

# Small Business Clicks

by Heath Sanchez



[www.smallbusinessclicks.com](http://www.smallbusinessclicks.com)

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Hi there! My name is Heath Sanchez. Since 2002, I have been using the marketing power of the Internet to successfully launch and grow three online businesses. Throughout the years of studying Marketing, working as an Internet Marketing Consultant (and running these businesses) - I have learned a great deal about the way customers purchase online, discovering exactly what is needed in order to build a strong, profitable, customer-focused brand. I have come a very long way in my many years of working on the Internet, and now I'd like to share some of my success with you!

This helpful book is a compilation of my valuable insights. It's a comprehensive guide filled with solid Online Marketing information that I have acquired from years of experience, as well as the countless marketing books that I have pored through over many hundreds of hours. Think of this book as a jam-packed resource containing all of the keys needed for you to see your business grow into a thriving customer-focused company. Read it, put it into practice, and refer to it often, as you continue to grow your very own successful online business.

This book will give you an overview of the **whole concept of marketing** and how things now work in the online world. It will introduce you to the **7 key components that are vital to any online marketing plan**, and will show you how to implement them into your own marketing strategy. We'll look at **online customers**, what they want, and how to keep them buying from you over and over again. Next, we'll examine your **brand**, and how you can portray a strong, genuine image to your customers, by first defining what you stand for as a business. We'll also go in to **website design**, particularly looking at how to use your site as a complete customer service tool, instead of just an online product or service catalog. And finally, we get to **traffic building techniques**, where I'll be giving you my tips on all the main methods of getting quality, paying customers in to your website.

Have faith in yourself and your dreams. Be willing to think things through and be prepared to act upon the information that I'm about to give you. Hold on for the ride, and get ready to begin your journey towards building a strong, profitable and customer-focused online business!

All the best!

*Heath Sanchez*

Heath Sanchez

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Business is changing fast, and the rapidly evolving digital world that has become far more than just ‘another marketing channel’, has a whole lot to do with it. Now, more than ever, it has become imperative for businesses to keep up with the online game, as failure to do so can result in missing the biggest opportunity that the business world has ever seen.

### The Internet

Over a billion customers, spending trillions of dollars, pounds, euros and yen on just about any type of product or service imaginable. This is no longer ‘one platform for marketing’ - for millions of businesses around the globe, the World Wide Web has *become* their market. Because of this, competition is fierce, and these days, if you are serious about making it on the Internet, then you need to make sure that you know exactly how to communicate in this young, online world. What you need is a business that understands, listens to, and acts upon the demands of your most valuable asset - your customer.

### Why Go Online?

There are several reasons why businesses are choosing to migrate to, or even launch on the Internet. Some of the main benefits are as follows;

#### 1. **TO MAKE MORE MONEY**

You can increase your sales through a much wider (global) distribution which has global promotional opportunities in a variety of niches. Even small subcultures are easy to find online, as people tend to form into groups of interest.

#### 2. **TO MAKE CUSTOMERS HAPPY**

You are able to add value to your existing customers by providing extra benefits online, not to mention giving them the convenience of ordering over the Internet.

### 3. **TO KEEP CUSTOMERS HAPPY**

You can form better relationships, and a fuller understanding of your customers by tracking their activity, asking them questions and creating an ongoing dialogue where you can be sensitive to their needs.

### 4. **TO SAVE MONEY**

There are extremely low overheads associated with an online business. Apart from the cost of web hosting, your Internet connection and your telephone line - there are very little ongoing expenses when compared to a traditional ‘brick and mortar’ business.

### 5. **TO GET NOTICED**

You have the opportunity to extend your brand awareness to millions of potential customers around the world. To many thousands of users, if your business does not show up in the search engines - then you don’t exist. On the Internet, your small business has the ability to compete right alongside the big corporations and you have an amazing advantage - the flexibility to adapt to changes much faster than these long established companies.

As you can see, you’ve made a very wise decision by choosing to take your business online. The Internet is absolutely thriving with opportunity and the only thing stopping you from ‘world domination’ is yourself! Stay true to your dream, keep focused and work as hard as you possibly can. It won’t be an easy road, and you’re bound to make a few mistakes along the way - but learn from them as I did. Remember that I could give you the most valuable information in the world, but unless you put it into practice, then these words aren’t worth the digital paper they’re written on!



“Do today what others wont, and you’ll have tomorrow what others don’t.”

## Chapter 2: Internet Marketing Overview

The UK Chartered Institute of Marketing define marketing as:

***“The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer needs profitably.”***

So let’s break this definition up, and see how it translates to the online world...

### HOW CAN YOU IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMER’S NEEDS, ONLINE?

Just like in the real world, good online marketing begins with identifying your customers needs, wants and demands. By first fully understanding the needs of your customers, you put yourself in a very good position to keep them happy throughout all of their interactions with your business. Happy customers mean increased repeat sales, and a good reputation in the marketplace. This is vital for any business to survive long-term.

Fortunately, your customer’s needs can be identified through a variety of online sources. For example, take a look at the comments, questions, requests or complaints that have been made through your email address or contact form - as this will be a very good indication of the needs of your customers.



“Why not go through your existing records and identify any common concerns or questions right now? By doing this you will begin to get a much fuller understanding of your customers.”

Another way to discover valuable information about your customer’s needs, is to read through and contribute to industry forums, or the comments posted on blogs relevant to your type of business. By doing this, you’ll be able to find any questions, concerns or interests that your target market might have - putting

you in the perfect position to respond within your own business, products and services. You can build your products and business around that information!

Going deeper, you can analyze your own business’ existing sales patterns to find out what your customers are interested in most. This is done by looking at what is already selling and what isn’t. Your web analytics software (if you use any), can also reveal valuable insight into your customer’s interests, determined by the pages that are visited on your site.

But one of the most effective ways of determining what your customers really want from your business, is to ask them. Online surveys are very easy to implement whether by email, or by using a good quality survey service such as <[SurveyGizmo.com](http://SurveyGizmo.com)>. Customer surveys are one of the most effective ways to learn how you can improve on your products, services, website, customer service, or order process - so they are well worth your effort.



“Why not begin to put together some questions that you can ask your own customers to find out more about their common needs?”

## HOW CAN YOU **ANTICIPATE** YOUR CUSTOMER’S NEEDS, ONLINE?

As well as identifying your customer’s needs, by using the information discovered in the identification process - you can begin to get a fuller understanding of your customers, and even start to *anticipate* their needs. This is extremely beneficial, as you can start to make note of common interests, concerns and needs that require your attention *before* a customer finally decides to go ahead and make a purchase. You can also anticipate what products or services your customers might like and offer them related items during, or after the sale (cross selling), you will also know which customers could benefit from upgrades of those products or services (up selling).



“Have a think about additional products or services. Can you sell anything else that can be offered during or after a sale? Perhaps you can encourage upgrades on purchases?”

## HOW CAN YOU **SATISFY** YOUR CUSTOMER’S NEEDS, ONLINE?

Let’s take a look at the final part of this definition of marketing - satisfying customers. Now, I would like to mention here that new research has shown that it is no longer good enough to simply satisfy your customers. (See [here](#)). The research suggests that a large percentage of satisfied customers will still shop somewhere else next time. What your business needs to do these days, in order to create repeat customers, is to completely delight them! (I will discuss this further in a later section.) The Internet gives you a great opportunity to delight your customers who expect and appreciate prompt replies to emails and calls, on- time delivery of their products or services, order status notifications and friendly service. We can add to this, with such things as after sales follow-up, and by creating an ongoing dynamic dialogue with them (whether it be through a forum, blog, newsletter, or email promotions). This kind of dialogue maintains permission for you to continue communicating with your customers, and adds value by delivering useful content in the right context. (The right stuff at the right time in the right amount).



“Why not brainstorm all the different ways that you can delight your existing customers? How can you, as a business, go beyond the regular call of duty, to instigate the ‘Wow Factor’?”

## The Online Advantage

Thanks to Internet technology and email auto-responders, such as [AWeber.com](#) (my personal favorite Online Marketing tool), maintaining dialogue with customers can be partially (or even fully) automated. But sending automatic emails does not mean that they have to be impersonal. By using this technology correctly, you can give tailor-made, personalized responses to customers based on their type. Eg. Standard Customers, Bulk Buyers, Corporate Clients, Partners, etc. By keeping good, regular communications, you will improve customer-loyalty over time, as well as profits!

By implementing customer relationship management (CRM) systems (which I will explain later on), you will slash the costs, time and effort of communicating

with your customers. This will also give you an advantage over many of your competitors, as you will be able to increase your ‘customer lifetime value’. This is the total profit generated by each customer throughout the life of your business. The more loyal your customers are, the higher their lifetime value.

In reality, identifying, anticipating and delighting your customer’s needs is simple common sense - it’s really not rocket science! But by taking a look around at many businesses on the Internet, as a customer, I find many broken sites, impersonal responses to inquiries, and sometimes even no response at all! Be sure to give your customers the same attention that you would like if you were in their position, and begin to watch your clientele grow exponentially.



“Put yourself in your customers shoes for a moment. When you are buying products or services online, what sort of experience do you expect? What impresses you, and what annoys you the most?”

## Finding Your Niche

Before we go any further, let’s take a look at defining your niche. This will help you to keep your target market in mind as you read through this book. For a good example of targeting a niche, let’s take a look at a product we’re probably all familiar with - t-shirts. Although nearly everyone in the world wears them, it would be foolish for a t-shirt brand to think that the whole world is their target market. T-shirts can be as diverse as the people that wear them, so it’s important for these companies to narrow it down, and to identify the types of people that would be interested in their particular designs and styles. By focusing on smaller groups of people, t-shirt companies can be much more effective in their marketing efforts. Their advertising costs will be much lower, and they can concentrate on tailoring their product or services to meet the specific interests of a particular type of person. For example, let’s take a look at the following t-shirt businesses, and the niche markets that they operate in;

- Brand Resistant <[www.brandresistant.com](http://www.brandresistant.com)>

The niche market appears to be ‘free thinkers’, such as environmentalists, animal rights supporters, feminists, people with left-wing political views, gays, lesbians and people against religion.

