

LinkyBlog.com Blogging & Online Business Guide | The Pinnacle of eBooks | The Mount Everest of mBooks

Not An “e” Book... This Is An:

eBook

Must-Have Resources, Tools, & Software
Over 100 Killer Blogging Tips
65 Great Headlines to Get You Started
Over 110 Brilliant Blog-Writing Ideas
80+ Online Business Tips
Digital Photography 101
A Visual Guide to Online Business
Genesis Week - First 7 Days Of Your Online Business
Over 60 Profitable Online Business Ideas
Over 50 Ways To Make Money Online
Writing, Designing, Publishing, Marketing & Automating A World-Class eBook
Mistakes To Avoid – Lessons Learned From My First Dozen eBooks
Checklist: 30 Things You Can Do To Improve
An Interview With An Online Expert
A Library of Useful Articles
And more, more, more!

brent riggs | linkyblog.com

Thanks

A book like this is a monumental amount of work and many thanks are in order.

I thank my wife for her endless patience and support. I thank my kids for their appreciation towards a Dad that works hard to support his family. I thank my parents for raising me to work hard and be honest.

I thank my editor and friend, Jessica for her professional skills, opinions, and constant nagging (that's part of her job description).

Thank you for all the feedback and input I've received from blogging friends, other authors, and goodness knows how many other people. Thank you to my twin brother Bruce who is my never failing cheerleader and a source of encouragement for all that I do.

There's nothing quite as pitiful as someone who puts forth an accomplishment and isn't grateful for all the support and help they received. If there is one thing I want to be known for, it's being thankful.

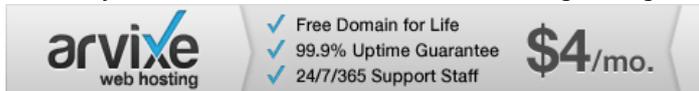
I'm thankful for the God-given opportunity, experience, and the ability to write a book like this. I'm thankful for the circumstances, tough times, and blessings that had to exist in order for all the lessons learned and experience that was needed.

I'm thankful to get to write and blog and help people. It's a better life than I could have ever deserved.

Thanks for reading my book.
This page has my favorite stuff I use after
years of figuring out what works best.
Save yourself some headaches and check out
these products and services.

If you are reading a printed version of this book and would also like the electronic version so you can click on the links and read from your computer, please email me and I'll send it to you free of charge: brent@brentriggs.com

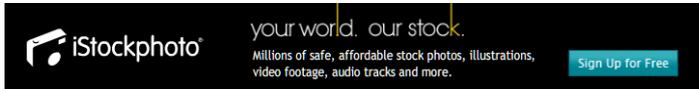
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Arvixe web hosting advertisement featuring a list of benefits: Free Domain for Life, 99.9% Uptime Guarantee, and 24/7/365 Support Staff. The price is listed as \$4/mo.



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You can find all my books and resources here:
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Not an “e” Book... An: EPIC BOOK

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Here’s all the legal stuff I have to say because we live in a lawsuit-happy world:

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Readers are advised to use due diligence about all business matters and no guarantees of profit - written or implied - are intended by this material. Every online business experience is different and many result in no financial gain, due to factors in and out of the business owners' control.

Powered by:



About Brent

Twenty-five years ago, I was doing graphic arts by hand in a little print shop. That was before personal computers. Many of you reading this probably can't imagine life without computers. They came on to the scene when I was in my early '20s. Technology has ended traditional publishing as we know it, traditional news as we know it, traditional education as we know it, and traditional visual arts.

The Internet opens up the entire world and removes constraints traditionally dictated by well-entrenched industries. A global audience and market is just on the other side of your keyboard.

We live in a time when extra income and financial security is more important than ever. Blogging and publishing great information as eBooks is legitimate, enjoyable, and profitable.

Electronic products and "online business" are the frontier of home-based business, side businesses, and the self-employed. The ENTIRE WORLD is literally your market. **It's mind boggling.**

My "side" income from 24/7 blogging and online business now far exceeds what my income ever was as an employee. I'm just an average Joe. I've built a great online business and big blog audience, so can you. No matter how big I make this book, this topic is too much information to squeeze into one publication so you need to make sure you are signed up to [Linky Blog](#), where I will continually post lots of great information about eBooks, online business, passive income, blogging, and personal finance in general.

A little bit about me:

- I have spent 25 years working in graphic design, marketing, and writing.
- When the internet came along, my design interests transferred over to web development and programming.
- I've started, ran, and owned many businesses and those experiences have led me to pursue "online business."
- I've published a dozen or so titles so far (which I consider a short list because I can't write full time yet); I've got a LONG list of others planned.
- I own/operate several popular sites like [linkytools.com](#) and [linkyfollowers.com](#).
- I was a Drill Sergeant for many years; worked on the Space Shuttle program; received a black belt in Kenpo; have 7 going on 8 kids (adoption in progress); and am married to the most wonderful wife a man could ever dream of having.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to do what I truly love and achieving my own success while serving and teaching others.



I'm on your side and cheering for you! Email me anytime:
brent@brentriggs.com.

A stylized, handwritten signature of the name "Brent" in black ink, with a light grey shadow effect behind it.

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If at any point while reading this book you have a question, feel free to contact me
 (brent@brentriggs.com). My subscribers are given first priority in my email inbox, so be sure to get your **FREE subscription** at www.linkyblog.com.

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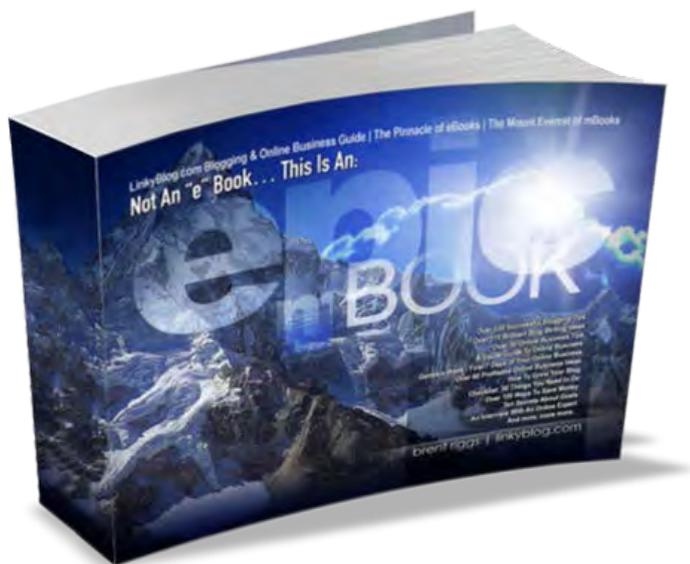


Brent’s Must-Have Quick List Of Favorite Products, Services, and Tools

Linked for your convenience; and, if you click from here, Linky Blog makes a couple of bucks:

- [Ninja Affiliate](#) – the BEST affiliate marketing software, something every blogger should be using
- [Arvix Hosting](#) – the best blog and website hosting.
- [Aweber](#) – the serious blogger’s choice of email list subscriber management and broadcast tools.
- [WPTouch Pro](#) – instantly have a mobile version of your blog; this is AMAZING software
- [CreateSpace](#) – Amazon’s on-demand print service.
- [iStock](#) – world-class stock images and clipart.
- [Elegant Themes](#) – high quality, stunning WordPress themes.
- [WPZoom](#) – professional WordPress themes with tons of features.
- [Optin Skin](#) – plug-in for creating and tracking the best, highest converting sign-up forms.
- [Premise](#) – the only choice for lead generation, membership sites, and landing pages.
- [InfusionSoft](#) – all-in-one sales and marketing.

Note: I teach you how to use affiliate links in your own eBook later on in this book...



LinkyBlog.com Blogging & Online Business Guide:
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Not an “Electronic Book”...

An **EPIC BOOK!**

The EPIC Book is over 400 pages packed with information, experience, knowledge, tips, advice, lessons learned, and practical instruction.

Not 400 pages of big fonts, wide margins, and huge graphics that eat up a lot of space so a big page count can be advertised. The EPIC Book has over 135,000 words, dwarfing typical good eBooks that usually average 20,000 – 30,000 words.

Nor is it just a bunch of filler content and stuff you won't read so I can advertise a huge word count. Every page in this book is useful and relevant, the very best of what I have learned and experienced in the last 15+ years of being online. I was blessed to begin online way back before the general public even knew what “the information superhighway” was, much before anyone truly grasped what the Internet would become.

Things have changed over and over in two decades, but in the past 5-8 years, the Internet has finally found some stability and equilibrium. It's still evolving every day but the whole “online business” and “blogging” thing is much more static now, when compared to the early days from the late 1980's to the early 2000's.

What you will find in this book is the experience of a long, long time online and countless rounds of trial and error, testing, learning, starts and stops, and a relentless passion to learn everything I can learn about all things blogging, internet marketing, and online business.

The idea of EPIC Book came from wanting to compile all the various topics, skills, technologies, and aspects of blogging and online business into a single book.

There are countless eBooks produced about one topic, or one skill or another. Most of what you find out there in the blogging world is rehash and copied mediocrity like bad Xerox copies - rather than being the real, personal experience of successful bloggers and online-business owners.

I wanted EPIC Book to be a valuable resource and even at 400+ pages, I could have easily doubled the book size. I've tried to give you overviews, definitions, best practices, and expert advice but not a lot of step-by-step "click here, do this, do that" because specific instruction like that is quickly outdated when software or services are updated. My hope is that this book will remain relevant and useful to you for many years.

The title for EPIC Book came up very simply... as the idea and scope of this publication was being planned, my editor said "that's not an eBook, that's an EPIC book!" I wish I could take credit for it, but that was the inspiration for the title. From that moment on, we have referred to it simply as "EPIC."

The implications of that word also drove our passion for the book and we knew that if we were going to call a book "epic," it had to live up to the word.

mBook

You'll see a term in this book that I have used in other publications and I'm hoping will catch on. It's "mBook."

The term "eBook" just doesn't cut it anymore. Electronic books are so much more than that now. They are in multiple formats, multi-purpose, for multiple uses, and come through multiple delivery methods. The key word here is *multiple* so I've coined "mBook." When you see that term, now you know what I'm talking about and I hope it will constantly remind you that eBooks have evolved into much more than an electronic PDF.

Priority One

I feel it important to include in this introduction the two highest priorities I believe you should have as a blogger or online business operator. They are so important that it's good to start with these in mind and keep them in the forefront of your time, energy, productivity, and focus.

