




A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS ON THE INTERNET

*What you should know
BEFORE taking your business
to the international marketplace
via the internet*



A BEGINNER'S "HOW-TO" GUIDE TO PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS ON THE INTERNET

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Why Should you Listen to Us?

Lighthouse Press has been operating since 1989; one of the owners has been in the printing/design business for 33 years, and our web experts have been in the business of website design and development for the past 6 years. No one person can hope to be expert at all aspects of the internet so we make a point of staying at the front edge of the technology by studying and applying the principles taught by the leaders in each area of expertise.

This booklet is a compilation of resources and intelligence gathered over the past few years; we sincerely hope that you will find it useful and enlightening.

Overview

This guide will give you an outline to follow so you can set up your own successful online business. It is meant as a blueprint for success, pointing you in the direction you need to go, listing the things you need to think about BEFORE you start to build a website and offering you links (domain names/addresses) to the resources you will find useful along the way. The resource list at the back of the guide includes eBooks, articles, white papers and books which offer in-depth explanations of the topics covered in this guide.

No one can expect to operate a business without having a plan and a focus (an outcome) and without putting in the time to research their area of interest. Wouldn't you rather know ahead of time if your business has a fantastic chance of success or if it's doomed to failure?

This guide can help you clarify your thinking so you know exactly what steps you need to take to make your business a success.

You will discover:

- How the Internet works
- How to build an efficient and useful website
- How to establish which products/services you should offer
- How to determine the best possible market for your products/services
- How to generate visitors and convert them to customers
- How to track the results of your marketing campaigns on your website
- How to automate your website

...and best of all:

- Insider's secrets that will practically guarantee your chances of success.

Many of the authors included in the list are considered international experts in their fields, so it is well worth investigating their books/course materials for a deeper insight into any of the issues covered in this guide. You can access most of them through our website; otherwise their website address has been included in this guide.

The Last Piece of the Puzzle

A valiant attempt has been made to include everything you need to get started in an online business, but there is one piece missing; that piece is YOU.

The most comprehensive guide in the world is useless unless you're willing to study it and do your own research! You will be amply rewarded for the time you devote to your online business - success stories are made public every day, and there are many more out there that no one ever hears about! (Some of the most successful online marketers prefer to remain anonymous).

Apply the principles that you will discover here, and you're well on your way to future success.

Remember, this is only the starting point of your "voyage of discovery," and what a fascinating (and rewarding) world the Internet is! Welcome!

Send us your Questions

We're always just an email or a phone call away. We'd be happy to answer your questions and we welcome your comments about the content of this eBook. For example, did you find it useful, are there some areas that require more explanation, do you have specific questions that weren't covered in the content, etc.

Think about this: if there was one burning question that you could ask us, what would it be? Email us at "questions@lighthousepress.net". We'll be putting together a short report with answers to the top 25 questions we get and we'll email you a free copy as thanks for your participation!

INTRODUCTION

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a vast, fascinating, complex collection of products, services and information, all instantly available at the click of a mouse or a few computer keys. Imagine a vast shopping mall in which you are the only customer, where you can stroll through thousands of stores looking at products, listening to music, stopping to read or examine whatever you want - all while dressed in your pajamas, if you wish! And further imagine that it is open and available whenever you wish to go - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Even if you wanted to buy a hammock at 2:00 in the morning - no problem! And whether you're booking a trip online or buying a hammock, you can instantly compare prices and features on dozens of similar products - all by hitting a few keys on your keyboard!

For example: an acquaintance recently tried to book a trip through a travel agent. The trip would have cost in excess of \$800 through the agent, so she decided to go on the Internet and have a look at the possibilities herself. Imagine her surprise when she found the same tickets for less than \$500 after doing a little bit of her own research!

The Growth Factor

Consumers bought more stuff online last year, a trend that will continue, according to a couple of recent studies.

A study by Forrester Research based on a survey of 130 U.S. companies indicates consumers spent \$76 billion shopping online in 2002. This represents a 48% increase over 2001, and their projections for 2003 come close to \$100 billion, representing 4.5% of total retail sales.

A similar study by eMarketer, a market-research firm that has released a report titled "North America E-Commerce: B2C & B2B," projects that U.S. consumers will spend more than \$133 billion online in 2005, up nearly 50% from a projected \$90.1 billion in 2003. Other findings from the report:

- The average annual amount spent online among U.S. Internet users aged 14 and up - excluding travel purchases - should rise to \$928 in 2005, up 30% from this year's \$717.

- Nearly 60% of U.S. Internet users have at least four years of experience online; 27% have six or more years experience, according to the UCLA Center for Communication Policy.
- Almost 62% of Web surfers ages 14 and up - 94.9 million people - will purchase goods and services online in 2005, up from nearly 60%, or 81.2 million users, this year.
- One-quarter of U.S. adults conducted business with the government online in 2002, according to surveys by the University of Maryland and Rockbridge Associates.
- Canadian business-to-consumer sales hit \$2.6 billion U.S., a 59% climb over the previous year.
- More than 80% of U.S. companies have experimented with some form of online procurement, although most are channeling less than 10% of their total procurement online, according to data from Forrester Research and the Institute for Supply Management.

The exact figures may differ slightly between research companies, but one thing is immediately obvious - online purchasing is on the rise!

What Does That Mean to You?

This is a perfect time to get into the market. Whether you're intending to bring an existing business to the Internet, or building one "from scratch," the time to take advantage of the present opportunities is NOW.

A business with an online presence will thrive in the coming years. The biggest advantage over traditional business is that you can draw from an international pool of potential customers, rather than limit yourself to a local and finite market. Online businesses can also transcend local economic downturns and thrive while their local competitors may go out of business.

Another huge advantage involves the cost of advertising; after your website is built, your main expenses are maintenance and hosting fees - advertising costs online are negligible compared to traditional off-line fees. Ensure a steady

stream of visitors to your online store, who you can convert to lifetime customers, and success is practically guaranteed.

