you can enable others to access your files. So if you have a business partner and want to keep your digital documents in one place that you can both access, use FolderShare.com. You'll see that it's much more efficient than having to email documents back and forth all the time.

FreeConferenceCall.com

If you have more than one partner and need to have conference calls or if you need to have calls with prospects, check out FreeConferenceCall.com for unlimited free conference calls. Pretty cool.

ShortKeys.com

ShortKeys will save you huge amounts of time. If you have to type certain things over and over again, you can always cut and paste those paragraphs from a Word document, but check out ShortKeys.com, which allows you to insert whole paragraphs into whatever document or Web page you are typing, simply by pressing a few keys that you program in advance. Check it out.

Answers.com

Unlike Google or other search engines which will give you hundreds of thousands of pages worth of results, Answers.com provides you with, well, answers. If you want to know about George Washington, type that into Answers.com and you'll get the facts quickly and easily since Answers.com has licensing arrangements with credible sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other information sources in a wide variety of areas.

Serialpreneur.com

If you're new to business and want tips on what to do, and maybe more importantly, what not to do, go to www.Serialpreneur.com and download your free e-books. A serial entrepreneur (serialpreneur for short) is someone who has started many businesses successfully. And these are the types of people you want to learn from. Their advice is much more credible than someone who has maybe just had one successful business.

Books and Other Publications We Suggest

Obviously, we can't cover everything here. If you want to hire us (or an expert in our marketing solutions provider network) to consult to you, contact us by visiting www.eMarketingInaBox.com/ContactUs.

Otherwise, go to Books and Other Publications at www.WhatWeSuggest.com for books and other publications you should read if you are serious about succeeding online.

6. GLOSSARY OF SEO AND ONLINE MARKETING TERMINOLOGY

Algorithm: A set of rules that a search engine uses to rank the listings contained within its index, in response to a particular query. No search engine reveals exactly how its own algorithm works, to protect itself from competitors and those who wish to spam the search engine. Source: Did-It.com

Algorithmic Results: see Organic Listings.

Backlinks: All the links pointing at a particular web page. Also called inbound links. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Banned: When pages are removed from a search engine's index specifically because the search engine has deemed them to be spamming or violating some type of guidelines.

Clickthrough Rate (CTR): The percentage of those clicking on a link out of the total number who see the link. For example, imagine 10 people do a web search. In response, they see links to a variety of web pages. Three of the 10 people all choose one particular link. That link then has a 30 percent clickthrough rate. Also called CTR. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Cloaking: In terms of search engine marketing, this is the act of getting a search engine to record content for a URL that is different than what a searcher will ultimately see. It can be done in many technical ways. Several search engines have explicit rules against unapproved cloaking. Those violating these guidelines might find their pages penalized or banned from a search engine's index. As for approved cloaking, this generally only happens with search engines offering paid inclusion program. Anyone offering cloaking services should be able to demonstrate explicit approval from a search engine about what they intend to do. If not, then they should then have explained the risks inherent of unapproved cloaking.

Contextual Link Inventory: To supplement their business models, certain text-link advertising networks have expanded their network distribution to include "contextual inventory". Most vendors of "search engine traffic" have expanded the definition of Search Engine Marketing to include this contextual inventory. Contextual or content inventory is generated when listings are displayed on pages of Web sites (usually not search engines), where the written content on the page indicates to the ad-server that the page is a good match to specific keywords and phrases. Often this matching method is validated by measuring the number of times a viewer clicks on the displayed ad.

Conversion Rate: The relationship between visitors to a web site and actions consider to be a "conversion," such as a sale or request to receive more information. Often expressed as a percentage. If a web site has 50 visitors and

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10 of them convert, then the site has a 20 percent conversion rate. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Cost Per Click (CPC): System where an advertiser pays an agreed amount for each click someone makes on a link leading to their web site. Also known as CPC. Source: Webmaster World Forums

CPC: see Cost Per Click.