We all have lots of priorities, starting with the basic practical priorities that are paramount to success in blogging and online business: honesty and the Golden Rule. Beyond those two, the first priority you should have is: creating high quality, relevant, and fresh content and products.

It is easy to get distracted with a million other things but when it comes down to it, if you do not offer your audience VALUE in the form of great content and products, your blog or online business will not be successful.

People often get caught up in gimmicks, planning, organizing, logistics, educating... spending their time on everything except creating content and products. Always preparing but never producing. Don't get caught in this trap.

The hardest part of this adventure will be to continually create high-quality content and products. This task should consume the vast majority of the time you've dedicated to your blog or business.

Priority Two

Your second priority should be your subscriber list. This is your connection, your gold mine, and the life blood of your online efforts. Everything revolves around your audience, and your audience is measured and connected to you via your subscriber list.

Start one immediately with a service like [Aweber](#). Protect your list. Respect it. Never abuse it, sell it, or share it. Your subscribers TRUST you with their information. And they reward you by allowing you to use that list to communicate with them.

It's hard for me to exaggerate how important this list will become to you. Don't put it off. If you haven't started yours, stop now, and go do it.

Feedback

One great thing about electronic publications is that they are never set in stone. I can change, revise, or correct things immediately.

I would love to hear from you. Comments, suggestions, ideas, corrections, feedback, even criticism... feel free to contact me anytime: brent@brentriggs.com

I love to listen, I love to help, and I love to respond. You are welcome to contact me anytime. One of the things I'm committed to is being accessible, personable, and responsive. I have that reputation and I don't plan on doing anything to change it!

I have a request before you dive into into EPIC . . . would you please do me the honor and blessing of sharing this mBook with your audience and friends?

Tell others about this book:





Must-Have Resources, Tools, & Software

During the almost 20 years I have been working online, I've lost track of the number of services, tools, software, and resources that I have bought and tried.

I can't even imagine the amount of money I could have saved if somebody with the appropriate experience would have pointed me towards a list of proven resources and shared with me why I should use them.

In this section, you will find all of the favorite "must-have" tools and resources that make my online business run like a well-oiled machine. You can always read the marketing a company puts out, but there is nothing like having a personal explanation and recommendation from someone with proven credibility and honesty.

One of the online-business income streams I have is "affiliate marketing." Affiliate marketing is discussed later in the book but a definition here is helpful: affiliate marketing is when you sign up to recommend a product or service and you receive a commission for doing so when a sale is made.

Many of the resources below are affiliate programs that I am involved in. By including this section in the book, not only am I giving you a great list of fantastic tools, I am also showing you (in a real-world example) how to use affiliate marketing.

I do not recommend products and services that I am not willing to back up with my reputation. It is common to see books or blogs that are built specifically for promoting affiliate marketing, with no regard to whether not there is a true personal recommendation or any experience with that product. It is basically just advertising; sometimes the advertising is even backed up with dishonest claims.

Everything I have listed and recommended in this section is a resource I risk my reputation on and recommend wholeheartedly. The last thing I want to do as an online business mentor and expert is to influence people to waste their money on junk, gimmicks, scams, or get-rich-quick nonsense.

Of course, I cannot guarantee a perfect experience between you and another company or service, but I can give you confident recommendations based on my experience, expertise, and two decades of fine-tuning my business.

If you have any questions that you would like me to answer before you consider purchasing or using anything recommended, feel free to contact me: Brent@BrentRiggs.com

Ninja Affiliate

I will share more about affiliate marketing throughout this book. The best way for you to find out about the Ninja Affiliate software is to watch their video at their website.



The advertisement features a ninja character on the left holding a sword. On the right, the text reads: "MaxBlogPress NINJA AFFILIATE". Below this, a green horizontal line separates the header from the main text. The main text says: "If you're not making as much money blogging as you dreamed you would, here's the magic pill: 'Discover How To Automatically Convert Keywords on Your Blog Into Money-Making Affiliate Links in Mere Seconds - Autopilot Blogging Has Never Been Easier!' REVEALED: New WordPress Plugin Gives You Lethal 'Ninja Powers' To Explode Your Affiliate Marketing Income Almost Overnight.."

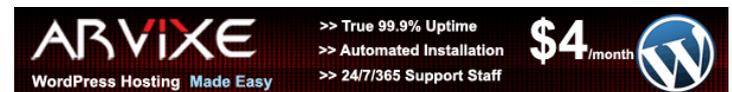
Let me say this loud and clear: GET THIS SOFTWARE FOR YOUR BLOG. It is truly a “must” have. All my books and blogs benefit from this software; however, the software is far too involved for me to explain it all in a couple of paragraphs.

[Click here to sign up and watch the Ninja Demo ...](#)

Arvixe Hosting



All of my blogs and websites are hosted on Arvixe. I have numerous hosting accounts and three servers that house the “Linky” family of sites.



A dark banner for Arvixe hosting. On the left, the word "ARVIXE" is written in large, white, bold letters, with "WordPress Hosting Made Easy" in smaller text below it. To the right, there are three bullet points: ">> True 99.9% Uptime", ">> Automated Installation", and ">> 24/7/365 Support Staff". Further right, the price "\$4/month" is displayed in large white text, followed by the WordPress logo.

Arvixe has stellar customer service. They have never failed to quickly and effectively respond to any issues I have brought to

them. All hosting companies have hiccups... the question is: how fast do they respond and fix things?

Arvixe is the best blog- and website-hosting you can get. They offer every kind of hosting for any type of business need; but, if you are reading this book, you probably want WordPress blog hosting.

[Click here to get WordPress hosting from Arvixe](#) for about \$4/month.



WPTouch Pro

For a long time I avoided the whole “mobile version” of my blogs because it was such a drag thinking about creating and managing a second version of pages.

Install WPTouch Pro and 30 seconds later you have a world class, professional mobile version of your blog. I was SHOCKED at how easy and perfect this solution was. It is one of those things I tell every blogger they must have as the use of mobile devices like iPhones are far outpacing new computers.

[Click here to see the incredible features of WPTouch Pro.](#)

Aweber



Aweber is the serious blogger’s choice of email-list subscriber management and broadcast tools. Ten years ago, there wasn’t even another serious option. There are some other good email-marketing companies out there now, but Aweber is still among the best.



With Aweber, you can manage your subscriptions, do email-marketing campaigns, setup new-user campaigns,

automatically monitor your blog for new content and then email it your list, do split testing, and a whole lot more.

Aweber is a fantastic service that I have relied on and recommended for many years.

[Find out more about Aweber, click here...](#)

CreateSpace

CreateSpace is Amazon's on-demand print service. On-demand printing is the ability to publish a book, and it is only printed one at a time when they are ordered. You do not have to keep an inventory.



The best way I know how to share the benefits of CreateSpace with you is to provide the list of features from their own home page:

- **Free and Easy Tools**
Do-it-yourself and finish fast with tools like Interior Reviewer, Cover Creator, Preview, and Image Gallery.
- **Higher Royalties**
Place more in your pocket with some of the best economics in the industry. View Earning Royalties video.
- **Comprehensive Book Services**
Get the help you need to complete your book with our affordable design, editing, and marketing services.
- **Always Available**
Your work is manufactured to meet demand, so your title is always in stock. There are no upfront costs and no need to carry inventory.
- **Wide Distribution Options**
Expand your book's availability through Amazon.com, Amazon Europe, your own eStore, and Kindle. Plus, reach more readers with the Expanded Distribution option.
- **Help when you need it**
Get answers fast over the phone, by e-mail, or join our Community and discuss your ideas, questions, and more with folks just like you.

[Find out more or sign up for CreateSpace here...](#)

iStock



There are lots of stock images and clipart services. The truth is: you get what you pay for. iStock.com is a world-class stock-image and clipart provider.

I use them almost every single day. I'm a graphic designer at heart and by trade. I know good images and art. You can't beat iStock. This is not the least expensive option, but what you get is well worth the investment.

[Sign up for an iStock account here...](#)

Elegant Themes



There is just no excuse for an ugly blog today. There are an abundance of high-quality, stunning WordPress themes available. Elegant Themes is one of my two favorite sources and I have used many of their themes on my own work and for clients. From the website:

Stellar Design

Design is our art and our passion. We craft WordPress Themes with a pixel-perfect eye for detail and a high standard for aesthetic excellence. Let us help you make your website amazingly simple, beautiful and professional.

Advanced Features

Our plethora of Shortcodes, Page Templates, and Theme

Options give you full control over your website. Manage your site like never before by using the countless powerful features that come packaged with all of our themes.

Unparalleled Support

We put a ton of effort into providing top-notch WordPress tech support to all of our customers. With our dedicated support staff, you can be sure that you will have your blog up and running without a hitch regardless of your experience level.

[Create your Elegant Themes account here...](#)

WPZoom



This is my other favorite theme provider. WPZoom concentrates on professional WordPress themes with tons of features and functionality. If you are looking for a function-specific theme (like a magazine blog, or a portfolio or video-centric blog), WPZoom has some incredible choices. From their website:

- Professional & Impressive WordPress Themes
- We provide top quality premium WordPress themes at amazing prices with excellent lifetime support included.
- Advanced Theme Options Panel

[Click here to visit the WPZOOM site...](#)

Optin Skin



Optin Skin is a WordPress plug-in for creating and tracking the best, highest converting sign-up forms. From their website:

- #1 Split-Test Your Way to Higher Conversion Rates
- #2 Fully Customize Our 18 Default Designs
- #3 Draw Attention to Your Opt-in Forms with 'Fade'
- #4 Impressions Only Count If Your Form is Seen
- #5 OptinSkin Can Power Your Custom Designs
- #6 Place Skins Anywhere On Your Blog with One Click
- #7 Make More Money With an (Optional) Affiliate Link
- #8 Works with All Email Marketing Services

[Check out Optin Skin here...](#)

Premise

In my opinion, Premise is the only choice for lead generation, membership sites, and landing pages. From their website:

Access

Build secure membership sites, sell ebooks, software, and

other digital downloads, do advanced lead generation, take recurring payments with automated member.



Acceleration

Perform split-testing from the WordPress interface, optimize your landing pages for search, discover new tactics and strategies with included copywriting and optimization seminars.

Action

Quickly and easily create 8 critical landing page types, control fonts, colors, and styles without code, included custom graphics, and copywriting advice from the WordPress interface.