Does everyone who has a store on the Internet get rich? No. However, building a website is an important first step, and anyone who dedicates themselves to learning about how the Internet works, and studies the available tools and techniques, will have a greatly increased chance of success. More than 95% of the people who own websites never take the time and trouble to learn about any of the issues encompassed in this guide. And that's good news for you - you'll be miles ahead of the competition!

Let's have a look at how an Internet business works.

BUSINESS & THE INTERNET

How Does it Work?

Think of a catalog, and you'll have a pretty good idea of what the Internet represents. Basically it's an enormous collection of "pages" containing information, advertisements and products. When you open a store-front on the Internet, you are adding one or more "pages" to the existing collection.

Access to your particular pages is through your unique address, or URL (Uniform Resource Locator) also known as your domain name (<http://www.lighthousepress.net> is our URL). We'll discuss domain names in more detail a little later on.

Your Store-front

Your domain name provides access to your store (or collection of pages - in other words, a website) that contains a list of the products you want to offer, and/or information about your business including contacts, special offers, and downloadable information which often takes the form of PDF or Portable Document Format files. Even though documents are originally created by any one of a number of software programs, the documents can be converted to PDF files and the end user will be able to view and print the file in the exact format in which they were created. Also, PDF files can be universally read by both PC and Mac users as long as they have Acrobat Reader, a free, downloadable piece of software from Adobe's web site.

An information (or brochure) site is used primarily as a resource to which potential clients are sent. It's used to give visitors an idea of who you are and what your business is about. An eCommerce site may do the same thing, but it will also include a list of your products, and an area where you can accept/verify credit card transactions, make arrangements for shipping, calculate total sales, do currency conversions (if necessary), etc.

Once your website is added to the Internet, it can be viewed by any of the millions of people who have access to the Internet. A conservative estimate of online traffic puts the number of users at around 60 million at any given time, but no one is completely sure of the figure. The number of actual visitors to your site will be determined by how well you've targeted your market, and how well you promote it.

Website Hosting

In the bricks-and-mortar world, you need a physical location for your store. In the online world you exist in "virtual reality" - an intangible, electronic presence only. That does not mean that you can exist without some way of accessing the information you have to offer to the rest of the world.

That's where a "host" comes in. Think of your site as a dessert, sitting on a tray. The dessert has a unique name - your domain name. The tray is the "host" - it's a real place for the electronic version of your website to sit so it can be accessed by anyone who is looking for it.

You will need a hosting company that can offer you a 99.9% guarantee that your site will always be accessible to traffic on the web. The importance of this will become more evident later on in the guide when we discuss automated software programs and traffic.

Possible Uses of Your Website

Okay, now how do you go about determining the best use of this website? First, let's think about the various possible uses for the site.

You can use the site to:

- relay information about your company
- advertise products and/or services
- advertise events or workshops
- promote your business
- sell products or services
- give away promotional material
- act as a resource for other businesses
- deliver products electronically
- collect email addresses (building an opt-in list)
- all or any of the above in combination

You may not know which kind of site is the best for you. If you already have a business you probably know which kind of site will work for you, but if you're just starting out in business and looking for ideas, the explanations in the next chapter will help to lead you in the right direction.

UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS

Products vs Services

There are basically two kinds of products you can offer - one is tangible, the other is not. If you're a Business Coach, a Graphic Designer, or any kind of Business Consultant, for example, you would probably be interested primarily in an information (or brochure) site where you can talk about yourself and your business, offer testimonials, and supply contact information.

If you sell any kind of tangible item - books, tents, first aid kits, for example - you would probably be most interested in an eCommerce site where you can take orders and process credit card payments.

Many businesses, even if they are primarily service industries, would benefit from an eCommerce site where they can also offer tangible products - a Coach who writes a book and wants to offer it through the website would fall into this category, for example.

Zeroing in on a Product/Service

Determining your target market is always one of the first steps in the process of planning your website. The steps laid out below will help you to find a perfect product/market match:

- 1) Pick a product/service
- 2) Make a list of keywords and phrases related to the product or service
- 3) Research it to see if there's already a demand for it. The number of sites that already exist to provide the product/service is a dead giveaway, plus the number of searches made on the keywords related to the product/service - the more sites, and the more searches, the better (in most cases). (See Keywords on page 16 for details on this process).
- 4) If you think that there is a viable market for the product/service, visit a number of the existing sites, go on discussion boards, check out existing online publications devoted to the subject and check out offline materials like magazines and newsletters to get a feel for the subject. You're not only familiarizing yourself with it, but you're looking for aspects of the product/service that there seems to be a demand for, but that no one is supplying. (See Traffic Generation on page 23 for details).

Let's use a simple, hypothetical example:

Suppose you like hammocks. By going through the steps outlined above you discover that none of the existing sites can offer hammock repairs. "Aha!" you think. "I'll write a book about how to repair a hammock and offer it on my website along with links to the places that supply hammocks." Good thinking! Not only will the hammock vendors be happy to send you customers for your book, but they will link to your site, helping you with your ranking in the search engines. And you're well on your way to building a list of people to which you can market other hammock-related products/services.

By now you probably have an idea of the best use of your website (see page 7 if you need a reminder of the options). Let's discuss in detail all of the elements you need to consider when you're planning your website and your new business.

Target Markets

If you have done the previous exercise, you'll have a reasonably good idea of what your target market should be. If you have chosen not to do the exercise, you may wish to re-consider. It would be a mistake to ignore the importance of determining who your optimum market is. When you have a clear idea of who you are selling to, your message can be tailored to "speak" directly to your prospect, addressing their unique problems and concerns. This is a much more effective technique than trying to appeal to everyone. By trying to speak to everyone, you end up speaking to no one in particular. Also, consider the following:

- a) By trying to appeal to a "mass market" you will have no measurable results in any of your advertising campaigns. An appeal directed at a wide audience will contain some "hits," if you're lucky, but you'll never know exactly which part of your message encouraged the market to buy. Also, you won't have the advantage of being able to apply the winning "formula" to future campaigns.
- b) If you have no measurable results, you'll have no starting place from which to make improvements to your message - and most of your future

earnings and time will be wasted in an attempt to either improve your message and/or to duplicate the efforts of a previous success.