- 80s Tees <[www.80stees.com](http://www.80stees.com)>

The niche market appears to be playful adults who want to re-live fond memories through symbols of their younger years. I would say that the site is targeted at adults (especially Americans), who are interested the U.S. pop culture of the 1980s.

- Desteenation <[www.desteenation.com](http://www.desteenation.com)>

The niche market appears to be patriotic small business patrons and citizens along the West Coast of the U.S. and Hawaii. The site also looks to be aimed at anyone around the world who appreciates authentic U.S. vintage t-shirts.

- T-Shirt Hell <[www.tshirthehell.com](http://www.tshirthehell.com)>

The niche market here appears to be ‘rebellious’ youth and adults. The site seems to be aimed at ‘bad boys and girls’ who like to make bold, and sometimes offensive statements.

- Tchirts <[www.tchirts.com](http://www.tchirts.com)>

The niche market appears to be the urban Hispanic community. The site looks as though it is aimed at young, fashion-conscious Latinos who are very proud of their culture.

By examining these websites, you should begin to see the importance of presenting your business, products and services in such a way that will appeal to a *specific* group of people - your target market. For some small businesses this will mean knowing the age group, income bracket, gender, geographic location and sometimes even the sexual preference of the people that they appeal to!



“Take a look at your products or services right now, and write down the characteristics of the type of people that you think your business appeals to. Be as specific as you possibly can.”

## The Online Marketing Mix

When it comes to marketing your business on the Internet, the way that you do things should be no different to the ‘extended marketing mix’ that is used widely within traditional marketing. These are the 7 P’s, (Product Or Service, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence & Process). As you may not have a solid understanding of all the marketing theory, I will go through and explain what each of the 7 Ps means to you.

### Product (or Service)

A good marketer will find the ideal product or service to sell. Your products or services should not only sell well, but you should enjoy selling them! You should be charged with enthusiasm to see your business fulfill a great need. If you don’t absolutely love and enjoy what you do, then you won’t last long, so remember to have fun!

Your decision on the types of products and services that your business provides should be largely influenced by your target market. To use the t-shirt example again, a business selling printed tees has to make a decision on which type of t-shirts to print on. Therefore they have to consider a few things. Are their customers looking for ethical, sweatshop free t-shirts? Would customers prefer the shirts to be made within their own country, or to be manufactured with organic cotton? The answers to these questions should become clear to a t-shirt business throughout the Identification phase that I mentioned earlier. They might find, for instance, that their target market is interested in a loose-fitting tee and is not particularly concerned about the country of manufacture.

The promotional t-shirt printing business that I own targets Australian Rock Bands. Through market research I discovered that my customers prefer a fashionable, fitted-style tee shirt. They are generally not concerned about the country of manufacture so long as the product or service is of relatively good quality and is reasonably priced - because they need to make a profit when selling their t-shirts at gigs. I found this valuable information out by reading and contributing to forums, as well as surveying my existing customers.

For another example, let’s assume that my business was targeting R&B or Hip Hop bands (of which Australia has few), I might find that my customers would prefer a loose fitting t-shirt with large sleeves - a completely different product.



“Be sure to tailor your products and services around the needs, wants and demands of your customers. By doing this, you will have increased sales and much happier customers!”

## Price

As the popularity of the Internet increases, more and more entrepreneurs from around the world are beginning to realize the huge opportunities that abound on the web. Therefore competition is fierce in many industries, so if you are serious about making it online - then you need to do one of two things. Either undercut your competitor's prices thus winning more business, or ensure that you can effectively differentiate yourself from the masses. The second option is preferred, because with a strong, unique brand and high-appeal, you are able to maintain high prices without sacrificing any of your profits. Below are some of the main pricing strategies being used by many businesses on the Internet today.

### *Premium Pricing*

Selling at a high price when there is a uniqueness about the product or service. This approach is used when a business has a substantial competitive advantage by their point of difference and high perceived value. The business portrays their products or services with a certain element of 'class' and rarity. With a premium product or service, consumers will 'buy in' to the image and quality of the brand, and what the brand represents.

### *Economy Pricing*

This is budget pricing for the sake of attracting many customers. Marketing and manufacture costs are kept to a minimum and often the quality of the product or service is sacrificed for the sake of the low prices. These types of businesses have the ability to sell in high volumes, but generally the workload is much higher, as there are large amounts of sales to deal with. Some businesses with economy pricing, also run the risk of actually deterring customers, because of the perception that is formed in regards to the quality of the products or services.

### *Psychological Pricing*

This approach is commonly used when the marketer wants the consumer to respond on an emotional, rather than a rational basis. For example, \$99.95 for a product instead of \$100.00 seems much less expensive! This is called 'price point perspective'.

### *Optional Product Or Service Pricing*

Some businesses attempt to increase the amount that customers spend once they begin the buying process. Optional 'extras' are offered to maximize the profit. For example, some domain registrars will charge more for an optional 'private' registration, where your contact information is hidden from public view. They might also display the .org, .net, and .info equivalents to the .com that you are buying, to encourage sales of these other domains. A business selling books could also encourage the sale of optional products, by displaying books that are similar to the one you have already chosen on the checkout page, just before you make your payment. (Amazon.com is a good example of this.)

### *Product Or Service Bundle Pricing*

Here businesses combine several products or services within one package. This can be used to sell in greater volumes and to move old stock. Some businesses include many products together for a set price that is less than the sum of all the individual product prices. This encourages customers to spend more than they usually would because of the added value.

### *Promotional Pricing*

Special pricing used to promote your product or service is another common strategy. There are many examples of promotional pricing including BOGOF (Buy One Get One Free). Here a business runs a promotion where you can buy their latest product, and choose an existing product for free.

### *Value Pricing*

This approach is commonly used when a business offers 'value' products or services as an alternative option to their standard or premium priced items. This

is to attract a larger range of customers. An example of this is the ‘value meal’ at Mc Donald's. This gives customers a choice between the standard menu and a more economical alternative.



“Which of the above pricing strategies do you currently use within your business? Which pricing strategies can you begin to implement? Perhaps a mixture?”

As you can see, the way that you price your products or services can be extremely varied. It really all comes down to your customer’s perception of your business - and it’s your job to influence that perception with your online marketing. I’ve actually had sales lift after raising the prices of tees within my designer t-shirt label. In this case, my tees were seen as a more premium, high-end product when I almost doubled the prices! Don’t be afraid to charge more for your items, after you create a strong brand image with your website design, website copy, graphics, photos and communications with customers.

Also, an important thing to remember when setting your prices, is that your profit is your sale price minus all of your costs, eg. time, labour, marketing, all materials used, packaging, freight, discounts, free gifts, order cancellation terms and refund policies.



“Find out what the profit margin is on your products or services, right now. This can be done with a simple spreadsheet calculation. Is your profit margin big enough to see your business grow?”

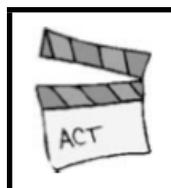
## Place

The ‘place’ in marketing is all about increasing availability and awareness of your products or services in the right environments. By downloading this book, you’ve already made the right move by looking to the Internet as a ‘place’ to distribute and promote your business. Now it’s time for you to look at the various websites within your target market, that would be suitable places for you to showcase and sell your products or services. One great place to expand distribution of your products (and recently, services) is <[eBay](#)>. There are

millions of customers available to you by using this world-popular auction site. Blogs are also another effective place for you to showcase your business - especially those that review your type of products or services, and have a strong, regular readership. A representative of your business should also be present in the Internet forums within your target market. Become part of the community, contribute helpful information to the threads, and include a link to your website within your signature.

Many website owners with a similar target market to yours, would be more than happy to have your products or services available to their users in return for a percentage of the sale. This is yet another great 'place' to expand your distribution. In addition, by setting up an Affiliate Marketing program for your business, you could be making sales from all kinds of places, as your affiliates refer customers to your website in return for commissions. I will discuss Affiliate Marketing later in this book.

So, we can see that increasing your distribution to places other than your website can have a huge impact on your sales.



"Begin a Google search for any websites related to your target market, and brainstorm ways of putting your products or services in front the eyes of their users."

## Promotion

Promotion is the practice of getting your business noticed. There are many effective methods of promotion that you can use online;

- **Advertising:** interactive ads, Pay Per Click, Search Engine Optimization
- **Selling:** sales copy, Affiliate Marketing, auction sites, inbound links
- **Sales Promotion:** incentives, rewards, gifts, loyalty schemes
- **Online PR:** online editorial, blogs, e-zine articles, newsletters, forums
- **Sponsorship:** sponsoring an online event, site, service, charity or organization
- **Direct Mail:** opt-in email and web response
- **Exhibitions:** photo galleries, videos, webinars
- **Merchandising:** shopping malls, product search engines, your own website
- **Packaging:** physical packaging displayed on your website
- **Word-of-Mouth:** viral marketing, Affiliate Marketing, email-a-friend button, links, video sites, blogs, review sites, etc.



“Are you using all of the above methods of promotion for your business? Think of how you could begin to use some of these techniques in your own unique way, over the next few weeks.”

Further information on how to use many of these online promotional methods can be found in the ‘Traffic Building Techniques’ section of this book.

## People

Putting the ‘people’ element into your marketing is absolutely vital online. The main reason why conventional ‘brick and mortar’ businesses generally do better and last longer than online businesses, is because they are real people in real buildings, doing real things! In the faceless, online world, you need to work hard to bring the personality out in everything you do. Every person working for you is an ambassador for your business. Happy staff means happy customers, so it is extremely important for you to find the right people for your business.

Customer expectations are rising, and because the Internet has birthed an impatient consumer - it’s now very difficult to keep your customers loyal to your business. But if you neglect to delight your customers in every way possible, your business will struggle to survive. Bad tasting words in the mouths of unsatisfied customers will spread like wild fire on the internet. Brand damage can be caused almost instantly in forums, blogs and through emails, thanks to what has now become known as ‘word-of-mouse’.