[Click here to find out more about Premise...](#)

InfusionSoft



This is actually a service that my twin brother [Bruce Riggs](#) recommends and trains his small business clients to use. This is a full featured, comprehensive online sales management system. Bruce says it is the best; and trust me, Bruce knows what he is talking about.

Their website says: The ONLY all-in-one sales and marketing software built for small business.



Discover How to Automate
Your Sales & Marketing

Watch a Quick Product Demo



We've built everything you need—CRM, e-commerce, social media and email marketing—into a single, powerful system that automatically converts leads into new customers and grows sales from existing ones. So you can focus on your business or your life. Or both. Imagine that.

[Find out more about InfusionSoft...](#)

PowerPay

A lot of people wish there was an easy alternative to Paypal. Now there is. From the PowerPay website:

Accept Credit Cards for Your Business with PowerPay!

PowerPay is a leading provider of merchant accounts, credit card payment processing and other transaction solutions for businesses of all types and sizes.

Our flexible solutions can help you establish a merchant credit card processing account, integrate a point-of-sale terminal, set-up electronic payment processing and more. PowerPay offers the most efficient and cost-effective solutions in the payment processing industry.

[Find out more about PowerPay...](#)

FREE Merchant Account & Gateway Setup

FREE Online Statement Access

NO Early Termination Fees



Over 100 Killer Blogging Tips

I have been blogging and running websites for almost 20 years. It is hard to believe the Internet has been around that long, but perhaps you are young enough that you do not remember when the Internet WAS NOT an everyday part of life.

I started doing graphic design before computers, so I got to learn all the early lessons of computer-aided design. In the same way, I started “blogging” back before it was called “blogging” - I simply had a website where I posted my writing. It has been amazing to watch the internet evolve and see all the amazing changes and the startling growth of what we now commonly call “blogging.” It is no longer the domain of professional writers but encompasses professionals, hobbyists, and people who simply do what amounts to “journaling” online. It is amazing.

What is even more amazing is that anyone, INCLUDING YOU, can make a very good income with online business. Most of the time, a blog is an integral part of that business. I make a decent income online from various current and past online sources: blogging, publishing, subscription sites, advertising sales, e-book and book sales, design services, and a host of other techniques. In 20 years, I have had plenty of time to try out a lot of things. At this point, I can confidently hang out a shingle as a bona fide successful expert at online business and blogging.

It has now become my joy and passion to share the lessons I have learned with the next generation of individuals, professionals, moms and dads, and friends, so that they can tap the immense and nearly incomprehensible opportunities that the internet represents.

In this book, you will find a compilation of my best tips, tricks, lessons learned, and advice about blogging specifically, and indirectly about doing “online business.”

The individual “tips” in this section are meant as both a compilation and as standalone tips. They can be read all

together, or one at a time as you implement them. So you will see some overlap and repeating of points and principles, but not a lot. What you are going to find is 100+ great tips, each explained, that will give you a decade of lessons learned and success compiled into one easy-to-read and interesting collection. Every SINGLE tip in this list is worth the price you paid. I would not risk sounding silly for saying that if I did not believe it.

A note about affiliate links: throughout my tips, you will find links to services, blogs, and websites that I recommend. Some of these links will result in affiliate commissions paid to me because I have referred clients to them. I do not recommend services or products that I do not personally use and am not 100% satisfied that they will be of great value to you. Recommending these affiliates to you helps me pay my bills and is my example to you of how you can do the exact same thing as you begin to build your business and audience.

You’ll discover in all my publications, and on all my blogs and websites, I make myself accessible to you to demonstrate my appreciation that you have chosen to invest your hard-earned money and valuable time in something that I offer. I do not take that for granted. Contact me anytime with questions, comments, and suggestions... even gripes. I can take it.



100-Point Blog Improvement Checklist

This checklist is based on the 100 tips which follow. Once you check off this list, you will be amazed at the improvement your blog will experience. Print this out or copy it, and check it off as you implement each.

- Have you earned the trust of your readers so that you can sell to them?
- Do your ads give an air of credibility to your blog? Do you have too many?
- Are your widget columns cluttered and busy? Or useful?
- Is your logo and header linked to your home page?
- Do you have a real domain URL relevant to your blog topic or business?
- Is your writing sloppy or juvenile? Are you using proper grammar and punctuation?
- Can you be reached by your readers? Are you hiding behind a contact form?
- Do you have a great blog design? Have you hired a designer or purchased a professional theme or skin?
- Do you have a creative design that fits your audience?
- Have you asked a successful blogger to give you an objective opinion about your blog design and content?
- Do you have a good color pallet? Have you educated yourself about the use of "color"?
- Do you use your blog footer effectively as good real estate?
- Does you blog have too many columns and sidebars, making it too busy?
- Is your best stuff out in front and easy for first-time visitors to find?
- Have you bought a good hosting plan that is reliable and responsive?
- Is your blog too wide to fit on average monitors? Are you NOT using "full width"?
- Is your most important and useful information on the first screen of your blog?
- Can people quickly, easily, and simply contact the real you, not a faceless form?
- Have you used your "About Me" page to make yourself real to people?
- Have you moved your archives and blog-roll lists off your home page?
- Do you all your pages and links work correctly?
- Is it super easy and fast to join your mailing list?
- Have you presented an offer they cannot refuse to join your mailing list?
- Have you viewed your blog in all the different browser types?
- Are you constantly changing your blog and losing any sense of familiarity?
- Do you have an easy-to-find link to favorite and best posts on your home page?
- Are you posting "ego" stuff that has nothing to do with your blog topic?
- Do you practicing writing like a sport so you will get better, faster, and more productive?
- Are you imitating other truly successful bloggers?
- Do you utilize high-quality images, either your own or from a stock service?
- Have you committed to blogging for at least 3-5 years if you want to be successful?
- Do you use good headlines, subheads, and callouts in your posts?

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- Are you careful with your sense of humor?
 - Do you write your opinion with your readers in mind and not your ego?
 - When you think of a great idea, do you immediately write it down so you will not forget it?
 - Have you set up an email-list-subscriber management service?
 - Do you write in 3-4 sentence paragraphs?
 - Have you thought about how long your posts should be to fit YOUR readers?
 - Have you thought about how often you should post to fit YOUR readers?
 - Are you spellchecking and proofing your posts for grammar and punctuation?
 - Do you utilize “new subscriber campaigns”?
 - Do you avoid spamming your subscriber list at all costs, no matter how much money you might make if you do?
 - Are you avoiding duplications of your blog content on other blogs or article sites?
 - Do you ignore all the requests for useless link exchanges?
 - Are you constantly trying to link to other high-quality and successful blogs?
 - Are you posting sincere comments on other blogs?
 - Are you using traditional and online marketing to promote your blog?
 - Are you being careful not to overwhelm your Facebook and Twitter accounts with sales material and ads?
 - Are you seeking out other bloggers to share audiences with?
 - Have you educated yourself on all the ways you can monetize your blog?
 - Have you shopped one of your flagship posts to big blogs for guest posting?

- Are you commenting on other blogs in a way that adds value to them but attracts other readers to you?
- Do you disclose your affiliate or commission relationships to your readers?
- Do you only sell things to your readers that you would buy and can honestly recommend?
- Do you respond as often as possible to people who leave comments on your blog?
- Do you allow “disagreeing” comments on your blog when they add value or interest?
- Have you learned to ignore blog bullies and trolls?
- Is your advertising done tastefully and does it add to your credibility?
- Do you have a good balance between quality content and creative style?
- Are you avoiding disguising a lot of advertisements as blog posts?
- Are you willing to invest in your blog or do you want everything for free while hoping others will open their wallet for you?
- Would 10,000 new readers today come back and visit your blog tomorrow? Would you?
- Do you actively think of ways to create more interest in your blog posts?
- Have you examined your blog and online business for signs of stagnation or failure?
- Have you created a list of brainstorming ideas to help you think up post topics?
- Are you trading useless screen time for productive blogging time?
- Are you practicing the art of concise, lean, and “to the point” writing?

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- Are you avoiding gimmicks and shortcuts, and committed to hard work and consistency?
 - Are you committed long-term to improved blogging, “out lasting” other bloggers?
 - Do you avoid a knee-jerk, defensive response to negative comments?
 - Do you know the classic format for a good blog post?
 - Have you viewed your blog on iPads, iPhones, Androids, and tablets?
 - Do you have quantity of content AND quality?
 - Do you check out other “experts” before buying from them or trusting them?
 - Is your blog about YOU in a good way? The way that creates a relationship between you and your readers?
 - Are you committed to working hard, and investing both time and money in your blog and your online-business education?
 - Do you “love” your readers back by being accessible and responsive to them?
 - Do you monitor your blog by objective measurements such as traffic stats?
 - Are you investing in your blog in all ways: time, money, emotion, effort, and commitment?
 - Are you careful about “get-rich-quick” online business scams that promise gold and fame for no effort and in no time?
 - Have you checked out all the ads on your blog to make sure you are not hurting your reputation with your audience?
 - Are you putting too much time into widgets, gadgets, and gimmicks to the detriment of writing good content?
 - Can you specifically state the purpose of your blog and what you hope to achieve?

- Do you create file names for your eBooks and PDFs that read like headlines?
- Do you use relevant and authentic comments on other blogs to further market your own?
- Do you use high-quality images and graphics? Do your images make a statement about your blog?
- Does your blog design enhance or distract from your content or reader experience?
- Do you make personal reading a daily discipline?
- Do you use Facebook and Twitter for microblogging?
- Does your accurately written, correctly punctuated, and efficiently organized content add credibility to your blog and online business?
- Do your blog posts reward the reader for their time investment in you?
- Have you evaluated your blog for trivial, egotistical, and unimaginative content?
- Are you continually educating yourself about new and different ways to monetize your blog?
- Do you encourage readers to contact you with feedback and questions?
- Do you routinely ask your readers for advice, ideas, and their opinion?
- Are your social-media links prominent and convenient on your blog?
- Do you have a comment and privacy policy?
- Do you give credit generously to anyone who helps you or any content you mention or excerpt?
- Do you create an image of “bigness” by using professional design and good customer service?
- Do you really really really believe that you can be a successful blogger?

100 Tips, Tricks, & Advice in Detail

TIP: Your readers will not mind if you are advertising and trying to sell products on your blog as long as you give them enough reason to want to read your blog. Value = trust.