- c) Most businesses don't have the resources of Coca-Cola or Ford; those companies can afford to litter the landscape with advertising in a variety of mediums, but you are probably in the position of needing to get it right the first time.

Determining Your USP / Mission Statement / Tagline

I run across these three key components of business all the time, online and offline: your USP - a 2 or 3 line description of your business outlining why you are better/different than your competitor; your Mission Statement (why are you in business?); and your Tagline (a brief but memorable phrase that will stick in a customer's mind). Don't underestimate the value of any of these components.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

The USP is a "unique selling proposition" - something that sets you apart from your competition. What is it you do that your competitors don't? What special skill/experience/expertise do you have that the majority of your competitors don't?

There are some excellent examples of the application of USP's in the offline world; for example, SleepCountry delivers and sets up your new bed, takes your old mattress away with them, and their servicemen wear little booties over their shoes when they enter your home. Does anyone else do that?

Spend some time thinking about what you already do that someone else doesn't, and if you do nothing that sets your company apart, develop something! Look carefully at what the competition is doing, talk to your customers to find out what they want, offer it, and build your USP around it.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement is a simple declaration of what your company is all about. When you develop one for your business it will help keep you on track as far as your business objectives go.

A simple example of a Mission Statement would be: "Our mission is to educate single mothers about their legal rights in child custody disputes." The focus

of this company is obvious; if they inadvertently change direction it would be simple to re-focus based on a mission statement like this.

TAGLINE

This is a memorable phrase that will stick in people's minds when you talk about your business. Look through the Yellow Pages and you'll find an abundance of taglines; from "#1 in the #2 Business" from a septic services company, to "We make security our business so you can get on with yours" from a security company.

You can build the tagline around your company name or the service you provide, and it can be descriptive, humorous, a play on words, or whatever you think would work to set you apart.

The 80/20 Principle

This is a vastly over-simplified explanation of a fascinating book, but here it is in a tiny nutshell; 80% of your effort gets you 20% of your income, 20% of your customers give you 80% of your sales, 20% of your products give you 80% of your gross income.

The premise is that this 80/20 rule can be applied to almost any subject you can think of. What's my point? Wouldn't it be of enormous benefit to you to know *which* 20% of your effort was getting you 80% of your results? To know *which* 20% of your products gave you 80% of your income? To know *which* 20% of your customers gave you 80% of your sales?

Imagine how much more effective you could be in every aspect of your business by devoting your time and effort to the 20% of customers and activities that get you the greatest results. Large corporations have completely changed focus and product lines as a result of this principle, and have turned their businesses around!

"The 80/20 Principle" by Richard Koch introduces and explains the principle, and how and why it works in the real world. The book contains formulas that you can use to apply to your own business, and even if you do not yet own a business it will help you decide where your efforts are best spent. I cannot

recommend it highly enough for the practical, useful tools it offers to anyone who has a business or is contemplating one.

You can order this fascinating book directly from Amazon.com, or through our website.

Building Customer Relationships

Neil Budde helped launch one of the more successful, and among the first of the paid-only online content sites, The Wall Street Journal Interactive. The following comments are related to the publishing industry, but have relevance to the whole issue of online business basics.

"You've got to start with a focus on customers, who they are, and find out what they want. It sounds like a cliché, but it's still true. In some ways working online puts companies even closer to their customers, which, for some can be tough. They can't avoid it, but some companies will refuse to respond to email from customers, and wonder instead about why they are writing. One of the things online helped.... was how to take that feedback, be more attentive, and shape products based on some of that. So I would start there.

It sounds simple in many ways, but it can be a fairly difficult thing, not so much to listen, but to understand what they want. You have to figure out what that means. From an online perspective, the industry is getting better at that, learning as much as they can from data, usage, better analysis of a registration (process) and understanding the flows and uses of the site. I think a lot of that will shape what they can charge and what they should charge.

If you don't have that in-depth knowledge of what the audience is using, it's hard to make decisions about what you want to do for them.

Analytics are becoming even more important than ever. More companies are providing those tools and providing more options on how to use them, and targeting (online) advertising based on that.

Finally, don't stop trying to innovate. The (online media) industry has a long way to go before we sort through all the problems."

Every one of the points made in this section is related to one theme; finding and dominating a "niche" market.

In an overcrowded and over-competitive marketplace, you and your business will get lost in the shuffle unless you do something to set yourself apart from everyone else.

Don't try to be the answer to everyone's prayers; sell your product to the exact people who are most interested in it. Finding an existing, rabid market and standing in front of it with a marketable product is a guarantee of success, as long as you plan your strategy and do your homework.

WEBSITE STYLES

Information Sites

An information site is primarily used as a resource by the site owner. Requests for information made directly to the business are commonly referred to the site where the visitor then decides whether they want to pursue a business relationship with the company. A visitor who comes to you through an information site can be considered an excellent prospect; they are infinitely preferable to a "cold" call where you initiate the contact and go through the entire sales process with them.

eCommerce Sites

An eCommerce site allows you to accept online sales. Your products/services/events are listed in a separate section (typically called the store) and with a few clicks of a mouse your customer can pay for the products using their credit card.

The store section of your website should be immediately obvious to your prospective customer, and the purchasing process should be an easy and intuitive one. A typical customer will come to the store, select the products he/she wants to purchase, and place them into a shopping cart. The shopping cart is a virtual "holding area" for selections. When the customer is ready to "check out," an order form will appear where the customer will be asked to fill in name, address, shipping preferences and payment method. When they're finished, they simply click a submit button and the purchase is completed. If they've chosen the option of paying by credit card, the page will allow them to leave the number for payment. After the customer has placed an order, the information is encrypted and transmitted directly to you by email. You can read it, save it, or print it.

This is well worth noting: recent statistics indicate that "shopping cart desertion" is a growing phenomenon in the Internet world. Whether this is a result of a poor transaction process has yet to be determined, but it's well worth taking extra time and trouble to make sure the purchasing process is easy and trouble-free.

Many websites offer a choice of payment methods to their customers. While this is a good tactic for encouraging the purchase by whatever means necessary, it is

always slower and more complicated to accept money orders or methods of payment other than credit cards; by far the easiest and most reliable method of payment is by credit card. Built in security measures to protect both the vendor and the purchaser have come a long way in the last few years.