CPM: System where an advertiser pays an agreed amount for the number of times their ad is seen by a consumer, regardless of the consumer's subsequent action. Heavily used in print, broadcasting and direct marketing, as well as with online banner ad sales. CPM stands for "cost per thousand," since ad views are often sold in blocks of 1,000. The M in CPM is Latin for thousand. Source: Webmaster World Forums and Did-It.com

Crawler: Component of search engine that gather listings by automatically "crawling" the web. A search engine's crawler (also called a spider or robot), follows links to web pages. It makes copies of the web pages found and stores these in the search engine's index.

CTR: see Clickthrough Rate.

Delisting: When pages are removed from a search engines index. This may happen because they have been banned or for other reasons, such as an accidental glitch on the search engine's part. Source: Adventive

Directories: A type of search engine where listings are gathered through human efforts, rather than by automated crawling of the web. In directories, web sites are often reviewed, summarized in about 25 words and placed in a particular category.

Doorway Page: A web page created expressly in hopes of ranking well for a term in a search engine's non-paid listings and which itself does not deliver much information to those viewing it. Instead, visitors will often see only some enticement on the doorway page leading them to other pages (i.e., "Click Here To Enter), or they may be automatically propelled quickly past the doorway page. With cloaking, they may never see the doorway page at all. Several search engines have guidelines against doorway pages, though they are more commonly allowed in through paid inclusion programs. Also referred to as bridge pages, gateway pages and jump pages, among other names.

Gateway Page: see Doorway Page.

Graphical Search Inventory: Banners, and other types of advertising units which can be synchronized to search keywords. Includes pop-ups, browser toolbars and rich media.

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Index: The collection of information a search engine has that searchers can query against. With crawler-based search engines, the index is typically copies of all the web pages they have found from crawling the web. With human-powered directories, the index contains the summaries of all web sites that have been categorized.

Inbound Link: See Backlinks.

Keywords: See Search Terms.

Landing Page: The specific web page that a visitor ultimately reaches after clicking a search engine listing. Marketers attempt to improve conversion rates by testing various landing page creative, which encompasses the entire user experience including navigation, layout and copy. Source: Did-It.com

Link Popularity: A raw count of how "popular" a page is based on the number of backlinks it has. It does not factor in link context or link quality, which are also important elements in how search engines make use of links to impact rankings.

Link Text: The text that is contained within a link. For example, search engine is a link that contains the link text "search engine."

Listings: The information that appears on a search engine's results page in response to a search.

Meta Search Engine: A search engine that gets listings from two or more other search engines, rather than through its own efforts.

Meta Tags: Information placed in a web page not intended for users to see but instead which typically passes information to search engine crawlers, browser software and some other applications.

Meta Description Tag: Allows page authors to say how they would like their pages described when listed by search engines. Not all search engines use the tag.

Meta Keywords Tag: Allows page authors to add text to a page to help with the search engine ranking process. Not all search engines use the tag.

Meta Robots Tag: Allows page authors to keep their web pages from being indexed by search engines, especially helpful for those who cannot create robots.txt files. The Robots Exclusion page provides official details.

Organic Listings: Listings that search engines do not sell (unlike paid listings). Instead, sites appear solely because a search engine has deemed it editorially important for them to be included, regardless of payment. Paid inclusion content

is also often considered "organic" even though it is paid for. This is because that content usually appears intermixed with unpaid organic results.

Outbound Links: Links on a particular web page leading to other web pages, whether they are within the same web site or other web sites.

Paid Inclusion: Advertising program where pages are guaranteed to be included in a search engine's index in exchange for payment, though no guarantee of ranking well is typically given. For example, Looksmart is a directory that lists pages and sites, not based on position but based on relevance. Marketers pay to be included in the directory, on a CPC basis or per-URL fee basis, with no guarantee of specific placement. Also see XML Feeds. Source: Did-It.com

PPC: Stands for pay-per-click and means the same as cost-per-click. See Cost Per Click.

Paid Listings: Listings that search engines sell to advertisers, usually through paid placement or paid inclusion programs. In contrast, organic listings are not sold.