People know you have to make a living, pay the bills, and feed your kids. They will not mind if you try to sell them something as long as it is a reasonable product or service with reasonable value. What people do not like is being constantly



bombarded and manipulated with gimmick products that have only one purpose: enrich the seller with little or no value to the buyer.

There are certain writers or companies for whom I press the “BUY” button as soon as they put something out because I already know the product or service is going to be worth my money. I do not even care how often they market to me because I am always glad they did. Develop that kind of trust with your subscribers/readers and then you will naturally know the right time to alert them to your new book, product, or service.

Give your readers good service, information that is valuable to them (helps them, benefits them, is important to them), and blog content they look forward to, and your marketing will be welcomed as well.

TIP: Done correctly, advertising on a new blog can add credibility and an image of being established. Too many ads are annoying and junk up your website.

Some people believe all advertising is a nuisance and turns people off. Wrong.



Appropriate advertising on a new blog gives the appearance of credibility and establishment. Quality advertising sends the implied message that those advertisers approve of your blog. Quality advertising implies: “I know what I’m doing, I’m experienced.”

On the other hand, sloppy advertising or over-advertising sends lots of negative vibes. Your blog will look messy. The quality of your blog will be reflected in the low-quality advertisers. People will ignore your advertising and then get sick of looking at all the advertising (or waiting for the page to load) and dump your blog altogether.

As you choose advertising for your blog, think: “classy,” “high quality,” and “value to my readers.” A new blog should be ready to advertise for FREE (or advertise affiliate and pay-per-click) until you build enough traffic to merit charging for ads.

TIP: Clean up your widget columns; no one is going to look at 1,000 widgets. Be selective and put only a few so people will actually view them.

There seems to be some unwritten rule with typical bloggers that the more widgets, gadgets, and blinking banners you have lining the sides of your content, the more you look like you are really experienced so that traffic will magically flock to you. Not so much. Here is the truth: it is ugly. All that junk makes your blog load slowly. It increases the potential for incompatibilities and frozen scripts trying to load. No one looks at them. No one cares about them. They are a nuisance and eyesore.

On the other hand, if you are selective about your gadgets and widgets, and they actually have some value TO YOUR READERS, then people will appreciate them. Widgets should enhance the visitor experience or help you achieve a specific goal for your blog - even if that goal is monetization. If the widget does not benefit your reader or further your vision for your blog, dump it.

TIP: Make sure the logo in your header is linked to your home page. This is the common set up and many people will click your logo to go "home."

While most people have a home link on their blog, it is also common and intuitive for people to click on the blog logo or header with the expectation that this will take them to the homepage. You always want your site to be as intuitive and easy to navigate as possible. Be sure that you link your blog logo or header to the homepage.

TIP: You should have your own domain name, not a Blogger or WordPress address. You look more **SERIOUS** about blogging that way.

Having your own domain address appears a lot more serious and dedicated than using a sub-domain of one of the major blog platforms. For example, www.Riggsfamilyblog.com is a real domain address. A sub-domain address would be Riggs.blogspot.com or Riggs.WordPress.com. They both work, and will lead people to your blog correctly, but having your own domain name not only gives the impression you are more serious about your blog, but will also make your blog look better in search-engine results.

This is especially important if you are trying to create a business from your blog and monetize it. When you use free blogging platforms, free e-mail addresses, and free everything else, you do not send the message to your readers and clients

that you are willing to invest in your own business. So why should they?

TIP: There is a difference between stylized, folksy writing vs. sloppy and juvenile writing. Use proper punctuation and do not insult your readers' intelligence.

Text messaging is a perfect example of sloppy and juvenile writing (I am referring to all the typical shortcuts, abbreviations, and acronyms used in text messaging as well as the lack of proper sentence structure and grammar). Writing the content on your blog like a 12-year-old who spends 10 hours in front of the TV every day is a surefire way to send the message to your readers not to waste their time on your blog.

However, do not confuse careless, sloppy writing with stylized, personalized, or folksy writing. When your content possesses your personality and conveys the down-home flavor of your life experience, it becomes more personal and readable. Boring, sterile, and clinical writing is not much better than sloppy writing.

Stylize your blog posts in such a way that they capture the reader's attention, but remember to do a good job proofing for mistakes: use spell-check, good grammar, and coherent organization.

TIP: Many blog owners are anonymous and unreachable; do not hide behind technology if you want loyal readers. Use a real name, photo, and e-mail address. Encourage your readers to contact you with any comments or questions.

It is very common today for a blog owner or online business owner to be anonymous. Some people do this because they are afraid of the nuts out there on the Internet, others remain anonymous because they are not good at dealing with people personally, and still others remain faceless behind a contact form because they simply do not want to deal with people.

It is also common after you have achieved a certain level of success to decide that you are too busy and have too many other important things to do than to be accessible to the very people that have made you successful. I find that to be a huge (and common) mistake bloggers make. If your blog has become so successful that you literally cannot handle all of the inquiries, at least assemble some help who can respond personally on your behalf to those who try to contact you.

If you are one of those people who want to remain anonymous and inaccessible to the people who visit your blog (except via an anonymous contact form), do not expect to develop a loyal personal readership who trust you. People do not trust an anonymous, faceless, contact form or e-mail address like contactme@myblog.com.

TIP: There is no reason to look cheap and amateur these days. Designers are inexpensive and libraries of pre-finished designs are abundant.

There is no excuse for having a blog with a poor design, cheesy clipart, or bad images. Blogging has been around for 10 or 15 years now and there is an endless selection of high-quality blog designs, clipart, and stock images.

While a lot of that content can be found for free, the really high-class stuff will cost you a few bucks - but it is worth it. You can get a world-class blog theme for less than 100 bucks, sometimes half that. You can subscribe to a clipart and image website like www.istock.com and get impressive and high-quality graphics to put on your blog or website.

Remember, you are competing with millions of other blogs. You need to be willing to invest a few bucks here and there in your success. Given how inexpensive it is today to get world-class designs and art for your blog, you should count your blessings. These types of services cost thousands of dollars when I started blogging 15 years ago.

TIP: Have a blog design that FITS your audience and do not just do what everyone else is doing unless you LIKE being lost in the crowd.

If you are on the Internet much and read a lot of different blogs, no doubt you have seen the tendency of people who "monkey see monkey do." A particular style, color scheme, or

collection of clipart will show up on a successful blog; the next thing you know, there are 100 other blogs that look exactly the same way.

While there is something very real and legitimate about mimicking success, you should always keep your own audience personality in mind as you design your blog around the topics and interests that define your blog. Your blog design should illuminate and enhance the message you are trying to convey to your readers; this includes the way your blog is laid out, the graphics, the fonts, and the color scheme. All of those should work together to make your readers feel "at home" when they visit your blog and read what they have come to expect from you.

Instead of mimicking what the "big blogs" do all the time, dare to be different and present yourself as one of those big blogs. Lead the way with your own design ideas and layouts. Yes, it can be a risky step; but if you want to be a truly successful blogger, you have to quit following and start leading.

Find successful bloggers and ask them to give you their cold, hard, and objective opinion about your blog. Better some sting now than failure later.

Most people are afraid to get a hard-hitting objective evaluation of their blog. You should not be. Find a proven



designer and ask them to critique your blog design, layout, and use of colors, fonts, and images. They may totally blister you but it is better that you hear that from one professional than have to discover it after two years of blogging failure.

In the same manner, find or hire a professional writer and have them read a few of your posts and give you feedback. You may have to invest in professional editing help for a period of time as you strengthen your writing muscles, but it is worth every penny. Your blog will live or die on the quality of your writing, and yet most bloggers will not spend a penny to improve their writing skills and they get offended if someone tells them they could improve.

If you are just getting started blogging, now is the ideal time to begin this evaluation process. Better to find out what is wrong with your blog, or your writing, while you only have a few posts and a few readers. With the evaluation in hand, you can work to correct any weaknesses as soon as possible and get started building a successful blog.

TIP: Spend a little time learning about COLOR. Colors that do not match, do not fit your blog “mood,” or are harsh to view are traffic-killing colors.

It is amazing to see the awful mess of color that I find on many blogs. Using a complementary palette of colors that is suitable to the topic of your blog, and the personality of your readers, goes a long way towards helping people feel at home when they visit your blog.

You can educate yourself about the use of color, hire a designer to help you develop a color palette, get some software that will help you with colors such as <http://colorschemer.com>, or find a blog that already has a nice color scheme and set your blog up similarly.

There are a lot of colors that simply do not work well together. There are other colors that are very harsh and irritating to readers. Still other colors do not fit the mood or personality of the message of

your blog. Having a good color palette for your blog is one of the primary elements of good design.

TIP: Your blog footer is no longer an afterthought for fine print. It is a prime marketing area. Check out the big blogs and mimic them.

It used to be that a blog footer was simply a place to throw some copyright information and some fine print. Those days are over. The blog footer is now a primary location for all sorts of valuable information: links to interior pages, advertisements, and social media icons. There really are no



rules about what you can put in your footer; those are just some of the common items.

View your footer as a valuable piece of real estate that is available on every page of your blog. Your readers will see it over and over every time they visit so use the space wisely and to your benefit.

My personal recommendation for new bloggers is a two-column blog (body and one side column). You will do well to make just that much engaging.

People come to your blog primarily to read the content. The sidebar columns, like advertisements, are generally ignored unless they contain truly useful information in a sparing and organized manner. People rarely look up and down even one extra column on a blog much less two or three. I do not have any scientific evidence to back up that statement, which is just my gut feeling from over a decade of experience.

I recommend for new bloggers - or for bloggers who just want to be on the safe side - to limit their blog to one column for blog content and one column for sidebar information.

TIP: Put your BEST stuff right out there for new visitors ("my best posts"). You get one chance to wow them - give new readers a link to your best.

There is a "first time" for every reader who visits your blog. You might get lucky and grab them on a day when you have

posted something magnificent; but to be safe, you should be able to clearly redirect new readers to your very best material on their first visit.

Have a page that lists your best blog posts, your flagship products, and your most helpful information, so that you make the very best impression on each and every new user the first time they visit. Rarely will you get more than one chance to gain their repeat visit. If you lose them the first time they show up, a reader will almost never come back to your site again by their own initiative.

On your homepage, in prime real estate right where every person will see it, make sure you have a button or link that attracts every first-time visitor and gives them a place to go and be immersed in the very best you have to offer.