In order for you to succeed in your online business it is mandatory for you to be able to accept credit card payments. If you do not, you will inconvenience your customers, and "impulse" buyers will not purchase your products. Credit card purchasing is so widely accepted now that your company will come under suspicion by potential customers if you do not offer this service.

ECommerce sites are much more complex than information sites. Going on in the background are credit card verification, inventory management, tracking, shipping, notification of sales by email, database management and a hundred other more arcane functions.

The more you expect to be able to do with the site, the more complex it is, and the more expensive it will be to build. If your budget is limited at the outset, and you have to confine the functionality of the site to what you can afford, you should still consider discussing your entire vision of the site with your web designer; it's a grave mistake to assume that the site can be added to later on without giving the designer the whole picture. Your ideas on where you want to take the site in the future could have a huge impact on the way the site is constructed; ignoring this crucial step could also incur unnecessary costs at a later date when your website needs to be "fixed," to make it more functional.

BEFORE YOU START BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

Congratulations if you've made it this far! You're well on your way to developing a successful business. This section deals with many of the issues you will need to consider prior to building your website.

Keywords

A keyword or phrase is the set of words that most people would type into the search engines when they are looking for a specific online product or service. When you discover the most popular keywords or keyword phrases related to your product, it gives you an enormous advantage over existing website owners - you can use these keywords in a variety of ways, including Pay-per-click campaigns with the search engines. (See page 25 for an explanation of Pay-Per-Click.)

One of the most useful websites on the Internet is the Overture Advertiser Center which contains a tool called the Term Suggestion Tool. You can type in a word or phrase and it will tell you how many searches were conducted on that set of words over the past month. "<http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/adcenter/tools/index.jhtml>" is the URL for the Term Suggestion Tool. This tool is priceless - if no one searches on the subject or set of words that you type in, how much of a market do you think you're going to have for your product? While you're at the site, check out the other tools that are available. You can get a free education from Overture if you take the time to read the information they have to offer. Contact us for links and more information about the Term Suggestion Tool.

Domain Name and Registration

Okay, you've found a target market and you have a list of keywords and phrases that the traffic commonly uses to search for this subject. Now you're ready to research an appropriate domain name. The sites with the highest search engine placement are congruent in every way; that is, the domain name, the description, the registered owner and the website content should be completely in line, employing the same sets of keywords.

Let's use the hammock analogy again. You want to sell a book on your site that talks about hammock repairs. You discover that the most popular keywords for

this site are: hammocks, hammock stand, hammock chair, hammock swing. There is no reference to hammock repairs. An obvious conclusion would be that the market is wide open (and maybe it is - "hammockrepairs.com" is available, and so are the .biz, .info, .net and .org variations). Hmm, suspicious. There's either no market for this, or everyone is missing something. You'd better do some more homework and find out if there really is a viable market for this.

If you haven't already checked out existing discussion boards / eZines / articles and offline material related to the subject, as well as talked to retailers that sell hammocks, this is a good time to do it. By taking this one step you could save yourself enormous amounts of time and money. You **MUST** find out whether there is a viable market for your product **BEFORE** you create it!

If you've decided that there's still a viable market, your obvious choice of domain names would be "hammockrepairs.com." The registered owner becomes Hammock Repairs Ltd., the description becomes "Hammock repairs, including chairs and swings" or something similar, and your content is peppered with the same words and phrases.

Easy, right?

Search Engines

Search engines are simply an "index" system for finding online information. Entering terms related to the subject you are looking for (keywords) brings up a listing of the sites related to your keywords.

Search engines are probably one of the most volatile aspects of the Internet - not only do the rules for being listed with the engines change with alarming regularity, but they also vary from one search engine to the next, making this a difficult subject to understand and deal with on an on-going basis.

This is another area where it would take years of experience in this particular area to offer advice; I'll direct you to the excellent material produced by Jim Maddox (Search Engine Directory Tutorial) who has been studying the subject for years and is an acknowledged expert. You can access his tutorial through the *Resource* section.

Index Pages

One of the ways of optimizing your site for search engine placement is to build a separate "doorway" or index page. The index page is built specifically for the search engines - indeed some business owners insist on building separate index pages for each particular search engine because requirements differ from engine to engine. The index page is invisible to a visitor to your site - it acts as an "entry page" only, and is comprised of the specific information the search engine needs to rank your site.

The index page includes your domain name, a title (or headline), a sub-title (or description) and 2 - 3 paragraphs about your product/service that are "keyword rich;" in other words the paragraphs include your keywords as many times as is reasonable in the context of the copy.

It is possible that the home page of your website also acts as the index page; the trick is to make the content highly relevant to your subject and congruent in every respect.

Another technique for optimizing your site is using keywords wherever possible for the text descriptions of the various buttons and graphics on the site.

Copywriting

I cannot emphasize the importance of the content of the website. A good copywriter can move you effortlessly through the site; before you know it you've signed up for the newsletter, you've downloaded every downloadable file on the site, and you've bought whatever it is the site is selling - and you're happy about it! On top of that, you feel grateful that you found the site and you look forward with breathless anticipation to the newsletter or mini-course that you've signed up for. (All right, I exaggerate slightly!)

I can't possibly do justice to this subject in this guide, so I'm going to stop briefly for a commercial break; RUN, do not walk, to the nearest bookstore (you can follow the link on our website to the reading list, if you prefer), and invest in something by Dan Kennedy (either "The Ultimate Marketing Plan" or "The

Ultimate Sales Letter" would be an appropriate introduction to his work.) Study the techniques of John Carlton or Robert Collier (The Robert Collier Letter Book). If you contact us directly, we can pass on information about where to obtain material written by these marketing/copywriting legends.

Graphic Design

Graphic design is one of the considerations that many people ignore when building their site. However, like a good copywriter, a good graphic designer conversant with web technology can be an enormous asset.