“Remember the ‘people’ element in your business, because without your staff and customers, your business wouldn’t exist!”

Below are some good methods and tools that can help you to add personality to your website, while simultaneously keeping your customers happy;

**Auto-responders:** These allow you to automatically generate a personalized email in response to an online form or inquiry. People are usually very impressed with an instant reply that keeps them informed. You can also use this technology to send potential customers information over time to effectively

convert them into paying customers. Visit <[AWeberTrial.com](http://AWeberTrial.com)> to test drive my favorite auto-responder service for free.

*Email notifications:* These should be used by your business to update customers on the status of their orders, to let them know that their order has been placed, when payment is received, and when the order is sent or completed, etc. Your customers will really appreciate being kept in the loop and knowing that everything is under control.

*Call-back facility:* This can be useful for when customers want to talk with a 'real person'. With a call-back facility on your website, the customer can leave their name and phone number and receive a phone call at no cost to them.

*FAQ:* By displaying answers to frequently asked questions on your website, customers are often able to help themselves. With well-written, helpful information, your business can save money by decreasing inbound help calls and emails. Providing informative answers will also keep your customers happy.

*On-site search:* This facility helps customers to find exactly what they want, both quickly and efficiently. The added benefit of on-site search is that you can use the search data to find out what your customers are looking for, and better meet their needs. If you constantly have searches on your site for a certain product, then this is a good indication that you should start selling that product, if you don't already. Site maps are also useful to help customer navigation on your website.

*Real-time chat:* Services such as <[VersoChat.com](http://VersoChat.com)> (these guys offer a free 10-day trial), give you the ability to chat in real-time with your customer, while they are still on your site. You are able to quickly and easily answer questions and guide your customers through the sales process right at the time that they are looking into your products or services.

Note that while most of your customers will enjoy the convenience of these automation methods, some will want to talk directly to you when making an order. For this reason, it's important that you display a business phone number on your website, and make yourself available to help these types of customers.



"Begin the move towards the 'people' element in your marketing right now. Start researching how to implement at least one of the above tools and facilities into your website."

## Physical Evidence

Customers are constantly looking for reassurance and this need is amplified online, in the scary, digital world of hackers and scammers. Thankfully, there are plenty of ways that you can show 'physical evidence', helping to put your customers at ease. As your website is the online representation of your business, high-quality, professional design is extremely important. Your site is usually a new customer's first experience with your business, and so it's imperative that you make a lasting impression of trust, integrity and credibility.

To help with this impression, your site can display such things as 'behind the scenes' photos or videos of your business, security icons, trade body memberships, awards, previous client lists, endorsements, testimonials, customer comments, guarantees, money back offers, independent reviews, and pictures of your business featured in physical news articles. Telephone conversations with customers can also add to the 'physical evidence' component, so make sure that your business can be contacted via phone.

Another vital element of your business website are photographs of your physical products, or shots of the various stages of your service being carried out in the real world. Too often I see sites that provide only text, assuming that the potential customer will know exactly what they are in for. It's very important that you clearly portray what's being offered. You can also provide very good 'physical evidence', by showing your potential customers samples of your previous work either by physical post or in digital photos online.



"Take a good look over your website and think about whether you would feel confident ordering through it as a new customer."

## Process

When it comes to 'process' in online marketing, the Internet makes it a whole lot easier. With e-commerce software and web-based customer relationship management (CRM) applications, your online marketing can become very integrated and much easier to manage.

With one of my online businesses, I receive orders daily which are dynamically displayed on a central web page as they come in. This web page is separate to our business website but is connected to it, in order to receive the data that is being entered in by our customers. For example, we have a Call-back Request button which is a simple icon on our home page that customers can click if they wish to speak with a 'real person'.

When a customer does click, a popup window asks them to enter their name, phone number and a convenient time to be called. Upon submission of that information, our website sends the data back to the other web page, where our staff who are logged in, are notified of the call-back request, as well as any other issues, quote requests and emails - as they occur in real time. The whole 'sales and support' side of the business is virtually run from this single website, which is running an Open Source (free) version of <[SugarCRM](#)>.

All the data is stored online, which means that it can be accessed from anywhere in the world. I am able to travel anywhere and access all my business info on my laptop, at any time. We have common responses to emails set up as templates, to automate many of the replies to questions and 'order progress notification' emails. So with a few clicks, we can send a pre-written, detailed and personalized email response.

SugarCRM also gives us the ability to view a customer file to see their contact information and all the previous email correspondence they have had with our business over the years. This enables us to instantly recall who they are and exactly what they have bought from us in the past.

We have many happy customers that have ordered through this system, most of which we have never had contact with over the phone. Our customers generally order online through our website and correspond with us via email. The system works really well, and is by no means impersonal because we are able to insert first names and personalized comments into our emails. Of course, there are some customers who prefer to have phone contact, and we certainly accommodate for these types of people as well.



“Perform some research on how a Customer Relationship Management system could be implemented to make your business run more efficiently.”

Integrated systems like the one I have described, can be extremely beneficial to your business. A lot of time and money can be saved, simply by taking the time to find and implement suitable technologies, which can make things a whole lot easier.

Another important issue to consider, when it comes to the ‘process’ component of your online marketing, is how well your business is set up to handle orders, questions and support requests. If you were to receive a surge of customer inquiries via email and phone, would you be equipped to manage these leads efficiently, turning them into paying customers? Would your customers be able to track the process of their orders online? A web-based CRM system could ensure that your business is well-prepared for growth.

Also, remember that processes go far beyond the sale. Collecting feedback, up-selling, cross-selling and product or service improvement are other important stages of the process.

In the online world, the smallest of changes to your process can make big differences, so plenty of care must be taken when altering your prices for example. Be sure that the new prices are updated across the board - on your website, in catalogues, email templates, and in all your advertising and promotional materials.

By implementing good processes and systems, your business is able to compete much more effectively. You will be working smarter, faster and with much less strain on your resources (money, staff and time). The ideal online business is a well-oiled machine, working hard to keep your customers happy.



“Think of your favorite online store that you like to purchase from. How does this business ensure that everything runs smoothly for you - their valued customer.”

## Chapter 3: Customers in the Online World

It is true, now more than ever, that your customers are the most valuable asset of your business. Treat them well and they might buy from you again, treat them like royalty and not only will they be your customer for life - they'll do most of your advertising for you! A satisfied customer might mention you to their friends, but a delighted customer will preach your name far and wide.

Customers *are* your business - so make sure that you are set up in such a way that listens to them, gets them involved, serves them and adds value to their experience. With good online marketing, it's possible to find good customers, who when treated right, will grow into extremely profitable, life-long customers. When you've learnt to do this effectively, you can replicate your methods for new customers while constantly, testing, measuring and improving your customer-focus.



“How well do you think you know your customers? Can you improve your understanding of them and get to know them more?”

Good online marketers know their customers deepest wants, needs, demands and concerns. Understanding your customers' behavior and the way that they buy online is very important, especially considering that your customer base could consist of people from all over the world.

As well as these geographical differences, people act much differently on the Internet, than they do offline. Not knowing exactly what your customers expect from you will make it very difficult to keep them happy. You need to know what it is that attracts them, and keeps them coming back for more. Don't just take a wild stab in the dark or assume here - this is not the way to run a business. Instead, spend some time getting to know your customers inside and out.

## Why Do Customers Go Online?

The Internet is an enormous place, filled with many different kinds of people. The reasons that we go online are numerous; from socializing, to sending and receiving email, reading the news, shopping and browsing, entertainment, education and research. Internet users enjoy being in control. They can access any information they like, when they like. Because of this, many customers will use the Internet to research products or services before they make a purchase. The empowered online customer has access to more knowledge than ever before. They have the ability to browse around your competitor's sites, and to share information with your previous customers. By doing this, they can get a good idea of whether or not making a purchase on your website, is a wise decision.



“If you have been in business for some time, type your business name or URL into the Google search bar and see if there are any results containing conversations about your business.”

As the Internet is an extremely powerful networking tool, this puts your businesses reputation in a very fragile predicament. Because of this, you need to ensure that you are treating your customers well and making certain that they are only saying good things about you and your business on discussion forums and blogs, etc. around the Internet. Be sure to always deliver on your promises, otherwise bad word-of-mouth will spread, repeat sales will decrease - causing damage to your business. Don't promise your customers what you can't deliver. This is particularly true with delivery times! Remember: it is far better for you to under promise, and over deliver!

## Online Customer Expectations

For some reason, online customers have higher expectations of businesses on the Internet, than conventional ones. Online, they expect higher convenience, speedier delivery, more competitive prices and larger variety. They expect to be in control of the entire purchase experience, and to feel secure in their dealings

with you. This is all understandable, but the problem with these high expectations, is that customers can be let down easily - bringing damage to your brand. When a business does not deliver on time, customers can be disappointed, annoyed, angry and sometimes even aggressive.

Due to the ease at which a customer can switch over to one of your competitors - you need to work extra hard in order to keep their business! Fortunately for you, it seems that good customer service is hard to find on the Internet, so your business could have a massive advantage just by meeting your customers expectations and keeping them happy.



"Research shows that poor customer service is the main reason why customers don't remain loyal to a business - not price or features. Do you see how important good customer service is?"

## Online Customer Fears

Although most of us have no problem with listening to the radio or watching television, when it comes to the Internet, there is a certain element of fear associated with it. As online marketers, it is our responsibility to deal with this fear and to make sure that it has minimal effect on preventing our customers from making a purchase through our website.

Understand that for many people, the whole online experience is completely new. The possibility of stolen credit card details, hackers, scammers, spam and viruses could be lurking in the backs of their minds. Even the chaos of information-overload on the Internet could make them skeptical of your credibility. All of these types of fears are based on a lack of control.

Good online marketers understand that customers can be a little apprehensive at times, and know the correct steps required to take action against these feelings of fear. Below are some practical methods of putting your customers at ease;

1. Have a clear privacy statement on your website and stand by it.
2. Display independent certifications on your site such as <[Verisign.com](http://Verisign.com)>.
3. Emphasize your service quality in all emails and phone calls.