Pay-for-Performance: Term popularized by some search engines as a synonym for pay-per-click, stressing to advertisers that they are only paying for ads that "perform" in terms of delivering traffic, as opposed to CPM-based ads, where ads cost money, even if they don't generate a click.

Pay-Per-Click: see Cost Per Click.

Paid Placement: Advertising program where listings are guaranteed to appear in response to particular search terms, with higher ranking typically obtained by paying more than other advertisers. Paid placement listings can be purchased from a portal or a search network. Search networks are often set up in an auction environment where keywords and phrases are associated with a cost-per-click (CPC) fee. Overture and Google are the largest networks, but MSN and other portals sometimes sell paid placement listings directly as well. Portal sponsorships are also a type of paid placement.

Position: See Rank.

Query: See Search Terms.

Rank: How well a particular web page or web site is listed in a search engine results. For example, a web page about apples may be listed in response to a query for "apples." However, "rank" indicates where exactly it was listed -- be it on the first page of results, the second page or perhaps the 200th page. Alternatively, it might also be said to be ranked first among all results, or 12th, or 111th. Overall, saying a page is "listed" only means that it can be found within a

search engine in response to a query, not that it necessarily ranks well for that query. Also called position.

Reciprocal Link: A link exchange between two sites. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Registration: See Submission.

Results Page: After a user enters a search query, the page that is displayed, is call the results page. Sometimes it may be called SERPs, for "search engine results page." Source: Webmaster World Forums

Robot: see Crawler.

Robots.txt: A file used to keep web pages from being indexed by search engines. The Robots Exclusion page provides official details.

ROI: Stands for "Return On Investment" and refers to the percentage of profit or revenue generated from a specific activity. For example, one might measure the ROI of a paid listing campaign by adding up the total amount spent on the campaign (say $200) versus the amount generated from it in revenue (say $1,000). The ROI would then be 500 percent. Source: Did-It.com

Search Engine: Any service generally designed to allow users to search the web or a specialized database of information. Web search engines generally have paid listings and organic listings. Organic listings typically come from crawling the web, though often human-powered directory listings are also optionally offered. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Search Engine Marketing: The act of marketing a web site via search engines, whether this be improving rank in organic listings, purchasing paid listings or a combination of these and other search engine-related activities.

Search Engine Optimization: The act of altering a web site so that it does well in the organic, crawler-based listings of search engines. In the past, has also been used as a term for any type of search engine marketing activity, though now the term search engine marketing itself has taken over for this. Also called SEO.

Search Terms: The words (or word) a searcher enters into a search engine's search box. Also used to refer to the terms a search engine marketer hopes a particular page will be found for. Also called keywords, query terms or query.

SEM: Acronym for search engine marketing and may also be used to refer to a person or company that does search engine marketing (i.e.., "They're an SEM firm).

SEO: Acronym for search engine optimization and often also used to refer to a person or company that does search engine optimization (i.e., "They do SEO").

SERPS: see Results Page.

Shopping Search: Shopping search engines allow shoppers to look for products and prices in a search environment. Premium placement can be purchased on some shopping search indices.

Spam: Any search engine marketing method that a search engine deems to be detrimental to its efforts to deliver relevant, quality search results. Some search engines have written guidelines about what they consider to be spamming, but ultimately any activity a particular search engine deems harmful may be considered spam, whether or not there are published guidelines against it. Example of spam include the creation of nonsensical doorway pages designed to please search engine algorithms rather than human visitors or heavy repetition of search terms on a page (i.e. the search terms are used tens or hundreds or times in a row). These are only two of many examples. Determining what is spam is complicated by the fact that different search engines have different standards. A particular search engine may even have different standards of what's allowed, depending on whether content is gathered through organic methods versus paid inclusion. Also referred to as spamdexing. Source: Webmaster World Forums

Spider: See Crawler.

Submission: The act to submitting a URL for inclusion into a search engine's index. Unless done through paid inclusion, submission generally does not guarantee listing. In addition, submission does not help with rank improvement on crawler-based search engines unless search engine optimization efforts have been taken. Submission can be done manually (i.e., you fill out an online form and submit) or automated, where a software program or online service may process the forms behind the scenes.