The role of the designer is to present your content in a way that is attractive to the eye, meaningful to the target market, compelling, simple and in an easily understood format. The designer will also keep your objectives firmly at the front of his/her mind when designing the site. A website that is used primarily to capture email addresses will look and operate quite differently from one that is concerned with selling products only.

There are several WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) software programs out there which include attractive templates that can help you build a simple website. However, if you plan on having a complex eCommerce site with multiple functions, you will probably need the services of a professional who knows how to create "clean" code to make your site as functional and problem-free as possible.

And since you're eventually going to have to track the traffic coming to the site, you'd better talk to someone first before you decide that you can do it yourself (tracking is mandatory - refer to "Automating Your Site" on page 28 of this guide, if you need to be convinced!)

Invariably it's the things you don't think about that come back and bite you in the behind somewhere down the road.

Our company offers graphic/website design as well as a number of other services. If you're interested in finding out more about this or any of the other subjects covered in this booklet, email us at info@lighthousepress.net. We'd be happy to answer your questions!

BASIC MARKETING STRATEGIES

Building a List / Opt-in email

Without a list, you don't have a business, it's as simple as that. When you have targeted your market properly and are attracting visitors to your site through pay-per-click campaigns, or some other method, you want to know who they are so that you can offer them products in the future. There is a reason that they came to your website; if you have a compelling message they will stay and read what you have to say.

Building a list is done by offering your visitors some sort of valuable inducement in exchange for their name and email address (they are "opting-in" to receive your information). One tactic is to offer a free report or subscription to a newsletter. The perceived value has to be high, or there is no incentive for the visitor to subscribe. Mini-courses work well (you have a chance to establish a solid relationship with the visitor this way - after receiving your multi-part course by email, they come to expect and recognize your offerings and are open to other ones). A free report or series of reports will accomplish the same end result.

There is a definite art to building your list through email campaigns. Refer to our website for available resources on list building techniques.

Remember, you must first establish some sort of relationship with the visitor before trying to sell them one of your products - if they come to know you and to trust you, the chances of them purchasing a product from you are increased exponentially.

Offering Free Products

Offering a product for free works very well. By offering the product itself, or information about the product (a report or sales catalogue) you can very quickly determine whether there is indeed a viable market for the product. If your visitor leaves his name and email address you know there's interest in the product and you start to build your customer list. If there's no interest in the product, it's a pretty good indication that you're either barking up the wrong tree and that you should reconsider your product offering, or that your copy isn't compelling enough to attract your visitor's interest.

Consider these other benefits of offering the product for free. It will help you:

- build a customer base of people using the product
- build name recognition for you or your product
- generate interest in your website and increased traffic
- test and get customer feedback about problems with your product

If you're delivering an electronic product, so much the better! Costs to deliver a product from your storefront are zero!

Newsletters

A newsletter is a perfect way for you to begin your relationship with a customer. If you make a point of presenting it as free information on your website and place the offer in a prominent position on your home page, many visitors to your site will sign up if they are convinced that they will get value from the information you are offering. The newsletter itself could contain your own articles or articles from other people in related industries (remember - think in terms of massive value for your customers).

Sometimes just asking your competitors or business associates for submissions will present you with amazing amounts of content! Why would you ask your competitors? There may be areas that they shine in that you know nothing about. You will gain value, and respect from your customers, if you can supply information on every aspect of your product. There is an added advantage as well - your competitors may be open to a joint venture with you, or may sign you up as an affiliate to sell their products. It certainly never hurts to ask!

Articles

Writing articles for inclusion in email promotions or other people's websites is an excellent idea. It gives you an excuse to stay in touch with your customers on a regular basis by email, and it adds to your "expert" status with your competitors and associates.

Offering the articles for free ensures added link popularity (other websites will want to link to yours) as well as elevating your presence in the online world. The

biggest advantage of this tactic is that added links to your site help to elevate your ranking in the search engines.

Remember, you're not trying to become a household name necessarily, just a leader in your particular niche market. You want to be the person everyone thinks of when they have a question in your area of expertise.

Discussion Boards

The same holds true for discussion boards/newsgroups. A discussion board is a forum set up for participants to communicate via the Internet. You sign on and follow a "thread" or topic of conversation, posting comments/articles, etc. by typing them into a comments box and submitting your comments to the group.

The more you participate in the groups dedicated to your niche market, the more articles there are floating around that you've authored, the more people who subscribe to your newsletter or have heard of your product, the better off you'll be. At some point a phenomenon known as "viral marketing" takes place - your presence grows exponentially, without your input, through the circulation of your materials in the online world, and through heightened awareness of your products and your website. There are people linking to your site from all over the place and you have not had to expend an extra ounce of energy to get them there!

Check the *Resource* section for links to discussion groups.

ADVANCED MARKETING STRATEGIES

Affiliate Programs

An affiliate is simply an intermediary that offers someone else's product through their own website. If you want to start selling products immediately but find it necessary to delay the production of your own material for your target market, selling someone else's product is a good way to get started.

The affiliate (you) gets a unique identity number from the product owner so that he can track sales that come to him through your site. You get paid a percentage of each of the sales you make, he keeps track of them, and he issues you a check for your portion of the sales at a predetermined time of the month. The product owner looks after everything; he makes the product, tracks it and ships it out to the customer.

The main drawback is that you're not building your own email list - the customer gets added to the product owner's list.

If you choose to be an affiliate, it's a good idea to check out the product that you wish to sell, and to confine yourself to offering a limited number of products in the same product line. Nothing will confuse a visitor to your site more than massive numbers of products with no apparent relationship.

Traffic Generation

Earlier we discussed opt-in email campaigns (also called permission marketing) as well as joining discussion groups and writing articles/newsletters for free distribution over the internet.

All of these methods will ensure a steady stream of traffic to your website - assuming you've picked the right product, and have targeted your market properly!

Another method for increasing traffic is to offer articles to existing online ezines; www.mediafinder.com is an excellent resource for discovering whether online publications exist in your particular niche. Online editors need a constant supply of new articles for their publications, so this would be an excellent forum for your information products.

You should be aware that there is a definite protocol for writing and submitting articles; you are well advised to become familiar with the protocols prior to submitting an article to any of the listed publications.