4. Use the text on your website to reassure the customer. Make things clear and explain their actions. Ask them to confirm things and allow them to cancel any actions that they make.
5. Professional web design. Make sure that your site appears professional, trustworthy, easy-to-use, and easy-to-navigate.

Following the above five steps will help to prevent many of the common customer fears that prevent them from buying. Making your customers feel comfortable and earning their trust over time will improve your sales dramatically. Therefore, building good, long-term relationships is vital for a sustainable business. It was the failure to do so, that was largely responsible for the dot com bust in the late 1990s. Don't fall victim to the same problems.



“Visit one of your favorite online stores, and have a look around to see if the above 5 steps are used to make customers feel secure.”

## Keeping Your Customers Happy

Well, you've learnt by now that the success of your business lies largely in the happiness of your customers. If you can effectively make, and keep, your customers happy - you won't be able to stop them from buying from you again and again! Are you doing the best that you possibly can to keep a smile on your customer's faces?

- Is your website easy to use? Do pages load fast, and with no errors?
- Have you made it easy for customers to find the particular products or services that they are interested in?
- Is your price, availability, and product or service information displayed clearly and correctly?
- Do you make it clear of how long delivery will take?
- Do you provide email notifications when an order is placed, when payment is made and when your products are sent, or services completed?
- Do you keep all personal data private?
- Do you ask customers to verify high-value orders?
- Do you deliver by (or before) the promised delivery date?
- Do you have a clear returns policy allowing an easy return or replacement?

- Do you provide quick, honest answers when the above expectations aren't met? This means being able to go through records, and someone who knows the order status and can solve any problems quickly and efficiently.



“Good marketing skills are really just good people skills.”

## Building Customer Loyalty

There has been a lot of research in to the profitability of repeat business. It is said that customers who return to make another order are, on average, worth 5 times more profit than an order from a new customer. This is because it will generally cost you nothing to get an existing customer to make another purchase. But attracting new customers costs you money in advertising and promotions, as well as time. If your business has a low rate of returning customers, it can struggle to stay afloat, because you constantly need to keep finding new customers in order to turn a profit. By creating a sense of loyalty in your customers, you can solve this problem. A loyal customer will not only return to buy from you often, they will also spread a good reputation about your business through positive word-of-mouth, bringing in even more sales.

My promotional t-shirt printing business targets Australian rock bands, who in my opinion are the second biggest networkers (after mothers!). They share everything with each other, because bands like to help other bands. I once had a situation where an order for 100 printed tees was late, so I quickly organized an employee to jump on a plane and fly the package out to my customer in the next city. Yes, it cost me more than the profit I made - but I made my customer's day! They had a very important gig that night.

As well as helping these guys out because it was the right thing to do, it was also important for me to consider the lifetime value of the customer. The real cost at stake here, had I lost their business, was not only the purchases that they will make in the future (currently about 2 per year, growing consecutively) but also the damage that could have been caused to my brand's reputation. A poor reputation can mean a rapid decline in sales and even has the potential to destroy your business.

Your customers are invaluable - treat them like rock stars. This one truth has the power to turn your business into a thriving multi-million dollar company - a customer focused company.



“Next time you receive a customer complaint, have a think about their lifetime value before you react in an uncaring way. What would it really cost you to lose them?”

There are many ways for your business to earn customer loyalty, which all center around good business practices. Reicheld and Scheffter identified that the ‘primary determinants of loyalty’ are:

1. Quality customer support
2. On-time delivery
3. Compelling product or service presentations
4. Convenient and reasonably priced shipping and handling
5. Clear, trustworthy privacy policies

Not surprisingly, quality customer support comes in at number one. Sadly, many online businesses have mixed interpretations about the word ‘quality’. The whole idea of satisfying customers needs to be reconsidered. A merely satisfied customer will have no problem in shopping somewhere else for their next order. We really need to replace ‘satisfaction’ with ‘amazement’. You should go out of your way to *amaze* your customers with how much you care for them, and appreciate their business - making sure that your customer service people do the same. This means accommodating customer’s special requests to the best of your ability. Be flexible. Your goal at all times should be do whatever you can (within reason) to make your customers so happy, that they tell everyone that they know about you! Don’t fail at customer service, because it’s arguably the greatest opportunity you have to differentiate yourself from your competitors. There are many different approaches to amazing your customers, but it’s all about listening, and meeting their needs over and above the regular call of duty.



“How many of your happy customers come back to you with repeat orders? If you could increase that amount, your business could grow exponentially with new AND repeat orders.”

## Customer Interaction

In order to properly interact with your customers before during and after their purchase, you need to have an understanding of the buying process. There are various stages leading up to a sale which begins at the customer's first contact with your business. This will usually be in the form of some kind of advertisement, or the result of a Google search for your particular type of products or services. An interested user will respond by clicking, to land on your business website. At this stage you want to help your potential customer to learn about your business, and the benefits of buying from you. This is where your website goes to work - introducing your business with your logo, your tag line, headlines, sales copy, flash presentations, images, numbered steps, audio, video, testimonials, etc. At this point, your potential customer will make a decision; either to leave the website with a simple click, or to stay around to learn more. If deciding that your business looks relevant and credible, the prospect might then move on to fill out a contact form, quote request, or even place an order. If this is the case, then making sure that all the required information is displayed on your website, and by responding with fast and friendly answers to questions, you are able to lead the customer right through to make a purchase. Your efforts here will help to break any reluctance they might have about going ahead with the order. Sometimes it's necessary to offer an incentive for customers to 'buy now', and this can be done with time-limited promotions. Eg. 'Order Today and Take Advantage of our 10% Off Sale!'

Make sure that you clearly display your phone number at the checkout stage for the potential customers with any last questions, or those that prefer to buy over the phone. It's also good to reassure them about any privacy and security concerns.

When the customer finally goes ahead with an order, often after assessing your quote, the interaction does not stop there. You should continue on to provide a payment confirmation message, and various updates throughout the order progress. When the order is dispatched (or started as in the case of a service), the customer should be informed again. A follow up email should also be sent around 3 days after the order was due to arrive (or when a service has been completed). This email is to ask the customer if everything went well with their order and to give them an opportunity to provide any feedback about your product or service quality.

This follow up email is quite powerful, as it will let your customers know that you

still care about them, even after you have taken their money! From here, ongoing, relevant and timely promotional emails should be sent to those who have opted to receive them. This will help with repeat sales, by keeping your business fresh in the minds of your customers, long after they have visited your website.

In every interaction with your customers, whether it be by email or by phone, make sure that you maintain a friendly tone. At all times, give the impression that you are extremely happy that the customer has shown interest in your products or services. Doing this will cause your customers to feel valued and to move toward a deeper ‘friendship’ with your business.



“Buy a product or service from a well known online store and watch the whole customer interaction process closely. Examine all emails that are sent to you right through to delivery and beyond.”

## Chapter 4: Building Your Brand

With any business, strong branding is extremely important, because it helps customers to clearly identify what you are about. It will differentiate you from your competitors and, by practicing what you preach, will create a desire within your customers to be associated with your business. They'll want to 'belong' to your brand.

Your 'brand' goes far beyond your business name and logo. It is your entire image and the way that you are perceived by your customers. It's your reputation and it's the emotions and attitudes that are associated with everything you do, and all that your business stands for.

Branding is not just about portraying an image through clever marketing though. If you try to portray an image that isn't true, then your customers will see through that. You really need to find out what you, as a business, are all about. Then consistently and clearly portray that brand, making sure that your staff, website and product or service do the same.



“What is your ‘brand’? What are your values? And what does your business stand for?”

### Identifying Your Brand

Your customer service people, apart from your existing customers, are the most critical ambassadors of your brand. Therefore it is vital that they are extremely clear about what you represent as a business. For this reason, if you haven't already, you will need to develop a Business Philosophy. These are thoughtfully planned Values and Vision statements that clearly enforce what you stand for, and why you exist as a business. Although the obvious answer would be 'to make money', some deeper reasons, depending on your business, could be; to make people look fashionable, to promote an adventurous life, to make life easier, to provide quality entertainment, to provide real business solutions, etc.

## Maintaining Brand Consistency

Once you have defined your brand, you must establish consistency of your key brand message throughout your website, in all customer interactions (phone and email) and within your product or service itself. Simply setting standards is not enough, you need to constantly evaluate the image that your business is portraying to the public, and ensure that it is in line with your brand values.

Allow staff to give you feedback about any inconsistencies within your business and be sure to take their advice. If your brand stands for one thing and a customer sees another, you will be in danger of damaging your reputation. The best way to lead is by example. If your brand projects a friendly image that claims to care about people, but you treat your staff poorly, then your reputation (and sales) will suffer. Always stay true to your brand.

## Understanding Cultural Differences

As more and more business move on to the Internet, we are fast becoming a global economy. Your customers could come from any walk of life and it's important when building a brand that you think about cultural differences. Words and phrases that mean one thing in your country might not translate to the same meaning somewhere else. The things that you value and consider good, might be the complete opposite in another country. Your brand should be extremely clear, but broad enough for you to grow globally.



“Your brand encapsulates your business, so identify, build and deliver your brand values across all communications and you’ll be positioning yourself for long term success.”

## Chapter 5: Elements of Effective Website Design

Now that we have most of the marketing theory stuff out of the way, you should be starting to get a good understanding of your responsibilities as an online marketer. Next, let's take a look at another extremely important part of your online business - your website. As many online customers will interact with you through this 'virtual store', it is extremely important that you get it right.

### The 3 Main Purposes of Your Website

A good product or service website should never just be an online catalog of your offerings. To maximize your sales, you need to make sure that you are using your website to its fullest potential. There are three main purposes that your site should fulfill;

#### **1. Customer Acquisition**

Winning new customers. This involves the whole process of converting your site visitors into paying customers. Your website, and especially your copy (text), should clearly communicate what you are offering. You should outline the benefits of your product or services and provide relevant information on the right pages. Your entire website should be geared at helping people to buy the products or services that they have come looking for. Your website is also a brand building tool, so remember to clearly portray your image and what you stand for.