XML Feeds: A form of paid inclusion where a search engine is "fed" information about pages via XML, rather than gathering that information through crawling actual pages. Marketers can pay to have their pages included in a spider based search index either annually per URL or on a CPC basis based on an XML document representing each page on the client site. New media types are being introduced into paid inclusion, including graphics, video, audio, and rich media.

7. CHOOSING THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE FOR YOUR E-BUSINESS

Too many small businesses – and especially, online businesses - begin operations without first thinking through their corporate structure. We've seen it all too many times. You have wild success in business, only to be sued by someone that blindsides you because you didn't take the time to fill out the simple paperwork and spend the little bit of money necessary to ensure that you limit your liability.

This is especially important if you want to do business online where many competitors can be unscrupulous and new laws such as CAN-SPAM (Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing Act of 2003), which was designed to limit email spamming) are popping up continuously in order to regulate the Wild West of the Web.

So we'll spend a little bit of time on this subject since it's so important.

There are several legal issues you should look into when beginning a new business. Make sure you review your legal needs, including; trademarks, patents, copyrights, doing-business-as (DBA)/business names, and even personal legal issues that may impact your business, such as: divorce situations, wills, prenuptial agreements, power of attorney, and wills.

For these legal issues, we recommend that you use the service that you can find by checking out the Online Legal Resource that we suggest at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

One of the most important issues that you should handle first is deciding your corporate structure. For our recommendation on which company to use for this service, check out the Online Business Incorporation Service we have listed at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Business Law Basics

One of the most common questions we get is: Should I set my company up as an LLC (Limited Liability Company) or a regular corporation or just start as a sole proprietorship?

As you'll see, 90% of the time, we recommend you taking the time and spending the money to set up an LLC, but, as with everything in business – and in life – the one right answer is: It all depends.

It depends on your risk tolerance, the nature of your business, your financing structure, and many other issues.

For starters, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you need financing beyond what you can invest yourself or what you can get from friends, family, and your bank? That is, do you want investors as shareholders in your company?

- Do you want to maintain full control of your company or are you willing to give up some control in exchange for investments from others?

- Do you want to avoid double taxation, that is, at the corporate level and then at the individual level?

- Are you willing to live with the risk of liabilities that may arise from your doing business?

The answers to these questions will help you choose the right corporate structure that will ultimately fit your needs.

Here's an overview of the main options that you have. Please be very careful with this decision. We are not attorneys so we suggest you consult with one so that you make the right choice.

Sole Proprietorship

If you are starting a business more as a hobby, you'll probably want to avoid paying the fees necessary to incorporate. Many people start with a hobby and then try to grow it into a money-making venture. Or, you might have a relatively straight-forward business. You might be a graphic designer or Web site developer, who wants to just use the Web to generate leads for some extra income through your freelance work.

In this case, you might just want to keep separate business records, set up a business account and keep your business-related receipts so that you can write them off as expenses at tax time. You will want to pay self-employment taxes on

a regular basis so as to avoid penalties, and make sure to report all business-related income on your individual tax return.

The Upsides and Downsides of Sole Proprietorships

The quick-and-dirty benefits of sole proprietorships are that they are (1) easy to start, (2) low-cost, and you (3) avoid double taxation – that is, you do not have a business entity that is taxed separately from you as an individual.

But the upsides of sole proprietorships come with a potential cost. The main drawback of this structure is that you are personally liable for legal claims that may arise against your business. For example, if a customer decides to sue you for some reason, they can go after both your business *and* personal assets.

As you will see, we suggest that anyone who is serious about starting a money-making venture should invest in incorporation, especially since it is relatively low-cost and simple nowadays. This small investment is usually a good idea, especially when compared to the nightmare of being wiped out personally by problems caused by your business. So bottom line is that we suggest you invest upfront so that you can sleep better at night. It's worth it. Check out the Online Business Incorporation Service that we suggest you use at www.WhatWeRecommend.com.