Traffic Conversion

An efficient campaign converts between 1% and 3% of its traffic to active customers. That is, it has a conversion rate of 1% - 3%. There are exceptions of course; if the right product is placed in front of the right audience at exactly the right time, sales go through the roof - conversions of 30% or more have been known to happen! It is useful to know the conversion rate of your campaigns because you can use the knowledge to attract prospective affiliates, among other things.

One of the other metrics, or measurements, that you should know is visitor value - which is in direct proportion to the amount of money you make per sale and your conversion rate. Say you have a \$100 product and your conversion rate is 1%. That means that you make one sale and earn \$100 for every 100 visitors to your site. The visitor value is \$1.00. A sophisticated marketer is not going to be interested in taking on one of your products unless the conversion rate ensures him of a reasonable return for his efforts on your behalf. By the same token, you will probably not be interested in becoming an affiliate unless you have some guarantee that the product you're offering through your website is worth the time and effort YOU are putting into marketing it.

The trick is to test, test, test your offering and tweak, tweak, tweak your copy and this process goes on continuously. Sometimes changing one word in a headline will make the difference between no sales and spectacular sales (refer to my advice on Copywriting on page 16).

This is how it works. You send out an email blast to part of your opt-in list (see Building Your List on page 20). The results aren't bad, but you think you can do better. Change ONE thing and send it out again to a different part of your list. Better results? Great! The new copy is now your control. Change ONE thing and send it out again. Nope, didn't do as well as the second offering. Revert back to the control and change ONE other thing. Are you beginning to get an idea of the

process? Remember, the copy that gets the best results always becomes the control copy - in other words the copy by which you judge other results.

Yes, it may sound tedious but the great thing about the Internet is that results happen almost overnight - you can send an offer out to your email list in the evening and know whether it's going to work or not by the next day or the next week! Imagine, it used to take months to get those kinds of results back from a traditional snail mail or magazine advertising campaign!

Joint Ventures

Joint ventures are one of the simplest ways to start an online business. Using the example above, suppose you are qualified to write a booklet on hammock repairs, but do not have a "list" to send the marketing information to. You could work out an arrangement with (perhaps) a hammock manufacturer with a large list of existing customers whereby he/she supplies the list, and you produce the marketing materials, sales letter and website to offer the eBook through. You share equally in the profits generated through the website.

Pay-per-click

Pay-per-click campaigns are based on the purchase of popular keywords to "buy" placement in the search engines. Determine conversion rates and visitor value before you begin a pay-per-click campaign. This will give you an idea of what you can afford to spend to acquire a new customer. Using the figures from our previous example, we've determined that our visitor value is \$1. If the cost of the most popular keyword for your product is less than \$1, you may wish to consider buying it, even if it's only to run a test to see how well you do.

Predetermine your budget for the day and for the month. If you've bought the correct keyword or group of keywords, you may now be (temporarily) in one of top positions in the Google search engine. Every time a visitor comes to your site through Google, an amount equal to the cost of the keyword is charged to your account. By limiting daily and monthly expenditures, you ensure that your entire budget is not spent in the first day that your advertising appears. It's a (reasonably) inexpensive test to see how much demand there is for your product, and how well you fare with converting traffic to customers.

If you decide this method of getting traffic will work for you, keep this in mind. You can't just buy the traffic and ignore it after that. You need to monitor Google constantly to see whether you're still in a top position, and what the current cost of a click-through is (a visitor "clicks through" to your site from the search engine). Someone may come along and decide to bid 1¢ higher than you and take a higher position; it's up to you to maintain it and do what you have to do to stay up there.

Also consider this: anywhere in the top three positions is acceptable. Most visitors will check out at least the top three sites listed in the search engines if the description line looks relevant to what they are searching for. The cost of positions 2 and 3 may be significantly lower than the Number 1 position - you may wish to buy a lower position when you're testing the market to see how well your site converts traffic. Your money will go further, and test results will still be relevant.

(Remember when we discussed descriptions earlier and how it had to be congruent with the domain name, etc.? A description appears below your domain name in the search engine, and the copy should be as carefully written for this as it is for all the other areas of your index page. Often a good description will make or break you when your site is being ranked, or when a visitor is looking for something specific).

Google is only one of the search engines offering pay-per-click; it would be worth checking out Overture and others. For more information on search engines and Google AdWords, check out the links in the *Resource* section.

Tracking Results/Monitoring your Progress

Tracking the results of your various campaigns is absolutely mandatory if you want to be able to maximize profits from each product you offer. You need to be able to ascertain which campaigns worked, and why (for example, when you're comparing one headline to another one, you need to quickly decide which one worked better for you in terms of the number of customers that bought your product).

By correctly tracking results you can get an accurate idea of where to spend your time and money; it will immediately give you an idea of whether or not an entire product line is marketable.

Refer to the section about traffic conversion on page 23, if you're not sure what the

process is; tracking your campaigns is impossible and pointless if you don't follow the steps as suggested.

This is how tracking works: when you create an account with a company that supplies the service, you are given a few lines of HTML code that you paste into your own site's HTML. That code will cause a counter image to display on your page (note that this counter image can be made invisible).

When a visitor accesses your site, his or her browser requests your page from your server and then goes on to load the counter image from the servers; as soon as this happens the tracking company captures information on that visitor and records the data into your own personal log files stored on their machines. You can then go to the URL of the tracking company at any time, log into your password protected account and check your traffic in real-time.

Please note: not all tracking systems are created equal! It makes a lot of sense to look into the top end products to see what they offer before you decide to go with a program that is not built to collect the information you need to assess the effectiveness of your campaigns.

Automating the Process

There are several aspects of your website that should be automated before you even "go live." You will need an automated ordering system that includes, but is not limited to: accepting credit cards; accepting orders by phone (an 800 number); a printable order form; a fulfillment house, if necessary (a fulfillment house is a company that accepts and ships orders for you - if the product you are delivering is a physical product, it's worth considering this option); shopping cart software (a virtual "holding area" for the products your customers are ordering).