TIP: If you are serious about blogging, do not use the FREE Wordpress.com blog. The limitations are not worth it. Spend the four or five bucks a month and get a real hosting package that gives you complete creative and functionality control.

Every day I hear from people who are switching over from blogger.com to WordPress. A lot of people use blogger.com because it is free and it is simple to use - both of which are true. WordPress is the choice of professional bloggers because of its flexibility and availability of themes and plug-ins. It is for the same reasons I recommend you use WordPress for your blog too. However, I do not recommend that you use the free

blog you can get at WordPress.com which comes with unacceptable limitations such as the restriction on the use of JavaScript. Invest the four or five bucks a month toward your success as a blogger and get a hosted WordPress account.

I use and recommend [Arvixe](#). I have tried many hosting services and [Arvixe](#) has provided me with years of reliable and quality hosting service. [Get your Wordpress blog set up in just a few minutes with Arvixe by clicking here.](#)

TIP: Be aware of the width of your blog on the many different-sized monitors. Making people scroll horizontally is both annoying and a sure sign of an amateur.

There are many different sizes of monitors. Most bloggers tend to think that all their readers are viewing the exact same thing on their monitor screen as the blogger is viewing. Monitor sizes vary widely so do not assume your great, big, wide blog on your beautiful 27-inch monitor is going to fit nicely on a common 19-inch screen. A safe maximum width for blogs is about 1200 pixels. Most blog themes and skins will allow you to set the exact width of your blog, which will include both the column for the blog content and any sidebars.

Resist the temptation to use a full-width or "fill the screen" blog setting. There are millions of people on the Internet and screen sizes can range from little 10-inch tablets up to 30-inch monitors, from 900 pixels wide to over 2000 pixels wide. When you choose a full-width "elastic" setting for your blog,

you have no idea what kind of crazy layout will show up on monitors that vary so widely in size and pixels. Use a fixed-width size for your blog no wider than 1200 pixels, and if you want to be really safe: no wider than 900 pixels.

TIP: Make a purposeful decision on how you arrange and order the information on your page. The most important things you want your viewers to see need to be at the top. You only get one shot.

Keep in mind that you only get one first impression for new readers. Your existing readers know what to expect when they return to your blog, but first-time visitors have to see your best stuff and get the best first impression you can deliver. You only get one shot most of the time.

Given that, make sure that you have "new reader" buttons, links, or information in prime real estate right at the top of your blog where it will be seen immediately by first-time visitors.

The same principle is true for return visits when it comes to information or widgets in your sidebars. Make sure you organize your blog so that the most important stuff will be seen at the top. Most returning visitors have already read your old posts and will not go too far down your page. They will only see what is in the first one or two screens of your blog vertically. Make sure all your important stuff that you want them to see is in that first or second screen.

TIP: **Make sure you have a clear, easy, and fast way for people to contact you. Use a real name – do not be a faceless shadow behind a keyboard.**

Be sure to give your readers a quick and easy-to-find way to contact you. The way you build personal loyalty is to be personal. If you hide behind a faceless anonymous contact form and no one ever knows you are a real person, do not be too shocked when you cannot build loyalty from real people.

I understand that some people are nervous about putting their contact information out there because they think there are nuts roaming the internet who will track them down. You can use a box number at the post office if you do not want to list your physical mailing address. You can get a second phone number at Skype or Google phone if you want to have just a "blog phone number." If you are really paranoid or have your own other reasons, you could even make up a new name and personality that becomes your blogging persona much like a writer who writes under a different name.

Some people are worried about putting their e-mail address or phone number out there because of junk mail and spam, but that is just part of the process of doing business on the Internet. There are lots of good filters for junk e-mail. After being on the Internet for over a decade with an easily discovered phone number, I personally do not find that I get very many marketing phone calls. Also, considering my blogs and websites list my real name, my phone number, a P.O. Box, and my e-mail address, I have not had any problems despite a

large internet audience and over a decade of internet exposure.

TIP: **Be very careful with your "About Me" page. Let people know you are real, personable, and truly appreciate they take time to read your blog.**

Guess what people find out on your "About Me" page? They find out about YOU. Are you a blogger trying to create an online business, or are you competing with millions of faceless scammers, marketers, and people with their hands out?

I believe the way to get a clear edge over everyone else is to build loyalty and trust with your readers by being real and personable. That does not mean disclosing every detail of your life and family, but it does mean telling them enough about you that people feel like they know you, trust you, and that you have a real appreciation for them.

Use the "About Me" page to express your appreciation and gratitude that your readers have taken their valuable time and invested it in you. You should never take that for granted because there are oceans of bloggers out there relentlessly trying to steal your readers from you.

TIP: **Put things like your "old posts" and "favorite links" (blogroll) on other pages, not your Home page.**

Many bloggers make the mistake of junking up their home page with all sorts of lists of favorite links, archives of their old posts, and a truckload of widgets and gadgets. This causes visual overload and your readers simply ignore them (best case) or it runs them off (worst case).

Create a single link on your homepage sidebar that goes to another page that lists your blog post archives. Create a single link on your homepage that goes to another page that has a list of all your favorite links and blogs recommend (your blogroll). Analyze all of the lists of things you keep in a sidebar and see if that would not work better on a separate page where you can more fully expand that information and it will not junk up your homepage.

TIP: Go through your blog occasionally and makes sure all the links and pages are working properly.

A blog with a bunch of broken links and missing pages will quickly frustrate visitors and run them off. An existing loyal reader might tolerate a few of those and come back (or even shoot you an e-mail letting you know about the problem, assuming you have made yourself to be a real person who values reader comments) but a new reader will almost certainly abandon your blog quickly if the links are broken and pages are missing. Your credibility and

trustworthiness as a blogger is demonstrated by how well you care for your own blog.

TIP: Make it brain-dead easy and lightning fast to subscribe to your mailing list.

I have been on many blogs where it is hard to figure out how to subscribe to the blog and get notifications of new content. It is very rare that people will simply come back and visit your blog routinely hoping to see something new. You must give them an easy way to be notified of new content. The most common way to do this is to have a subscriber mailing list.



Once you set up your subscription list, be sure to put an easy way for people to sign up in a very conspicuous and prominent place on your blog. You never want to miss the chance at getting a new subscriber because a visitor did not see your list sign-up button or form, or because they could not easily figure out how to fill it out.

Always keep in mind that blog readers have an endless choice of blogs before them. If you make it difficult or complex in any way for them to use your blog, they will abandon you without so much as a “fare thee well.”

TIP: Give them an offer they cannot refuse to sign up to your mailing list.

Almost every blog tries to get people to sign up for their mailing list. That has caused e-mail fatigue with most people and it has gotten to a point where they simply will not sign up for your blog just because you ask them to.

If you are an extremely good writer with a reputation for content that people just cannot do without, you may be able to get people to subscribe to your mailing list based on reputation alone. If you are not in that top 1% of elite bloggers however, you are going to need to offer some incentive for people to sign up to your mailing list.

You might offer a free report, an e-book, some sort of service that you provide, or other valuable information for your reader. Most of the time you only get one chance to entice

them to sign up for your e-mail list, so make sure you give it your best shot and offer them something they have a hard time refusing.

TIP: Check your blog on different computers with different browsers to make sure it displays properly.

Gone are the days of single-sized monitors with one Internet browser on one computer platform. Today we have Windows PCs, Macs, Androids, Tablets, Smartphones... all sorts of devices that display blog pages. You have Safari, Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, and a host of other lesser-known browsers to choose from. There are 30-inch-wide high-resolution monitor displays all the way down to 2.5-inch Smartphone screens. Be sure to check what your blog looks like on a variety of devices, screen sizes, browsers, and operating systems. You do not have to go out and buy all those things, just ask your friends or colleagues if you can check out what your blog looks like on their device.

TIP: Do not be tempted to continually test and use the latest cool blogging format and presentation. People like familiarity. In the end, they are coming to your blog to READ, not be a guinea pig.

There is a huge difference between market testing and keeping your blog design fresh, and continually fidgeting with

your blog and never settling on something your readers can get used to.

We are creatures of habit and comfort and we like what is familiar. You do not go in and repaint, re-furnish, and redesign your house every day. You settle in on what you like and you are comfortable with. Occasionally you might decide it is time for a change, which brings a sense of refreshing or re-energizing. A blog is the same way. Pick a great design and settle into a format and style that your readers can become familiar and comfortable with. You will know the right time for a complete redesign that will inject some new energy and life into your blog experience.

TIP: **Make sure you have an easy-to-find list of your favorite posts so you can make the best first impression.**

Most bloggers will have a handful of posts that I call their flagship content. It is the very best of what they have written and what they are most proud of. Make sure you have a link or a button in a prominent place on your homepage where new readers or any reader can quickly go find that content to either read it or refer other people to it. You also need to keep that list fresh by adding new content or trading out newer content that is even better.

Do not underestimate the power of this best-content list. Very often it will be the page that people bookmark the most and use when referring others to your blog.

TIP: **Do not give in to your ego and post about stuff that does not fit your blog.**

Your blog about home cooking does not need your opinion about the Presidential election, no matter how passionate you are about it. Resist the temptation to use your blog as your own personal brain dump and editorial column unless that is what your readers expect your blog to be. I know a guy who writes a blog about creationism in the Book of Genesis and also throws all his political opinions on the blog as well. It makes no sense. People who show up to read his creationist material get put off by all the political content, and people who show up for the political content cannot figure out what in the world the Book of Genesis has to do with politics.

Of course, it is your blog and you can write about anything you want. Remember though that your readers have a choice not come back if you decide to gain their loyalty with one topic and then, contrary to the material that brought them to your blog in the first place, decide you want to pontificate about something else. This is especially important if you are planning to throw something controversial on your arts-and-crafts blog like religion, or weigh in on politics in the middle of your gluten-free-recipe blog.

TIP: **Writing is like any “sport”... the more you practice, the better, stronger, and faster you get.**

A lot of people have the misconception that if you do not have the natural gift to write then you will never be a decent writer.

That is a false notion. Anyone can be taught to write up to a fairly good standard by following basic writing rules.

I have been doing graphic design for 25 years. I know that I can teach just about anybody to do decent graphic design if they will learn a few basic rules and follow them. To be a great designer at the next level, you do need some of that gift of natural artistic ability and creativity.

Writing is the same way. If you learn the basic rules of writing and follow those guidelines, you can be a decent writer and be ahead of about 90% of most people. The good news is that the more you practice, the better you get. Writing is like working out your muscles, the more you do it, the stronger your skills will become and the more writing you can produce.