#### **2. Customer Retention**

Keeping customers. You can increase the chances of a customer buying from you again by using timely reminder emails, promotional offers and incentives for them to keep coming back to your site. A weekly newsletter gives you the ability to deliver relevant and useful information containing good reasons for your subscribers to come back. Use your site as a communication tool, to get closer to customers. Through it you can learn more about them, customize content for them, and keep the conversation flowing. Make it easy for customers to communicate with you through your website by using such tools as a contact

form, call back request forms, live chat, a forum and a facility for customers to check their order status easily.

### 3. **Customer Extension**

Selling extra things to customers. As I mentioned before, you can really boost your sales by selling other relevant products or services to the same customer. By using your existing information about the types of things that were previously purchased, you can get a good idea of other products or services (or upgrades) that your customers might be interested in, and present these things before, or in followup emails after the sale.



“Spend some time researching effective ways that companies have used to increase customer acquisition, retention and extension.”

## What Kind of Website Do Your Customers Want?

Although there are many different types of websites online, ranging from big flash animations right down to text-only pages - how can you be sure what kind of website your customers will prefer? I think to answer this question, we need to look at the main things that people look for in a website.

A survey of 8600 U.S. consumers conducted by Forrester <[www.forrester.com](http://www.forrester.com)> revealed the 4 main factors that made users return to a website:

1. **High quality content** - Good, relevant information that is easily accessible when the customer needs it
2. **Ease of use** - Clear, easy site navigation. Easy to find the pricing and order page and other required information
3. **Quick to download** - Internet users are becoming increasingly impatient and will mostly leave if the website takes too long to load
4. **Updated frequently** - Fresh content. New information which is useful, relevant and timely for the audience. This could involve industry news, a blog, regular forum posts, competitions and special seasonal promotions.



“Does your website currently contain the above 4 factors, to encourage your users to return?”

## A Page by Page Analysis

If your business incorporates the above 4 components into your website, you'll have a very good advantage over your competitors, and will be well on your way to keeping your clientele both happy and responsive. Although the ideas seem simple, I thought that it would be useful to you if I outline some of the actual pages and components that I believe should be included in your business website.

### Home Page

This is a fairly obvious part of your website, but what's not obvious are the things that should be included on this most-visited page, which is often a customer's first impression of your business.

**Logo** - Your header (the top of the page) should include a bold business logo that allows your customers to clearly and instantly identify your business. Your logo, and the rest of your website, should look professional - or your customers might assume that your products or services are also inferior. Try to make your logo easy to remember, and if possible, incorporate your URL into it. This will make it easy for customers to remember your web address for next time.

**Tag line** - This is an important part of a home page that is so often overlooked. A good tag line should encapsulate your brand into one sentence. It should say very clearly what your business is about. See the websites below that were mentioned in the Finding Your Niche section, for examples of effective tag lines.

- Brand Resistant <[www.brandresistant.com](http://www.brandresistant.com)> - Dress to protest
- 80s Tees <[www.80stees.com](http://www.80stees.com)> - Great product or services for the kid in us all!
- Desteenation <[www.desteenation.com](http://www.desteenation.com)> - Real tees from real places
- T-shirt Hell <[www.tshirthehell.com](http://www.tshirthehell.com)> - Where all the bad shirts go
- Tchirts <[www.tchirts.com](http://www.tchirts.com)> - Funny product or services for gringos and latinos



“Take a look at some of your favorite business websites. Are you able to get an idea of what the brand is about just by looking over the contents on the home page?”

**Navigation Bar** - As a web standard, your navigation bar - which is the links to all the main pages in your website - should be in a horizontal line just under your logo at the top of the page. This is to make navigating your site as clear and as easy as possible.

**Search Bar** - It's added convenience for your visitors, if you include a search bar somewhere on your home page. This will make finding particular products or services quick and easy. The data that people type into your search bar is also invaluable information to you, revealing the types of things that your customers are looking for. If you notice certain searches being made regularly, this is a very good indication that something could sell really well, if you don't already have it available for purchase on your site.

**Contact Info** - Your phone number, email and even a call back request button should be prominent somewhere on your home page. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to get in contact with you.

**Popular Products or Services** - Another vital ingredient of an effective home page is photographs showing your most popular products or services. These should link directly to their specific pages, containing further information and the option to purchase them. Displaying these on the home page gives your customers an instant example of the types of things that your business offers.

**Current Promotions** - One extremely effective way to increase sales and to get attention is to have a big promotion displayed on your home page. This might be a seasonal promotion such as, *10% Off For Father's Day* or an all-year-round promotion like, *Buy 3 - Get Free Shipping*, or perhaps *Free Trial*.

**Effective Copy (text)** - It goes without saying that your website should have effective copy throughout its pages. The style of writing should be clear, laid out in brief chunks and be well-aligned with your brand or 'style'. It's a common sales technique to major on the benefits of your products or services, clearly stating what's in it for the customer. Your website text should also be 'keyword rich' for Search Engine Optimization purposes. This means including the exact words and phrases that people might type into Google when searching for your particular products or services.

**Footer** - The footer, which is the last section at the bottom of your page should include a smaller navigation bar with links to such things as Terms, Privacy Policy, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Contact Us, etc. Your business name along with a Copyright symbol should also be present, as well as any industry association logos, supported charities and security icons, etc. These types of things help to put the customer at ease by making your business appear legitimate and trustworthy.

## About Us

This page is your opportunity to introduce yourself not only as a business, but as a person running a business. Your ‘About Us’ page should be personal, have an outline of your story, and clearly present your brand through such things as Values and Mission Statements. Don’t assume that your visitors will automatically know what you are about, this page is a perfect opportunity for you to explain the brand and to let people know what it is that makes you different. Although it may feel vain, it is extremely effective to include a photo of yourself on this page as well. Online users like to see the face behind the website, and by adding photos of you and your staff, you will begin to connect on a personal level which will help you with gaining customer trust.

## Pricing

Pricing is often the most important thing that a customer wants to see before making the purchase decision, so it’s important to have this information clear and easily accessible. When listing prices, make sure that you are clear and transparent, listing all charges including any extra costs like shipping or set up fees. Customers can be easily deterred at the quoting phase if you appear to have hidden charges, by not stating all of the costs up front. Be sure to make things as honest and as simple as possible.

## Product Or Service Pages

Your website should have a separate page for each different product or service that you offer. This will prove useful when it comes to advertising, as you will be able to send potential customers directly to specific products or services of interest. The page should include clear photographs, as it’s difficult for a customer to imagine your products before making a purchase, unless you send them a sample. Use pointed sales copy and be as specific as you possibly can

with your descriptions and specifications. Try to present your products or services as clearly as possible, perhaps even using informative video or flash presentations. Your product/service pages should also include a ‘buy now’ or ‘add to cart’ button.

## FAQ

When Frequently Asked Questions are listed on your site, you can save a lot of time by not having to answer common queries via email or phone. For this reason, it’s worth putting in some initial effort to get this right. Make a list of all the questions that your business receives on a regular basis, and take a look at competitors FAQ pages for any questions that you may have left out. When providing your answers, do so in a friendly manner, remaining positive, and making sure that you don’t sound abrupt. The last thing that you want to do is make a potential customer feel stupid, or have a giant list of things that you cannot and will not do!

## Terms

Your Terms page is basically a few paragraphs of text outlining the legal terms and conditions of using your website. It really just a legal precaution, but can also help towards creating a sense of security within your customers.

## Privacy

Your Privacy Policy page will outline your intended use of the contact and personal information that you collect about your users. This page can also help to put your customers at ease, by letting them know that their information is only collected if they give you their expressed permission.

## Contact Us

A good Contact page should include your physical address, postal address, phone and fax. numbers, sales email address, support email address, a call back request button and an inquiry form. By including all of these things, you make it possible for customers to communicate with you in any way that is convenient for them. It’s also useful to include maps and a photo of your physical shop front, if you have one.

## Site Map

A Site Map is a page which displays a directory tree of all the pages within your website. It will not only make it easy for users to find what they are looking for, but can also help with your search engine rankings.

The pages that I have listed above are all quite standard for a business website. If you would like to include some additional enhancements, try some of the following;

## Forum

Hosting a forum on your website and building your own community around your brand can be a very good idea for several reasons.

- You can get to know your customers much better
- You will have many people returning to your website to answer questions and to read posts
- You can collect valuable feedback with surveys and voting polls about site enhancements and service quality
- You can collect email addresses of users during the forum sign up process, and ask members if they would like to subscribe to your ongoing newsletter
- Your website will receive greater visibility in the search engines, as more pages with relevant content will mean more chances of your site being listed in Google results, etc.
- Your site will be seen as a great resource and a place where you customers can hang out

## Blog

Another great idea is to include a blog on your website. This can be used to build up a readership by writing regular entries about your niche, your daily business growth or your industry in general. This is a good opportunity to present yourself as an authority within your market, or even just to connect with your customers and reveal some of the personality behind your business. It's also another great way to get good search engine rankings.

## Articles

Displaying articles on your website serves two purposes. Firstly, it provides a useful resource for your customers, and also helps with your search engine

rankings - as relevant articles will be filled with keywords that are related to your type of business. The articles can either be your own, or sourced from free services such as <[EzineArticles.com](http://EzineArticles.com)>.

## Gallery

A great way to showcase your product or service designs is to have a picture gallery on your website. The pictures could be photos that have been sent in by customers using your products. Suitable businesses might like to run some kind of competition as an incentive for people to send their photos in via email. This is a great way to display a sense of community and ‘social proof’ which will increase your sales as potential customers are more likely to make a purchase from you after seeing that a whole bunch of people already have.

## Press

If you’re business has been the subject of any recent media attention, it’s a good idea to display this on a Press page. You can include scanned images of any newspaper or magazine clippings, audio files of radio interviews or links to reviews, etc on other websites. This will also add to the ‘social proof’ of your website and can make all the difference to sales.

## News

Many customers like to keep informed, so a News page can work really well. Use it to let people know what is going on in your business. You might also have news on your particular niche or your industry as a whole.