Now it's necessary to do extensive testing of the site BEFORE you go live, to ensure that all of the automated processes are working correctly. There is nothing more frustrating for a potential customer than having a critical part of the sales process break down - they'll leave your site, and you'll never see them again.

After you've ensured that all of the critical elements are working correctly, it's time to consider automating the other aspects of the site. Some of the most time-consuming chores that should be automated are: email promotions and customer service,

including building and growing your opt-in email list, collecting email addresses, adding new names and email addresses to your opt-in list, and responding to customer queries with "canned" messages (messages that contain answers to the most commonly asked questions); search engine submission and monitoring.

It would be next to impossible to include all the relevant information you will need to review on this subject. Please refer to the *Resources List*; references to several excellent reports on the subject of Automation have been included so you can learn more about it when you're ready.

Writing an eBook

If you have expertise in a certain area related to the product/service you are selling on your website, it may be worth your while to write a small eBook (like this one). Not only could you turn around and sell it at some later point, but you could use it to promote your site, you could offer free copies to other website owners to generate interest in your site, you could bundle it with other products of your own to offer to your opt-in list... the possibilities are endless. And if you offer a free newsletter through your site, you can use portions of the eBook as articles in your newsletter. Sections of the book can also be used as mini-courses to encourage people to opt-in through your website.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Your Action Plan

If you've read through the guide you should have a pretty good idea of the basic steps involved in the process of going online. Here is a summary of the steps that we've covered:

- a) If you have a business already, take a long, hard look at it. Look at it through your customer's eyes. What problems does it solve for your customers? What advantage does your business possess in the sales of this product that no one else can offer? What disadvantages? What are the advantages and disadvantages of your sales process? How are you marketing it presently? Will it "translate" easily to the Internet environment? Will you handle the order processing or do you need the services of a fulfillment house? Do you have any of the existing framework in place to take your business online (800 line, merchant account, etc.)? Do you know where to go to find what is missing? Are you aware of existing resources (like a talented copywriter) among your associates/employees?
- b) If you haven't already done so, determine your USP.
- c) Go through the process of deciding if there is a viable online market for the product (this is particularly important if you are thinking of developing a new product). This is where you come up with a list of keywords and do the appropriate research on them.
- d) Decide on and register an appropriate domain name based on your keyword research.
- e) Get a firm idea of your exact target market.
- f) Decide what kind of website you want. What is the main purpose of the website - is it to collect email addresses so you can do future mailings, or do you want to sell the product directly from the site, or are you merely presenting information about the product?
- g) Research the existing systems for automating your website, depending on the kind of site you've decided you need.
- h) Research the various ways of developing a market for your product online.
- i) Find a website designer/developer.

- j) Find a good copywriter.
- k) Do more research into the various methods of driving traffic to your website, and use them (I haven't even covered some of the other possibilities, like Postcards, Automated Telephone Calls, etc. Contact us for more information on these and other traffic generation programs).
- l) Look for related products you can offer through a Joint Venture or Affiliate relationship
- m) If you haven't done it yet, investigate pay-per-click
- n) Be prepared to track your results and test, test, test
- o) Develop another product and start the whole process over again. It's far better to have 10 websites producing \$5000/month each than one producing \$50,000 - you never know which way the market will go. (Read Robert Allen's "Multiple Streams of Internet Income" if you need convincing!)

RESOURCES

Reference Material / Links

The following list is reasonably comprehensive (although incomplete). There are currently vast numbers of reports, white papers, articles, courses, mini-courses, audio and video files, etc. available on the Internet, but I have included only those that I endorse and that I am familiar with; the authors of the courses listed below are considered international experts in their particular fields, and they are all successful graduates of their own courses - in other words, they did it first, learned from it, perfected it, profited from it and then offered it to the rest of the world. They are the "big fish" in the Internet ocean, and you are well-advised to follow their time-tested advice. By studying their methods, you will learn how to become a "success story" in your own right.

The listing is alphabetical, by subject; some of the categories were large enough to be divided into sub-categories.

Please note: the links listed below were valid at time of publishing; for a current list of links and resources visit www.lighthousepress.net as this list gets updated regularly. Any of the resources below that list www.lighthousepress.net/resources/ as the link are available through our website.

A-Z (Complete training)

The "System" Training

Ken McCarthy offers THE definitive training course on marketing via the Internet
www.amacord.com

"The Insider's Guide to Marketing your Business on the Internet"

Corey Rudl is one of the true pioneers in Internet marketing, and his course and newsletter are excellent.

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

"AssocTrac"

Powerful Affiliate (or "Associate") managing program

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

"Affiliate Link Cloaker"

Affiliate Link Protection Software

Stop affiliate link hijackers from stealing your money!

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

"ClickBank"

Partner with ClickBank and you'll have an instant affiliate network promoting your digital products.

www.clickbank.com

AUTOMATING eMAIL

Autoresponder and Newsletter Services

www.aweber.com

"MailLoop"

Explode The Profits From Your Online Business Or Newsletter - While Actually Decreasing Your Workload and Expenses - Using A 100% Brand New Software That'll Literally Make Your Business 'Hands-Free'!

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

COPYWRITING

General

Copyright Basics (United States Copyright Office)

A review of US copyright laws and regulations.

www.loc.gov/copyright

"Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets Of A Marketing Rebel"

John Carlton's highly praised resource for anyone serious about learning the secrets of writing effective copy.

www.marketingrebel.com/

eBooks

"eBook Secrets Exposed"

Jim Edward's guide on eBook Marketing Information

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

"7 Day eBook"

A comprehensive program for writing your own eBook... in as little as 7 Days

www.lighthousepress.net/resources/

Articles/eazines

"Turn Words Into Traffic"

The secret to non-stop, FREE, targeted traffic; techniques for writing and promoting your business with articles and newsletters

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

Locating potential publishers for your articles

<http://www.mediafinder.com>

Languaging

A rhyming dictionary for poetry or songwriting (enter a word, click a button to receive words that rhyme).

<http://www.rhymer.com>

A database of thousands of acronyms and abbreviations. Also search by keywords to find the perfect or correct abbreviation for a word or phrase.