Learn the basic rules of good writing and discipline yourself to write something every day even if it is just for practice. Over time, you will be amazed at how much you improve just through the workout of writing.

Case in point... I've written books of 20,000 words or more in one day many times. How? Practice. I have strong and durable "writing muscles" from years of practice and working out.

TIP:

Mimic success. There are a lot of "fakers" out there but when you do find a "winner" blogger, imitate their success.

It does not matter what goals you are pursuing in life, if you will identify those who have gone before you and become successful, and then mimic their discipline, methods, and choices, you will have a huge head start towards achieving your own goals.

In the online business world, you will find that only about 1 out of 10 bloggers are doing anything more than selling you rehashed material about "how to make money online." They have never made any money online or been successful on the Internet other than selling information on how to do that. It is like the old "no-money-down real estate" programs that proliferated back in the 80s and 90s. Most of those guys never actually made any money in real estate, they just made a bunch of money selling books on how to make money in real estate. The same thing is occurring with online business today.

You need to find someone who has been successful in actually building a real online business, preferably with multiple income streams from various sources - and who can show you how it is done. The temptation for most people is to immediately copy the "how to make money online" material, and go out and find the next generation of suckers who will buy it. Yes, a lot of people make money that way. I happen to have a conscience and I am hoping you do too. I would rather teach people all the legitimate ways to actually make money utilizing the Internet than perpetuating the "online business sucker scheme."



TIP: Sign up for a photo-library service and use quality images to give visual appeal.

There is no excuse for having crummy images on your blog. Unless you are a photographer or enjoy photography as a hobby, you probably will not want to spend the time and effort to come up with your own images all the time. You definitely should have images to enhance the visual appeal and interest they bring to your blog. Many of the really nice blog themes or skins will look for images in your posts to create excerpts on your homepage or search-results page.

There are many online stock photography libraries that contain incredibly high quality clipart, photos, and even animation. The better the quality, the more it costs, but you are only talking about a few bucks for most images or clipart in the size that you need for a blog post. My favorite service is www.istock.com.

TIP: Perseverance is the main difference between success and failure in blogging. Most bloggers will quit in the first year.

Over 10 years ago when I started blogging, we were still at a time where most people could build a blog and new readers would come simply because there was still only a small community of blogs to choose from. Once blogging increased in popularity, that number grew exponentially. The bad news is that you are competing with literally tens of millions of blogs for the attention of readers. The good news is that 99.9% of those bloggers will quit in the first few weeks or months. The longer you keep at it, the more you will win new traffic by attrition. Once you establish yourself as someone who can be counted on to hang around and readers know you are not going anywhere, you will build loyalty with them and they will refer other people to you.

Every day I run across new blogs that are just getting started and announce all their grandiose plans to take over the blogosphere. Occasionally I will go back and visit them a few

weeks or months later and most of the time they still have the same handful of posts they started with, followed by a post apologizing for not having posted for a while.

The longer you keep at it, the better chance you have to be successful at blogging. You have to realize the quantity of competition out there; and, that on average at this point in the life of the Internet, it will take you two to five years of consistent blogging to build up an audience. Unless you get extremely lucky, or you are an extraordinary writer, you have to be patient and be in it for the long term to increase your chances of success.

TIP: **Headlines, sub-heads, and callouts are what attract the reader's attention and give them instant reason to read your blog post.**

I have helped many bloggers and authors who write great big, long, and boring paragraphs. While it would be nice if most people could still read long bodies of copy and discern them, the reality is that it is just not where we are at today.

By writing in short paragraphs and using headers, sub-heads, and callouts to provide a sort of visual roadmap through your content, you will better keep your readers attention and also give them the ability to quickly evaluate the message and determine if they want to invest the time to read it.

In other words, I can look at the title, glance at the sub-headings, and read a callout or two and get the general idea of

what your blog post is about. Given that, I can make an instant determination of whether or not I want to read it.

Novice bloggers will immediately think "we don't want them to do that, they may choose not to read it." That is a rookie mistake. By honoring your readers' valuable time and trusting them to make the decision about whether to read your post, you build loyalty and trust with them. Every reader is not going to love every post you write, or even want to read it, so you have to come to grips with that sooner rather than later. Your readers will appreciate your giving them what is needed for them to efficiently and safely determine if your current blog post is something that is relevant to them.

TIP: **Have a sense of humor in your writing but be careful of off-color, localized, or social-issue humor which can turn off readers.**

I have a relentless sense of humor. Humor is a wonderful way to create interest and cultivate loyalty with readers. But you have to be careful with it on the Internet because you have such a widely varying audience.

You are going to have people of all political persuasions, all sorts of religious beliefs, and a huge range of tolerance for what kind of humor is appropriate. You have to be careful with the words you use as certain words, topics, or stereotypes that you think are hysterical may be really offensive to others. You also have to deal with the reality that we live in a very oversensitive and easily offended world who

claims "tolerance" on one hand while in reality being utterly intolerant of anything that even slightly rubs them the wrong way.

That does not mean you have to shy away from using humor, you just have to be savvy about it.

TIP: **Share your opinions and experience but do it with your reader's interests in mind, not your ego.**

There is nothing wrong with sharing your experiences, feelings, and opinions on your blog regardless of what the blog topic is. A sterile and clinical blog is not generally a very interesting blog. People do not become attached to screens full of text but rather to the person and personality behind the content.

Many bloggers lose out on the personalizing benefits of weaving in their own opinions and experience into their content even if it is a blog about golfing or recipes or business. People relate to people. Your experiences make your advice and information more real and believable. Your opinions build trust as they prove themselves to be true in the lives of those who read them and put them into practice in their own life.

Now a warning for the flipside... If your opinions and experiences are not relevant to your blog topic and do not work to enhance the material to your reader, then leave them out. If you use your blog to whine, complain, or get on a

soapbox, and it is not highly relevant to your blog topic, then you will quickly run off people. If you simply use your blog as a place to hear yourself talk about yourself, then you run people off even faster.

Learn to use your experiences and opinions in a way that helps your reader and creates an emotional attachment between you and them. That is the kind of loyalty and interaction that will bring them back for a long time.

TIP: **When you get a writing idea, never think "I'll remember that for sure." Write the idea down immediately and keep a little library of writing inspirations.**

I cannot even count the number of times I have had an idea for a blog post or website or a new product and thought the idea was so magnificent and so exciting there was no possible chance I would ever forget it. When I woke up two hours later, there was no possible chance of me remembering.

Now when I get an idea, I always write it down no matter how insignificant or how magnificent I think it is. By writing it down, my mind can be at peace that I will not forget it or overlook it later.

I may not even act on the idea at that point, but it becomes part of a list of ideas and inspirations that I will read over every so often looking for ways to improve or expand my blog or business.

There are several ways you can do this. I recommend an electronic version and not paper so that you do not have to worry about losing it or having it destroyed over time.

Write your ideas in an e-mail and send it to yourself to store it in a folder. Or get a note-taking application and write it down there.

MY FAVORITE: "The Brain" software. You cannot beat this software for storing your ideas, ALL OF THEM, for the long term where you can quickly retrieve them later. Get it here thebrain.com - you will love it.

TIP: Use a real e-mail list management service to build your reader list.

A lot of bloggers try to manage an e-mail subscriber list with a contact form and their desktop email program. That is okay for a small handful of e-mail addresses, but there are lots of disadvantages to it:

1. You have to manually manage the e-mail subscriptions.
2. You have to manually manage people who want to get off your list, which can be discouraging when you see people request to be removed.
3. You have to send out your e-mail through your local e-mail provider, which can get you put on a spammers list.
4. It is not automated.



With a real list-subscriber service such as Aweber.com, your e-mail subscriptions will be handled automatically. People can subscribe or unsubscribe and you do not have to manage it. Your e-mails to that list are sent out through a well-known and protected e-mail sending service so they will not get blocked by spam filters. When people unsubscribe, you do not even have to look at the request or know about it.

Also, services like Aweber.com (which is the one I recommend) offer you newsletter templates and list-campaign services, which are one of the best ways to stay in contact with your subscribers. You may even be reading this

blogging tip in an e-mail that was sent to you as one of my subscribers.

TIP: Try to keep writing to paragraphs made up of 3-4 sentences. Long blocks of text send a visual message of “too much work to read.”

When people come to your blog, the first thing they do is “look” at your blog post – NOT read it. They take a visual snapshot of it which sends a lot of unspoken messages.

If your blog post is a title and one or two great big long paragraphs of text, you are sending this message to them: I want you to work really hard to dissect this big long paragraph of text to figure out what I want to say to you. You can probably guess that is not the message you want to send. Learn to write in short paragraphs of 2-4 sentences.

Vary the number of sentences and links in your paragraph. If every paragraph is exactly the same length, the post will appear methodical and boring, so mix it up.

TIP: There are a lot of differing opinions about how often to post, which means there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

How often should you post? This has been argued ad nauseam and for as long as blogs have been around.

Some experts claim you should post every day. Some claim you should post once a week. Others will argue that every day posts will wear people out, but if you only post once a week people will have time to forget you.

The real answer is: there is no answer. You have to know your audience and what they want and expect. If you are writing a blog about parenting, you might be able to post once every two or three weeks and give them plenty to read and practice. It may take them two or three weeks to digest and test out everything you taught them.

On the other hand, if you are writing a blog about football and you post every three weeks, you probably just missed two weeks’ worth of games in between.

There are some topics like making money, improving your life, or gardening (especially in the springtime), where you could post something every day and people would gobble it up. If you are blogging about the latest and greatest bargains and deals and sales on Internet shopping sites, you might be able to send out multiple posts every day.

You have to know your audience, what they want, what they expect, and in a positive sense, what they can tolerate. That is how often you should post.

TIP: There are a lot of differing opinions about how long a post should be, which means there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

How long should your posts be? Should they be long or should they be short? Yes.

In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. The length of your post should fit the topic, the goal of the post, and most of all: the expectations of your readers.

Many novice bloggers make the mistake of equating length with expertise, or not understanding that their passion is not always equal to their readers' interest. Sometimes as a blogger, you have to learn the fine art of wetting their whistle, and teasing their interest in leaving them wanting more so that you give them a reason to come back. That is not the same as bait and switch, which is promising something and not delivering. Doing that is stupid and will lose your readers fast.