## Order Status

When buying something online, the wait for your product to turn up on your doorstep can be painful. For this reason, it’s worth implementing a facility for your customers to track their order status. This can be managed by your e-commerce software and should integrate with your freight company, so tracking numbers can be entered in to locate dispatched packages.

## Competitions

Good competitions can really get your customer community involved. If your prizes are good, they will keep customers coming back again and again. The prizes (usually your products or services) can help to get your brand name out there in the public, as the winner will become excited and spread the news of their win far and wide. With a dedicated competitions page, you can also run comps that involve customers submitting feedback about your business.

## Street Team

An increasingly common offline marketing tool for many businesses is a Street Team. This is a group of incentivized 'die hard fans' whose role is to promote your brand in any way possible within their own sphere of influence. A dedicated Street Team page could have a forum for its members. It could display prizes for the best promoters, have a sign-up form and show pictures or videos of your team out in the public handing out flyers, etc. A Street Team can be a great method of guerilla marketing for appropriate businesses, and can create a strong sense of belonging within your customers.

## Newsletter

Newsletters have become a key marketing component for any online business. It is a direct line to your customers and periodical mail-outs can be used to keep your brand fresh in their minds. You have the ability to invite customers back to your site at any time for various offers and promotions, generating more sales. A good newsletter is an extremely valuable tool, so be sure to include an opt-in form on your home page and other relevant pages so that customers have the ability to sign up.

## MySpace/Facebook

Setting up a MySpace or a Facebook page, is a very good way to present your business to a much wider audience. For some businesses, being present on one of these social networks is a great way to find new customers within your niche. It also allows your existing customers to communicate with you in a comfortable, informal way while giving you the added opportunity to build your brand awareness.

## Site Usability

Usability is a term used to measure how well your visitors can use your website to complete specific actions. Efficiency, simplicity and ease-of-use are all important factors when it comes to usability. So as not to deter any potential customers, it is important to make sure that your site is working as well as possible.

One way to test usability is to have a group of people who have never used your site before to go through and attempt to perform actions like finding a particular products or service, placing an order, or contacting customer service. If there are any issues, then these will need to be ironed out as soon as possible. Another important factor of web design is accessibility. As there are thousands of users around the world with different computers, operating systems, browsers, screen resolutions and internet connections - it's important to make sure that your website appears and functions in the best possible way, across multiple platforms.

One of the key components of site design adopted by many successful companies including Apple and Google, is simplicity. Make sure that you provide the simplest and clearest website that you possibly can - one that is extremely intuitive and easy to use.



“Arrange for some friends that haven’t seen your website, to conduct a usability test. The feedback might help you to reconsider some elements of your site design and order process.”

## Behind The Scenes

Behind every good business website are strong, integrated back-end systems which are used to manage many tasks such as payments, inventory, order tracking, customer data, customer interactions, automatic emails, and finances just to name a few! Although I can't go into too much information within this book about implementing each system - I'd like to give you a general overview of two main systems, so that you can get an idea of what is possible within your own business.

## E-Commerce Software

E-Commerce software, such as <[1ShoppingCart.com](http://1ShoppingCart.com)> (which is one of the easiest that I have come across), can be easily setup to give you shopping cart functionality, as well as providing the ‘nuts and bolts’ required to handle many of your customers’ ordering and payment activities. <[1ShoppingCart.com](http://1ShoppingCart.com)> is a very easy to use service that does it all, so it’s very handy. The main features to look for when choosing e-commerce software for your business website are;

- The ability for customers to order multiple types of products or services
- Member discounting to encourage repeat sales
- A management interface and editor for you to add and change your products or services
- Flexibility to add various delivery and payment options
- An in-site search engine

Good e-commerce software will allow customers to set up their own accounts, allowing them to log in to the site at any time. The customer’s contact and delivery details are saved in a data base so that they don’t have to enter their information in each time they visit. The data base should also store purchase information, so that you can analyze which customers buy certain product or services giving you the ability to tailor make specific email messages to different groups.



“It’s usually better to build your site around your e-commerce software. So make sure that your site template, or designer is compatible with the software that you choose.”

## Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software

Implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system can involve a lot of time and expense. Therefore, I usually only recommended it to well developed businesses who are looking to take things to the next level by forming stronger relationships with their customers. Whether or not you are ready at this stage, it’s still good to know that CRM systems have many benefits;

- Better timing and relevance in your email messages to customers due to your ability to anticipate their needs based on historic data
- You are able to identify and meet needs more effectively by understanding specific customer requirements and segregating customers into various groups
- Helps to manage cross-selling and up-selling
- Allows a more personal approach to customers which helps to encourage repeat business
- Higher customer satisfaction and retention, means that your good reputation continues to grow
- You can reduce costs associated with customer service and support, increasing your overall efficiency

With a CRM system you can start to look after your existing customers quite easily, which allows you to focus on finding new customers. On top of that, the more you know your customers, the easier it is to identify potential new ones.

By having your database easily accessible, you can locate where most of your existing customers were found, and concentrate your efforts into getting customers from the same source. You will also know exactly what is needed in order to convert potential customers into sales which will help you to increase your customer base greatly. A good web-based CRM system also allows multiple users to log on at any given time, so anyone within your business (customer service people, etc.) can be given access to the customer information.



"If you are interested in setting up a CRM system, organize a time with one of the many providers available, for a free demo of how it can help your business. They'll be happy to show you."

## Chapter 6: Traffic Building Techniques

Now that you have all the information that you need in order to start getting your website geared for effective online marketing, it's time to look at the fun task of getting visitors to your site! When it comes to sourcing clicks, many online business pay for high volumes of traffic in a chaotic game of hit and miss. But rather than quantity, it is really the quality of your website traffic that you should be concerned with. You need to make sure that the people you attract to your site are not only interested in your type of products or services, but are likely to make a purchase. There are literally hundreds of ways to find potential customers online (both free and paid), so I thought that I would give you an overview of some of the main 'traffic generating' techniques. This will help you to be more informed when it comes to deciding which methods you will use to attract customers, as you'll know how each technique works. With a lot of these methods, you may decide to pay an expert to put them into practice for you - but a basic knowledge is still an advantage, as you'll know what is possible and the types of results that you can expect for your business.

### Search Marketing

Did you know that about 90% of all online purchasing customers come straight from search engines? Millions of people from around the world use search engines to find specific products or services to purchase, every single day. By understanding Pay Per Click advertising, Search Engine Optimization and the Content networks - you will know what is needed to bring highly targeted traffic into your own website.

#### Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is the process of 'tweaking' your website and links in order to increase your site ranking in search engine results. By optimizing your website text and links for keywords that are highly related to your products or services, you will have greater chance that that your site will be seen by users searching for those particular keywords. As the majority of searchers will never look beyond the first few pages of results in Google for instance, it's important that your website

achieves a relatively high ranking in order to maximize the amount of potential visitors.

SEO is considered by many to be a more technical side of online marketing. Because a basic knowledge of HTML is needed, as well as being familiar with the algorithms that search engines use to display sites in order of relevance, many businesses decide to leave their SEO to an expert. As the search engines are constantly updating their criteria for website relevance, it can sometimes be very difficult to keep up. If you decide to do SEO yourself, make sure that you consistently do your research in order to stay ahead of the game!

One of the most important things to remember about SEO is that search engines are not humans. Search engines are only interested in the text throughout your website content, headings, titles, file names, and links (both on your site and pointing to your site from other places). Search engines crawl the Internet, at regular intervals, analyzing text so as to form an idea of what each website is about. Crawlers (or spiders) which is the software used by Google to sort through websites, follow links from one page to another, indexing everything that they find on their way through the Internet. Because of the sheer volume of web pages to get through, the crawlers will sometimes not revisit your site for a month at a time. So during this period, any website changes you make will not affect your search engine ranking until your site is crawled next.

### *Search Engine Optimization Tips*

To help you to get things moving, I have provided some basic tips that can get you started on optimizing your website to rank higher in the search engines; Select 5 keyword phrases that describe the products or services that you sell. Try to be quite specific, because the less general you are, the less competition you will have for those particular words. Also, when your phrases are specific, you will be able to source some very highly-targeted traffic to your website. Going back to our t-shirt example, a business selling t-shirts with crazy dog cartoons on them should select such phrases as: 'funny dog t-shirts', 'humorous dog t-shirts', 't-shirts with dogs on them', and 'dog cartoon t-shirts'. Make sure that you don't try to optimize for overly-broad phrases, like 't-shirts', in this case. Although it seems logical to go after the millions of people searching 't-shirts' in Google every day, that would be a very difficult task without paying out a lot of money. There would be an extreme amount of competition, and only a very small percentage of people searching for 't-shirts' would be interested in 'funny dog t-shirts' anyway.

- \* Once you have selected your 5 keyword phrases, insert them into your website page HTML titles. Use your most important phrase at the beginning, followed by the other 4 keyword phrases and then your business/brand name. Also remember keyword variations, these would be phrases like 'tees', 'tee shirts', 't/shirts' and 't shirts' in our example.
- \* For your H1 header tag within the page HTML, make sure that you contain the same keywords that are in your title.
- \* Also use descriptive sub-headers (H2 or H3) with your keywords in them before every few paragraphs. This improves usability and helps the search engines to know what the page is about.
- \* Use bullets, italics and bolding for your keywords to break up your site content and make it easier to read.
- \* Write your website copy for humans. Make sure you don't overuse your keywords just to get high search rankings. Search engines don't like pages that look 'spammy', so make sure you write naturally.
- \* Add lots of quality on-site content. Forums, blogs and articles are all good things to have on your website as they constantly add natural text to your site containing several good keywords related to your types of products or services. The more pages of human generated content that your site has, the more chance you site has of pages appearing in the search results. This will also get you links from other sites, as people will begin to find your content useful.

### *Link Building*

Once you've properly optimized your website pages, you can start looking at the most important part of SEO - link building. By finding ways to get other quality and relevant websites to link to yours, you can boost your search engine ranking by hundreds of positions at a time.

-  Find websites that are closely related to yours (same keywords), and email them asking them to link to your home page in return for placing a link on your website to their home page.
-  Whenever you can, try to make sure that your keywords are in the link text of any links pointing to your pages.