Partnerships

Many people don't like to do it alone. They might just have a friend that they want to go into business with – or they need skills or money that another person can provide. In many cases, 1 + 1 = 3, meaning that, for example, you and a partner might be able to get much more done as a team than either of you can accomplish individually.

In this case, a sole proprietorship is not viable since more than one person will be involved in the business. Instead, you can form a partnership in which you and your partners are both considered business owners. Each partner will contribute time, money, and/or skills to the business, depending upon whatever arrangement you make among yourselves. Be careful to clearly delineate who is

responsible for what upfront because you want to avoid fighting later over how to share profits, assets, or losses.

General versus Limited Partnerships

There are two main types of partnerships – general and limited. In a general partnership, the partnership can buy and sell property, products and services as a separate legal entity. However, you and your partners must report income from the partnership on your individual tax returns.

As with sole proprietorships, the individuals in a general partnership are liable for all of the obligations of the partnership. There is no limitation on liability. Someone who decides to sue your partnership can go after both your and your partners' individual assets. Again, we do not suggest you form a partnership because of this liability issue.

Alternatively, you can form what is known as a limited partnership where the partners only risk what they agree to in their partnership contract when they first start the business. In many cases, a limited partnership is a much more viable option than a general partnership. However, in this case, we definitely suggest that you consult an attorney before signing such a contract.

C Corporations

If you want to avoid the risk of liability, you must form some type of corporation. Most start-ups will either incorporate themselves as S Corporations or Limited Liability Corporations. If you want to sell shares of stock in your business to obtain funding, you might want to consider forming a C Corporation. Most publicly-traded companies are formed as C Corporations, which means that they are legal entities separate from the owners, who are called shareholders or stockholders. These stockholders are not personally responsible for the fees, liabilities and losses of the business.

This might sound like a good choice, however keep in mind that C Corporations are relatively expensive to start and maintain. To become incorporated, you have to hire an attorney to ensure that you fill out all of the relevant documents for the state in which you are incorporating, and then you have to hold annual

stockholder meetings, and keep detailed records to avoid any legal or accounting problems.

And perhaps most importantly, stockholders of a C Corporation must pay taxes on the business profits at the corporate level and then again when they report their earnings as individuals. This is known as double taxation.

S Corporations

To avoid the double taxation issue, some choose to form an S Corporation. In this case, the profits of the business are what is known as "passed-through" to the individuals that own the corporation. Therefore, the owners only pay taxes once at the individual level. If you expect losses in the short-run, you might want to incorporate as an S Corporation since you will be able to report a loss on your personal tax returns and thus minimize the taxes you owe.

However, there are certain limitations of forming an S Corporation that you should be aware of. You must run your company on a fiscal calendar year, have less than 35 individual stockholders who must all be U.S. residents, and you can only issue one class of stock. There are other restrictions which you should review with an attorney before deciding to form an S Corporation.

Limited Liability Corporations – Our Recommendation

Even though we say that you should think about which corporate structure is best for you, most of the time, we suggest that our clients form Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs). Think of an LLC as a corporate form that is the best of all possible worlds. It is relatively simple and inexpensive to form and maintain, and it provides the owner or owners with limited liability.

There are no rules as to who can be a member or manager of an LLC. You can own it by yourself; you can have family members as co-owners; and you can even have other corporations as the owners of an LLC. It is very flexible. Like a C Corporation., an LLC is a legal entity separate from the owners so your personal assets are protected from anyone who might decide to sue the LLC.

Also, an LLC enables you to avoid double taxation. As an owner, you only pay taxes on the profits that are distributed to you, which you then declare on your individual tax return.

Even though we always recommend speaking to your attorney and/or accountant first, if you want a do-it-yourself solution, check out the Online Business Incorporation Service that we are currently recommending at www.WhatWeSuggest.com.

Taxes and Bookkeeping

No matter which corporate structure you decide to adopt for your online venture, you need to keep your records straight. First-time entrepreneurs, who most often try to handle their own bookkeeping, should use off-the-shelf accounting software packages, which will make your life much easier and will help you get organized right from the start. For our recommended accounting solution, go to www.WhatWeSuggest.com and check out the Accounting Software Solution.