Now I will say this from experience: most people do not have the reading skills or attention level to read long posts anymore. If I had to give you a reasonable maximum length for most of your blog posts, I would tell you about 500 words maximum.

If you force me into a corner and simply want a good reasonable word count target for each post, I would tell you about 400 words. That is my best advice based on over a decade of writing experience.

TIP: Typos, bad spelling, and poor grammar are unnecessary distractions that cast doubt on you in many ways. Get someone to proofread your writing.

Just about every word-processing software or browser application has a spellchecker on it, which usually includes grammar as well. If you cannot find a friend or relative who is good at proofing, you can hire someone to proofread your material.

There are many different sites on the Internet for very inexpensive rates. [Check out my other books for information about to find contract help.](#)

Everything you write leaves an impression. You can get away with a few typos and errors here and there, especially if you are someone who writes a prolific amount. But if your writing is full of spelling errors, it simply makes you look uneducated. If your writing is full of poor grammar, it will erode your credibility. If your writing is full of typographic errors, then you simply look careless.

Learn to proofread and spell-check your blog posts. The best method is to use another person to proofread as the worst person to proofread your own material is you.

TIP: Learn how to set up a “new-subscriber” campaign so that you are maximizing your invited presence with your readers.

When you get someone to sign up for your e-mail subscriber list so that they can receive a notification about your new blog content or some free report or e-book from you, here is the worst thing you can do: send them a thank-you email. And that is it.

Yes, of course you should send them a “thank you” but that is a golden opportunity to continue building a relationship with them. They have given you permission to put yourself face-to-face with them electronically. You should take advantage of this in an appropriate and professional manner.

The best way is to have a new-subscriber campaign set up at your e-mail list-subscriber service. I have been using Aweber.com for many years and recommend them to all my new blogging clients. They will handle your subscriber-list management, e-mail newsletter needs; and, best of all, allow you to set up a new-subscriber campaign that works something like this: you create a series of e-mails that go out at a scheduled frequency to every new subscriber.

In other words, let's say I set up a new-subscriber campaign of three e-mails. The first e-mail goes out immediately, tells you “thank you for subscribing,” and gives you a list of all my “best of” links and a link to the free report I promised you. Then I schedule a second e-mail to go out seven days later again

thanking you for subscribing, asking you how you liked all the material I sent you, and letting you know about my online discussion forum and inviting you to visit. Then I schedule a third email to go out 30 days after the second e-mail that again thanks you for being a subscriber, says hellos and asks you if you have any questions I can help you with. That third e-mail would also present a list of other products and services I have through my blog.

The variations combinations of how new-subscriber campaigns can be used are (of course) endless and limited only by your creativity.

TIP: Never e-mail your subscriber list with anything less than something of value for them. Spamming will kill you.

True spamming will ruin your subscriber list as fast as anything you could come up with. Your subscribers will not mind if you send them an occasional e-mail of value that presents something they can buy from you.

Most people are reasonable and realize that while you give away a lot of free information, you still have the primary goal of building a business and making a living.

If the products and services that you offer to your subscriber list are truly of value, not only will it not bother people to receive those e-mails, they will actually look forward to them.

There are plenty of writers, vendors, and companies that cause excitement when I see an e-mail from them. It does not matter whether they are sending some free helpful information or sending me a product or service to consider.

They have earned my trust and so I am glad when something shows up from them. That is the kind of relationship that you need to build with your e-mail list and then you do not have to worry about them ever thinking you are spamming them.

TIP: Do not duplicate your posts on other blogs, article services, or sites. You will get penalized.

Resist the temptation to duplicate your blog posts and articles out on other people's blogs or at article sites. Duplicated content does not benefit you and can even get penalized by large search engines such as Google.

The way to disseminate a particular blog post into multiple blogs and articles is to rewrite the post each time it goes out to another location. That may sound like a lot of work but it is worth the benefits. First of all, you do not have to reinvent all the content, you already have it. All you need to do is rewrite it or have some other writer rewrite it. Then you can take those variations and post them out on other blogs or into article services so that

you will benefit from the increased exposure of that article all across the Internet.

TIP: Avoid the endless offers to exchange links, get free writing for your blog, and to purchase guaranteed "ranking" or SEO (Search Engine Optimization) services.

Once you start a blog, you will get swamped with junk offers promising to do things for you the easy way. The age-old rule applies: if it sounds too good to be true, it is.



The only people you want to exchange links with are other bloggers who write within the same community as you and who have relevant blogs where both of you benefit from the exposure.

All the offers you will get for people who say they will write free content for you usually end up giving you junk with a couple of embedded links to their site or service. Once in a while you might get some decent content, but not usually. Either way, you have to be willing to allow them to link to their site or blog from within the blog post.

Any offers you get for “guaranteed search engine results” or “automated SEO” are garbage. There is no magic service you can buy that is going to get you to the top of the Google search results. There are lots of ways to get there, but none of them include paying \$79 to some service who promises to post you to 800 search engines and get you on the first page of Google.

When you get offers for services like this, the best thing you can do is find an experienced successful blogger and ask them their opinion. Since they have probably already wasted thousands of dollars (which many of the first-generation bloggers had to do to learn the lesson), they will be more than happy to tell you if something is a waste of time.

TIP: **Link to other quality blogs and try to get links from other quality blogs to build traffic and ranking.**

One of the best ways to build traffic and search engine ranking is to have your blogs linked to other relevant and popular blogs. This is not as easy as it sounds because a larger successful blogger really has no compelling reason to simply slap your link on their blog. So you have to offer them something in return.

It might be a guest blog post, but usually successful bloggers are inundated with people begging them to guest post. You might trade some work for a link, even if it is just a mention in a blog post. Think of something you can barter with that blogger.

A good successful blogger will not simply link to you for money unless you have a blog that helps build his reputation. If you offered me \$1000 to put your link on my blog, but your blog would offend my readers or tear down my reputation, I wouldn't take \$10,000 to give you a link. Keep that in mind as well.

Sometimes you have to be creative, but if you can get your links onto popular relevant blogs then it can quickly lead to increased traffic and higher search-engine results for your blog.

One new way to maximize blog linking is through a traffic-builder service like Linky Tools. Linky Tools created the “blog hop,” which is simply the method of sharing a list of links across many blogs so that you can hop from one blog to the

other using that same list. You can check out Linky Tools here:
<http://www.LinkyTools.com>

TIP: **Post sincere and quality comments on other blogs to build links and exposure for your own blog. People love comments and you get exposure.**

Don't you love getting good comments about your blog posts? Of course you do, so you realize that other bloggers love it too. But what they do not love is the fake two- or three-word comment meant to simply give you an opportunity to provide a link back to your own blog. You may fool some new bloggers into posting those insincere comments, but they never get past the kinds of bloggers who you really hope will approve your comments.

One of the very best ways to get your link out there and to build interest to your blog is to show genuine interest in other bloggers and invest the time to submit authentic and thoughtful comments. Most bloggers are happy to allow you the chance to leave your link because you have taken the time to help them build their blog by leaving a good comment.

Some bloggers make the huge mistake of disallowing all links in comments. I know there are some people who will abuse this, and you can simply not publish those comments, but to me it is the height of both arrogance and a lack of appreciation to tell someone they cannot leave a link back to their blog when they just took a chunk of their valuable time to read

your blog post and add a valuable comment to the conversation. I do not care how good someone's blog is, if they refuse to let an authentic commenter link back to their own blog, then in my opinion they are not worthy of that person's time because they are declaring that their time is valuable and the other person's is not.

There are a lot of online business gurus and blog-traffic building experts out there who will teach you methods on how to quickly and insincerely comment on other blogs for no other purpose than getting your link on that blog. They will even teach you to hire contractors to go out and do it on your behalf. I find this to be dishonest and I am a firm believer that what comes around goes around.

TIP: **Use traditional online and off-line marketing to grow your blog.**

People often ask me how to market a blog. How can you grow your traffic and build your online business? There was a time 10 or 15 years ago, that simply getting something good online would bring traffic because there was not a lot of competition. If you build it, they will come... Those days are long gone. Now you have to grow and market your blog or online business just like you do any business, and that is by utilizing all sorts of various techniques both online and off-line, using new and traditional methods.

A few available methods are: pay-per-click campaigns, banner advertising, magazine advertising, participating in forums,

writing reviews and guest posts, paid search engine results, link exchanges, e-mail marketing, newsletters, and video ads.

There is no one magic way to market your blog, nor should you dismiss traditional ways to market. Learn to use the best of both the old and new marketing methods to your benefit.

TIP: **Do not wear out your Facebook and Twitter accounts as simply a way to publicize your blog posts, pitch products, or tug on heartstrings for donations.**

Some people wear out their Facebook and Twitter accounts with an endless stream of what is basically electronic junk mail or heavy-handed, emotionally intensive appeals for donations for this cause or that. This wears people out over time.

If you market a business and people expect nothing but product and service sales pitches from you, they may still choose to follow you. But if you lure people in on a personal basis to then bombard them with the latest deal on Amazon or Etsy, you are going to irritate them quickly.

Make sure you use your Facebook and Twitter accounts appropriately. Keep your messages relevant to the reason why people became interested in your Facebook page or Twitter account in the first place.

TIP: **Interact with other bloggers to build traffic across both your audiences. Be careful though, as some bloggers only believe in one-way streets. Look for those who will reciprocate.**

You have an audience. Guess what? Other bloggers have audiences too - which represent potential growth to your audience. Good bloggers realize that there are far and away enough people on the Internet that it is not dangerous to share your people with other bloggers. There is no reason to be territorial as a blogger. You can work with other good bloggers and develop crossover traffic from each other.

There are a couple of tricks to this though. First of all, if the other blogger has a much larger audience than yours, you will need to sweeten the pie for them in order to tempt them to allow you to address their audience or to get them to promote your blog to their readers. That principle is also true when you are approached by a blogger with a much smaller number of readers than you have.

The other thing to be careful of is bloggers who absolutely want to get in front of your audience but do their best to keep you away from theirs. Sometimes bigger blogs have all the leverage and there's not much you can do about it except to try to seek out blogs that are more equal to yours in size and influence. Be alert for bloggers who are territorial and simply want to steal your readers without any intention to reciprocate and allow you the opportunity they are asking for.

TIP: Learn about ways to monetize your blogs. There are lots of options and they all have positive and negative components.