 Look for places where you can get free, high-quality links to your website like local business directories, website directories and any kind of industry directories.

 Write relevant, keyword rich articles about your industry with a link to your site and submit them to several article directories. (There is more on articles later in this chapter.)

 Comment on other sites like blogs and forums with useful and relevant information and include a keyword rich link to your site in the signature or at the end of the comment.

 Issue online press releases about your business with links to your site. Sponsor charities, blogs, or other websites related to yours in exchange for links.

 Link to your site from your MySpace or Facebook page, or any other similar sites.

 If you have any interesting articles, pictures, videos forum or blog posts on your website, submit them to social bookmarking sites like <[Digg.com](http://Digg.com)> with your main keywords in the headline.

Each of these tips will go a long way towards helping you to get higher search engine rankings, so they are well worth your effort. Note that many quality links into your site will boost your rankings dramatically, so be sure to spend some time on link building. It's also worth mentioning that any new SEO changes to your website can take up to 30 days (and sometimes longer) to have any effect on your search engine ranking - so remember to be patient!



“If you don't feel confident doing your own SEO, it's probably better to outsource the task. But why not give the above tips a try, and see if you can get some results on your own first?”

## Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising

One way to get guaranteed first-page listings in search engines for any keyword is to pay for it. Google Adwords, for example, allows you to pay a certain

amount to be included in their ‘Sponsored Results’ on the right-hand side of the screen when a particular search is made. The amount that you pay is up to you, but will determine your position in the ranking order of similar websites that are also paying to be included in the sponsored results for the same keywords.

Google AdWords, like many other PPC services works on a bidding system. The higher you pay for someone to click on your ad, the higher up the list your ad will be shown, creating higher visibility. Because you only pay when someone clicks on your ad and visits your website, many businesses are using this service to attract new potential customers every day. There is a limit of course, to the amount that you should spend on PPC. This is because you need to make sure that you are getting a good Return On Investment (ROI). For example, let’s say that you spend \$50 to generate 100 clicks from people who have searched for ‘funny dog t-shirts’, and out of those 100 people that visit your website, 4 of them make a purchase. If the profit that you make is much higher than \$50, then this was money well spent - a good ROI. If however, your ad spend is more than your profit, then you will need to make some alterations which could involve changing your bids, changing your ad text, or changing the web page that the ad links to (usually the product or service page), in order to better convert those visitors into buyers.

Google (and others) also give you the option of displaying your text, banner or video ads on websites within your target market. This is called the Content Network, and when used properly, can be a great way to expand your reach to an even larger audience. I won’t go into too much detail here about PPC and the Content Network, as it can get quite in-depth! But if you would to find out more about this effective advertising medium, I recommend some good further reading in the Resources section of this book.



“Most Pay Per Click services allow you to set daily budgets on your campaigns, so that you can cap your advertising spend at a comfortable amount.”

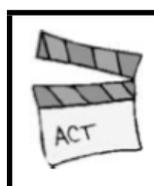
## Product Search Engines

Product search engines, like Google Product Search, allow you to list specific products within their directory for free. This could allow even more potential customers to find your business, delivering quality traffic to your website and helping you to increase sales. Based on your product’s relevance, shoppers

may find them in their results for searches on Google Product Or Service Search, as well as the main Google web search.

There are generally no charges for uploading your product listings or making changes to your details, and you can add as many products as you like. Their handy data feed tools allow you to submit your entire product catalog if you want to! They also give you control of the information displayed in the Product Search results for your items.

As product search engines are relatively new, I suggest that you jump in early and begin to take advantage of them. I predict that product search engine popularity will grow in the near future, even to eventually become the main channel that consumers use to find products to buy online.



“To maximize your results, why not do a little research on how you can best optimize your listings within each product search engine?”

## Banner Advertising

Despite becoming less effective, due to web users developing an ‘immunity’ to flashing advertisements on the screen, banner advertising can still be a good way to bring traffic to your website at relatively low-cost.

Some of the main reasons of placing graphic advertising banners on other websites related to your target market are as follows;

- To increase your sales
- To offer special deals, discounts and promotions
- To get your target audience to remember your brand name

When arranging with other websites to display your banner advertisement, there are quite a few terms that are often used. I’ll give you a brief explanation of the main ones, so that you know what you’re dealing with.

**Banner ad:** An advertisement graphic that is linked to the URL of the advertised product or service. These are usually animated GIF images, Flash banners or even Video ads. The ‘full’ banner size is 468 x 60 pixels, and most

sites limit the file size of the graphic to ensure fast download speeds. The Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) specifies 8 different banner sizes.

**Creative:** Advertising jargon used to describe the actual banner graphic.

**Hits:** Usually people define "hits" as the number of times a web page has been seen, but to be precise, the better term is "page views" or "page impressions."

**Banner views:** The number of times a banner has been displayed on the web page. Almost the same as "page views," but some banner server programs won't count a banner view, unless the user remains on the page long enough for the banner to be fully downloaded.

**CPM:** A metric that has been used since the early days of offline print advertising. It means "Cost Per Thousand". Some people can get confused here thinking that it is "Cost Per Million", however the Roman numeral "M" is used to represent one-thousand. A price of \$20 CPM means, \$20 for every thousand times the banner is displayed on the web page.

**Click-Thru:** Used to count the number of visitors who click on the banner and are transferred to the advertiser's website.

**Click Through Rate (CTR):** The percentage of click-thrus to banner views. A 2% CTR means 2% of each 1000 banner views have clicked the banner. In this case 10 visitors have clicked through to the advertiser's website.

**Conversion Rate:** The percentage of visitors to your website who actually make a purchase. This is generally 1% to 5% for online stores, but can be lower or higher depending on the on-site marketing and the type of product or service being offered.

**Cookies:** Small files that are placed on user's computers when they view a banner ad, visit a website, or place a product or service in a shopping cart, etc.

This can be used to help the banner server to keep from showing users the same advertisement after they have already responded. Web pages can even show you ads that you might be more interested in seeing, based on your cookies. Cookies also enable advertisers to track which banner ad a visitor responded to before buying their product or service. This can tell them which banner ads converted users into buyers.

**Run of Site (ROS):** Refers to displaying a banner ad throughout a website or a

banner network without targeting your market. As the banner can be shown to anyone, run of site advertising costs much less than more targeted advertising.

**Traffic:** The amount of visitors to your site, usually determined by number of page views or impressions.

**Cost Per Sale:** The amount of advertising spend needed to result in one sale. "You are able to run your entire banner campaign through the Content Network on AdWords. However, sometimes finding niche sites yourself to buy banner space on, can be more effective."

## Online PR

Basically, online PR involves all the activities associated with influencing the media, communities and audiences on the Internet about your business. This includes influencing search engines, blogs, news, forums, social networks and other online communication tools.

These days, online media can be as influential as print publications, so it's important to monitor what is being said about your products, services, brand and business. It can be extremely beneficial to your publicity, if you notify these online media outlets, as new products are released, or if something exciting happens within your business. But as with all marketing tactics, your business should really consider your overall marketing strategy and choose the appropriate mix of PR tactics that will support your marketing plan. To help with your online PR, there are many tools that can be used to submit online press releases (see Resource section for details). These services distribute your press release to a variety of media outlets which increases your chances of someone taking up the story and publishing it. If your business does receive any good coverage, be sure to submit the published news to social bookmark services such as <[Digg.com](http://Digg.com)> in order to archive it and draw more attention to your story. It's also a good idea to write a business blog, and form partnerships with other blogs within your niche to share and distribute news of upcoming products, etc.

The Internet makes monitoring what online consumers are saying about your business, quite an easy task. By being notified of any discussions about your brand, you can receive early warning signs about potential customer issues. A useful tool called <[Google Alerts](http://Google Alerts)>, can send you emails daily, with results from

across the Internet of web pages that contain your business name, brand name or URL within the text.



“If you haven’t already, visit Google and set up some Alerts right now for your business name and URL.”

## Online Partnerships

Content-sharing partnerships are a great way for you to increase your website visibility and to get your products or services in front of even more interested buyers. For example, why not form a partnership with an online business selling products or services similar to your own? You could sell their items to your customers, and they could send their users over to buy your items. Or how about including articles from a magazine related to your industry on your website, with a link to the magazine site? You could arrange for the magazine to return the favor by displaying a banner on their website advertising your business. Not only would their content be beneficial to your website, their readers might also be interested in your products or services. You could even offer the magazine a percentage of the revenue generated by their readers, who click through to make a purchase on your website.

Another good online partnership idea is to find websites within your niche that have a decent sized community. Contact the site owner and offer your product or services as prizes to their site members. You could be creative with designing a competition before you confront them. Offer them a set amount of free products or services in return for allowing you to place a banner advertisement on their site, and perhaps even a mention in their email newsletter. Make sure that the website you go for is closely related to yours and has a similar target audience. For example, a dog lovers forum would be the perfect site to offer funny dog t-shirts as a competition prize.

The possibilities with online partnerships are endless, the only limit being your imagination. When conducted well, online partnerships like this will benefit both websites involved.

## Sponsorship

Online sponsorship can also be an extremely effective strategy to generate brand awareness and traffic to your business. Online sponsorship involves your business sponsoring the web or email presence of a suitable organization. This can be an extremely powerful way to increase your customer reach and brand exposure. You will also gain the off-flows of goodwill that people have for the organization you are sponsoring, because your business will be associated with it. Also, if you are sponsoring a charity, you also have the privilege of contributing to the community.

There are 3 main types of online sponsorship;

### **1. Newsletter sponsorship**

Many organizations and charities use email-newsletters as a tool for communicating with their members. This is for the purpose of building relationships and sending traffic to their website. By becoming a sponsor of such newsletters, you are able to tailor make your marketing message to a specific audience. This is because the audience will already be defined, and its demographics are easily measurable by the organization. The great thing about these types of newsletters is that they will be sent to an opt-in list. This means that the people who receive the newsletter, have asked for it, and are highly likely to read through it all. By sponsoring newsletters, you may even get a choice of who your message is sent to, eg. those within a certain state, a certain gender or a certain age.