<http://www.ucc.ie/info/net/acronyms/>

Search through over 60,000 acronyms, their abbreviations and meanings.

<http://www.acronymfinder.com>

Choose from over 3,300 clichés to illustrate points and paint vivid images in your readers' minds.

<http://www.westegg.com/cliche/>

Great Quotes

Nothing sets the tone for any written work quite like a stirring quote from a famous person.

<http://www.bartleby.com/100/>

More famous quotes.

<http://www.quotationspage.com>

Dictionaries and Thesauruses

Webster's hypertext dictionary.

<http://m-w.com/netdict.htm>

Roget's Online Thesaurus along with a number of other useful reference tools.

<http://www.thesaurus.com>

Interesting tool that transforms any web page into easy convenient links to definition and word lookups in dictionaries or thesauruses

<http://www.vocabulary.com>

DISCUSSION BOARDS

Some good places to start looking for discussion boards and newsgroups related to your area of interest.

<http://groups.google.com>

<http://www.talkcity.com>

DOMAIN NAMES

Domain name searches and registration

<http://www.domaindirect.com>

<http://www.tucows.com>

<http://www.godaddy.com>

MARKETING

"Magnetic Marketing System"

By Dan Kennedy

The most valuable sales tool you can possibly have is a steady stream of interested potential clients calling you. This toolkit will teach you how!

<http://www.dankennedy.com>

"Cash Like Clockwork"

Great advice on targeting your market

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

"33 Days To Online Profits"

A 33 day, step-by-step roadmap for Internet success no matter what product or service you sell... 100% guaranteed!

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

"Lazy Man's Guide To Online Business"

Internet Marketing Secrets

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

"Anatomy of a Marketing Rollout"

When you launch a website, there is a very specific sequence of steps that will dramatically accelerate your profitability.

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

"Marketing with Postcards"

Time-proven secrets to transform targeted website traffic into cash

<http://www.marketingwithpostcards.com>

SEARCH ENGINES

"Google Adwords ROI"

The definitive resource for Google Adwords campaigns

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

"Search Engine & Directory Tutorial"

Generate quality traffic to your website using this Search Engine Optimization Tutorial!

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

SURVEYS

"One Minute Poll"

The simplest most powerful survey tool online for the price!

<http://www.lighthousepress.net/resources/>

TRACKING

"WebStat"

Fast, reliable traffic analysis for your website

<http://www.web-stat.com>

Reading List

While I recognize that there are many other excellent books out there on the subject of marketing your business, the names of most of the following books keep coming up again and again in discussions with experts in the field of Internet Marketing. (Some have just been included because I read them and found them useful in one way or another).

Each of the books on the reading list (listed alphabetically, by author) is available through our website. If you wish to purchase a copy of the book, go to: <http://www.lighthousepress.net/readlist/> and click on the link beside the book.

Abraham, Jay

Getting Everything You Can Out of All You've Got

21 ways you can out-think, out-perform and out-earn the competition

Allen, James

As You Think

The self-empowerment classic "As a Man Thinketh" revised and updated by Marc Allen

Allen, Robert C.

Multiple Streams of Income

How to generate a lifetime of unlimited wealth

Multiple Streams of Internet Income

How ordinary people make extraordinary money online

Canfield, Jack / Hansen, Mark Victor / Hewitt, Les

The Power of Focus

How to hit your business, personal and financial targets with absolute certainty

Caples, John

Tested Advertising Methods

Fifth edition - completely updated

Carnegie, Dale

How To Win Friends and Influence People

A classic - one of the top selling books of all time

Cialdini, Robert B.

Influence

The new psychology of modern persuasion

Covey, Stephen R.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Powerful lessons in personal change

Principle Centered Leadership

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"

Gerber, Michael E.

The E Myth Revisited

Why most small businesses don't work and what to do about it

Girard, Joe

How to Sell Anything to Anybody

The world's greatest salesman tells how he made a fortune - and how you can too!

Hill, Napoleon

Think & Grow Rich

This book could be worth a million dollars to you

Napoleon Hill's Keys to Success

The 17 principles of personal achievement

Hopkins, Claude C.

My Life in Advertising / Scientific Advertising

"Present-day advertising research has a long way to go before it reaches the level of Claude Hopkin's contributions to efficient advertising."

Jeffers, Susan, Ph.D.

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway

Dynamic techniques for turning fear, indecision and anger into power, action and love

Kennedy, Dan S.

How to Make Millions With Your Ideas

An entrepreneur's guide

How to Succeed In Business by Breaking All The Rules

A plan for entrepreneurs

No BS Business Success

"...the most truthful, blunt, straightforward, non-sugarcoated, no pabulum, no holds barred, no nonsense, no BS book that has ever been written on succeeding as an entrepreneur."

The Ultimate Marketing Plan

Find your most promotable competitive edge, turn it into a powerful marketing message, and deliver it to the right prospects.

The Ultimate Sales Letter

Boost your sales with powerful sales letters

The Ultimate Success Secret

Is it possible that is one single, super-powerful secret of success of far greater importance than all others?

Koch, Richard

The 80/20 Principle

The secret to success by achieving more with less

Maltz, Maxwell (with Dan S. Kennedy)

The New Psycho-Cybernetics

A new technique for using your subconscious power

Zero Resistance Selling

Achieve extraordinary sales results using the world-renowned techniques of Psycho-Cybernetics

Raphel, Murray / Raphel, Neil

Up The Loyalty Ladder

Turning sometime customers into full-time advocates of your business

Reis, Al / Trout, Jack

Positioning

How to be seen and heard in the overcrowded marketplace

Ruiz, Don Miquel

The Four Agreements

A simple but powerful code of conduct for attaining personal freedom and true happiness

The Four Agreements Companion Book

Using the four agreements to master the dream of your life

Sugarman, Joseph

Triggers

30 sales tools you can use to control the mind of your prospect to motivate, influence and persuade

Zarro, Richard A. / Blum, Peter

The Phone Book

Breakthrough neurolinguistic phone skills for profit and enlightenment

Ziglar, Zig

Top Performance

How to develop excellence in yourself and others

Ziglar on Selling

The ultimate handbook for the complete sales professional