### **2. Website sponsorship**

Sponsoring an organization's website is another good option. You might place banner advertisements on their site with an agreement that your competitors are not permitted to advertise. The ideal sponsorship though, is when the organization agrees to endorse your business within their website's editorial.

### **3. Integrated sponsorship**

This is a mixture of website and newsletter branding and should also be considered. The benefits of sponsorship are known by the big companies that spend millions of dollars to associate their business name with arts, sports, health and charity organizations. Why not use these same proven strategies on a smaller budget? This can significantly increase your sales and help to grow your customer base significantly.

## Affiliate marketing

An increasingly popular way to maximize your product or service sales, is to set up an affiliate program. An affiliate program allows people from around the world to sell your products or services in return for a commission of the sale. For example, you might have a product or service that sells for \$90. If one of your affiliates gets a customer from somewhere to make a purchase through their special tracking link, you might pay them a 15% commission, which is \$13.50. Affiliate marketing has been described as ‘no-risk’ advertising. This is because you only pay when one of your affiliates sends a customer to your site who makes a purchase. Because you are only paying per sale, it’s easy to work out a commission amount that is a good return on investment. By analyzing your other advertising costs and your current monthly profits, you can get a good idea of how much you can afford to pay an affiliate per sale, in order to still make a profit. Keep in mind that the higher your commission rate, the more affiliates will be inclined to send potential customers to your website.

When starting out with an affiliate marketing campaign for your business, I recommend going with an established affiliate marketing network (see examples in the resources section of this book). This is because such companies will manage the entire process for you. They also have access to thousands of affiliates who might be interested in promoting your product or services, so you can get off to a good start. Please be aware that this is not a magic formula for success. You will need to work hard in order to attract good affiliates, but it will be worth it in the long term.



“Try selling relevant products or services, alongside your existing items as an affiliate. This could increase your profits and show you the other side of an affiliate program.”

## Opt-in email

Opt-in email marketing is an extremely cost-effective marketing tool for any business. It can be used to build relationships with your customers, keep them coming back to your website and increase your sales. With clever technology, you can set up emails to be sent out automatically at daily intervals, or when certain events occur like a sale. By offering visitors a free opt-in email newsletter (with interesting and relevant content) on your website, you can turn many of

your readers into paying customers. Also, by following up with emails to customers a month or so after their purchase, you can entice them with current promotions, often resulting in repeat sales. By setting up an auto-responder, you can literally automate this whole process, so that customers will be emailed pre-written messages at set times without any effort. Have a look at [AWeberTrial.com](http://AWeberTrial.com), it's the service I use to handle all of my opt-in email lists. You'll get a free test drive if you follow that link. They allow you to have unlimited auto-responders.

The key to turning your first-time customers into repeat customers is by building strong, valuable relationships. Even though email is faceless, the messages that you send through text go a long way towards connecting on a personal level. Your competition will constantly attempt to draw your customers away by undercutting your prices, so the best way to keep your customers loyal to your business, is to build up a solid relationship with them over time. Sending useful, friendly information to their inbox is a great way to do this. Providing helpful tips or discount coupons is a good way to motivate your customers to action. Daily, weekly, or even monthly emails will keep your brand in your customers minds and help them to remember your business the next time that they want to make a purchase.

One alternative to starting your own email newsletter is to advertise in the newsletters of similar websites. Keep in mind though that the impact will be much less effective and will not compare to the response that you will receive with your own regular email newsletter.



“Place a form on your website [AWeberTrial.com](http://AWeberTrial.com), and begin collecting the email addresses of people who would like to receive a regular Newsletter from your business.”

## Online Viral Marketing

Although the term "viral marketing" sounds a little offensive, it can be an extremely powerful and inexpensive promotional tool for your business, when implemented correctly. Online Viral Marketing is the name given to any strategy that encourages users to pass on a specific marketing message to others, creating the potential for the message to grow exponentially in exposure and

influence. Unlike computer viruses, viral marketing requires the message to be appealing in some way, in order for people to consciously, and willingly pass it on. A carefully designed viral marketing strategy will rapidly gain momentum, as more and more people pass it on, quite quickly multiplying to thousands or even millions. Think of it like the snow ball effect.

Some viral marketing strategies will work much better than others, but many will not work at all. A lot of planning should go into setting up a viral marketing campaign. There are 6 basic components that can be included in your viral message, in order to maximize it's effectiveness.

1. Give away something for free (video, game, cartoon, poem, joke, photograph, audio, email, etc.)
2. Can be effortlessly sent to others (via email, social network messages, instant message applications, forums, etc.)
3. Taps into common motivations and behaviors (humor, shock, inspiration, intrigue, urgency, compassion, etc.)
4. Utilizes existing communication networks (YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, etc.)
5. Takes advantage of other's resources (eg. a video hosted on YouTube will not cost you any money in server bandwidth when more and more people access it)
6. Includes your URL or brand name within the message (to promote your business)

If you are interested in implementing a viral marketing campaign, then you will need to create what is called a 'viral agent'. This is the item or experience that you will use to initiate a dual positive reaction. The first reaction involves the recipient of your marketing message enjoying it so much that they forward the item or experience on to an associate. The second reaction you are going for, is the recipient responding to the message within the item or experience (this can involve anything from exposing them to your brand name or attracting them to your website).

The quality of your viral agent, whether it be a video, game, cartoon, poem, joke, photograph, audio or email will largely effect the possibility of people passing it on. It's also important that the message can be passed on easily. This might mean including a 'send to a friend' button, or at the very least making

sure that it can be easily passed on by email. It is particularly effective to have the viral agent hosted at one particular destination, as people will be able to send their friends a simple link to it. This will also benefit the viral agent’s exposure in the search engines, allowing even more people to see your message.

	“Search Google for some well-known viral campaigns to get a good idea of what is needed in order for people to ‘pass it on’.”
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As much as the above traffic building techniques are needed to generate sales through your website, they are really only good to you if your visitors are actually converting into sales. For this reason, you need to make sure that your website is effective in guiding your visitors right through to the purchase stage. On top of that, if your products and services are of top quality, then they will speak for themselves.

You will begin to receive traffic from a whole range of sources as your reputation starts to build and people begin to talk about your quality of service.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion and Encouragement

Well you've finally reached the end of this book, and what I hope will be the beginning of a very fruitful quest to see your business succeed online, by creating raving fans out of your customers. If you read, and act upon the information and tips that I have provided, you can expect to see your business grow to become one that listens to, understands and acts upon your customer's deepest needs - amazing them with your quality of service, and making them desperate for more!

Remember that it takes time to build trust and repeat business, but it will be well worth it in the long-term. Give your best efforts day in, day out and your work will eventually pay off with exponential business growth. Treat your business, like a serious job - but with greater enthusiasm! Set hours for yourself and don't slack off. Allow yourself to be creative, to try new things, but remember to prioritize and stay on task. Remain genuine in all of your dealings with people. Remember that your customers are human, like yourself, so treat them how you would like to be treated. Practice good business ethics with all of your suppliers and everyone that you deal with, because people can smell a rat a mile off! Don't be too concerned about not having a big advertising budget. If you're constantly delighting your customers, your reputation will soon spread like wildfire. Always keep in mind that the most effective form of advertising is word-of-mouth, because customers listen closely to the recommendations of other customers.

Network yourself with like-minded people, that spur each other on. A great place that I have found to meet with fellow entrepreneurs and online marketers is <[YoungEntrepreneur.com](http://YoungEntrepreneur.com)>. When I signed up to to this forum recently, I was blown away by the culture and attitude of the members. The people on here are extremely passionate, and are always helping and encouraging each other to achieve greater things. It's well worth being a part of this rapidly growing community.

Don't expect success to come too early, then you won't become distracted when things seem to be moving along slowly. Never give up, learn from your mistakes and most of all - **remember to have fun!**

## My Recommended Resources

For your reference, below are some links to websites and tools that I have found extremely helpful throughout my many years online. I consider these the best of the best. Have a browse through and see what's available to make your online marketing tasks easier and much more effective.

### Young Entrepreneur Forums

- <http://www.youngentrepreneur.com>

### Market Research

Online Survey Service

- <http://www.surveygizmo.com>

Forum Directory

- <http://www.big-boards.com>

Blog Directory

- <http://www.blogcatalog.com>

### Brand Building/Networking Sites

- <http://www.linkedin.com>
- <http://www.squidoo.com>
- <http://www.myspace.com>
- <http://www.facebook.com>

### Distribution

Product Search Engine

- <http://www.google.com/products>

Affiliate Marketing Network

- <http://www.shareasale.com>

## Back-End Systems

Open Source Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System

- <http://www.sugarcrm.com>

A Very Good 'all-in-one' e-Commerce Solution (30-day trial)

- <http://www.1shoppingcart.com>

Reliable Web Hosting

- <http://www.triple.com>

## Customer Service

My personal favorite marketing tool - AWeber auto-responder (free test drive)

- <http://www.awebertrial.com>

Live Chat Service (free 10-day trial)

- <http://www.versochat.com>

## Traffic Building Tools

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

*These 2 tools can increase your website traffic dramatically*

- <http://www.seoelite.com>
- <http://www.keywordelite.com>

Personal SEO Training from who I believe is the world's leading SEO expert

- <http://www.seobook.com>

Pay Per Click (PPC) + Banner Advertising

- <http://www.google.com/adwords>

My Favourite AdWords Tutorial (explains everything about PPC)

- <http://www.beatingadwords.com>

Opt-In Email

- <http://www.aweber.com>

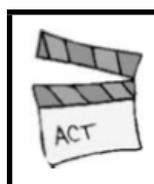
Article Marketing

- <http://www.ezinearticles.com>

PS: If you have enjoyed this book and would like to continue the discussion with fellow online marketers and entrepreneurs, go to:

<http://smallbusinessclicks.com/blog/category/book>

Here you can post all of your feedback, comments and questions directly to me. I also provide more online marketing advice, tips, audios and videos on my blog for FREE!



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