Many people start a blog to make money. Other bloggers maintain their page for a while, start to see some blogging success, and decide to up their game and really aim for profits. You can go either route.

There are many ways to monetize your blog and it is far too big of a topic to explain it all here, but I will give you enough information to make sure you are headed in the right direction. Some of the most popular ways you can monetize your blog include: pay-per-click advertising like AdSense, direct-sale advertising, writing reviews for products and services, writing for other blogs, affiliate-sale programs, selling e-books or reports, offering a membership site, and if your content is really worthy of it, you can simply ask for donations to support your writing.

Check out some of the books I have written that explain this topic more fully: <http://www.brenttriggs.com/stuff>

TIP: Write a great post with your best expert advice or opinion and shop it to BIG blogs that fit your target audience. You will strike out most of the time, but one hit can be magic.

Do not let anyone lie to you; it is very hard to get accepted as a guest poster on a large successful blog. They are inundated

with submissions for guest posts every day. You have to write a standout post, send it to them at just the right time for them, and have a little luck tossed in for good measure.

Does that mean it is not worth the effort? Absolutely not. It is worth the effort if you swing the bat 1000 times and get one hit on a really big blog, resulting in exponential growth for your blog overnight.

So write a home-run blog post and, with dogged determination, submit your post to the larger successful blogs that are relevant to the topic and your own readers' interests. It may take some time and effort, but if you get that one magic chance, it could pay off big time.

TIP: When commenting on other blogs, add real wisdom, answer questions not addressed, or bring up new points not considered to draw interest to your own blog.

Commenting on other blogs is almost as good at drawing interest to yourself as is writing on your own blog. If your comment genuinely benefits the readers of the other blog, they will naturally be drawn to your blog. You can do this by adding some real wisdom to what has already been said, or perhaps you may answer a question that was not addressed in the original blog post but should have been addressed. You might bring up some points of conversation and topics that are relevant that also happen to be the kinds of things that are found on your blog.

A good blogger is not stupid, they realize that commenting is a way to draw attention to yourself as a blogger. Successful bloggers do not mind this technique as long as you are not obnoxious, spamming, or submitting a bunch of worthless comments meant only to link back to your own blog.

TIP: When using affiliate links or promotional links in your posts, make sure to disclose your profit relationship to your readers. Do not try to fool them or pretend you have no monetary motives.

Never try to fool your readers when it comes to affiliates, commissions, or promotions that you benefit from. With few exceptions, your readers do not care that you profit from recommendations as long as they trust you. They realize that you are actually teaching them a way they can build their online business too.

That does not mean you have to spit out a full disclaimer every time you put up an affiliate link. But I typically do make mention of it in the introduction of a document so that gets it out of the way.

You can even use links to affiliates or promotions as a direct teaching example. You might explain to the reader exactly how you set it up and how it works, and then encourage them to use the technique for themselves.

My primary point is this: do not be dishonest or sneaky with your readers. They do not mind if you make money and they

realize that is what people with businesses do. What they do not like is being fooled or tricked or treated like dummies.

TIP: Do not try to sell your readers something you would not honestly buy yourself and find real value in.

Never try to sell your audience a service or product that you do not honestly like, do not sincerely find real value in, and would never buy yourself. People are not stupid, they will see right through you if you are trying to hawk junk on them just to make a few bucks.

In the online business world there is a lot, and I mean a whole lot, of junk you can foist onto your readers and trick them in the buying - especially if they trust you. But once you become known as a snake-oil salesman, your audience will disintegrate at a mind-numbing pace. It takes a long time to build up a good reputation and just a couple of gimmicks to tear it down.

If you cannot honestly know that you would be satisfied and glad someone presented a specific product or service to you, then do not present it to your readers who trust you.

TIP: When people comment on your blog, reply to those comments as often as possible and acknowledge them. Appreciate their time and build loyalty.



When someone takes their valuable time to leave a comment on your blog and add to the value of the conversation you are having with your readers, you should take the time to respond to their comment and acknowledge them.

If I could only offer you one way, one magical way, to build loyalty and encourage people to return to your blog, I would encourage you to read your comments and post a response. If you truly do not have anything to tell them in response to their remarks, simply acknowledge them for taking the time to comment. By doing this, you are stating publicly that you appreciate them, that you find their time as valuable as yours, and that you are willing to invest in those who invest in you.

TIP: Consider allowing comments with disagreeing opinions or even criticism when appropriate. Learn when it is NOT appropriate.

It takes some time to grow a thick skin when you blog and to learn not to get upset when you receive comments that are critical of you. I am not talking about the downright nasty comments that you want to just simply delete (and should). I am talking about sincere comments of genuine and/or appropriate critical response or feedback.

You have to learn when it is appropriate to disregard those comments and trash them versus when it will actually benefit your blog to publish them. Sometimes the best thing to do is digest the criticism privately, make the necessary changes, and not publish a comment publicly.

Other times, negative comments in disagreement or controversy can actually spark interest in the activity on your blog. So ask yourself when you receive a critical comment: will this benefit my readers if I publish it? Will it generate traffic and interest because of the controversy or emotion involved? Does it actually enhance my reputation by showing that I am confident enough to allow disagreement towards my opinion or published content?

If publishing a negative comment benefits you, then do not be afraid to put it out there. On the other hand, always keep in

mind IT'S YOUR BLOG. There is no unspoken, ethical, or unwritten rule that says you have to publish anything on your blog that you do not want on your blog. Do not be bullied by the person who submitted the comment into publishing something that hurts your reputation or credibility.

TIP: **Do not be bullied by commenters or other bloggers. Learn how to handle trolls and criticism.**

First, what do you do with "trolls" and just plain nasty criticism? Trolls are people who hop around on blogs and leave nasty comments for no other purpose than they get a kick out of it. They tear people down, criticize, and are generally nasty because they feel brave - typically hiding behind a keyboard and the name "anonymous."

There is only one way to handle people like that: immediately delete their comments and do not give them a second thought. My philosophy is that if you are not brave enough to tell me your name and attach your email address to your comment, then you have not even earned the right to be considered for publication on my blog, especially if you have sent me a nastygram.

What about critical nasty comments from a real person? If the criticism or negative feedback helps you generate interest and does not undermine your credibility, then you should publish it. Do not be afraid of allowing disagreement or even criticism if it works for your benefit. However, you should not be

bullied by the commenter into publishing their comment as if they have some right for it to be published simply because they took the time to submit it. Over the years, I have received many an e-mail like this: "I see you did not publish my comment. You're not afraid to publish it are you because I'm right? You shouldn't ask people to read your blog and then refuse to publish their comments. I can't believe you censor other people."

This is pure manipulation and you have to learn not to fall for it. IT'S YOUR BLOG. You do not have to publish anything that does not benefit you and your blogging effort. Do not be bullied or manipulated by anyone who visits your blog. If you blog for very long, it is not a question of if this will happen to you, the question is when will it happen to you. So be prepared for it ahead of time and it will not be so hard to deal with. As a novice blogger, this situation with nasty or mean comments can be pretty stressful until you have dealt with it a few times and then it will not bother you anymore.

TIP: **Advertising on a new blog - done correctly - can add credibility and an image of being established. Too many ads are annoying and junky looking.**

We are surrounded and inundated with advertising. Blogs are no different. The novice blogger will usually fall into two categories. Some will load up their blog with every advertisement they can find, hoping to make a few pennies with pay-per-click or affiliate programs. Other bloggers

believe that all advertising is cheap or an insult to their readers and will develop this "no ads on my blog" mentality. I will address both sides of the debate, mostly based on the wisdom I learned in the magazine-publishing industry.

First: if you junk up your blog with tons of ads, your readers will automatically block them out and dismiss them without a second glance. It is like the pages in magazines that are nothing but advertisements that you quickly flip past and do not give any attention to. Not only are a lot of the ads ugly and worthless, there is no reason for you to stop and even notice them. Learn to be choosy and selective about the ads you have on your blog, and make sure they are products and services

that will actually interest your readers. Make sure that these are products and services that you are not embarrassed to present to your audience and will not regret recommending them to purchase. If you will allow any old advertisement on your blog just to make a few pennies from your reader, you are sending the message to them: "I don't value you, and you can't trust me because I will sell you out to make a buck."

What about the idea that "no ads on my blog" is somehow a superior position to take? I think it is hogwash. First of all, good advertising from credible companies sends an implied message about your blog that those companies support your blog and recommend your blog. It does not matter that they actually have probably never looked at your blog; the fact that they are advertising on your blog implies their approval and credibility. That is why you want good, solid, and reputable advertising on your blog. It actually helps establish you and your credibility.

Second, you are actually doing your readers a service when you present them with advertising for high-quality products and services. Think about it: most of the things you buy are a result of what? Advertising. You do not mind a good advertisement for something you actually want; and whether you remember thinking it or not, you have appreciation for whoever presented that advertisement to you because you found a great product or service you ended up buying. Not only do good advertisements



for good products and services build credibility for your blog, they also cultivate loyalty and trust when readers find out about another company they end up purchasing from and benefiting from.

TIP: **Advertising is common and expected; your readers don't mind as long as you do not abuse them or insult them.**

There is nothing wrong - and everything right - about good advertising on your blog. When you present valuable and credible products and services to your readers, it builds trust between you and them.

As a blogger, your content and how you treat your readers establishes a foundation of trust and loyalty. The more they trust you, and the better you treat them, the more receptive they are when you present high-quality advertising to them. Readers are not stupid, so never try to trick them or mistreat them. They know you have to make a living and have no problems with you making an income from blogging unless you try to deceive them or dump off junk onto them to make a couple of bucks.

Remember, it takes a long time to build up loyalty and trust and only a few bad decisions to completely destroy your reputation. Keep this in mind when you present something for sale to your readers or put advertising in front of them.

TIP: **You have to have both style and content.**

Some bloggers focus on style and gimmicks to the detriment of good content. Other bloggers present to you good content in such a sterile and uninteresting way that readers never get around to being interested in the good content. You must learn to have the appropriate balance between good content and style. Great content with no style is still great content but a boring presentation. Bad content presented with great style will leave your readers feeling empty and cheated. So create good content and present it in such a way that is interesting, organized, visually appealing, and leaves your reader feeling happy that they invested their time in your blog.

TIP: **People have become hyper-sensitive to advertising; if you primarily blog so every post is an advertisement in disguise, people will get sick of it.**

Today, we are surrounded and bombarded with advertisements so much that for the most part we have become completely desensitized to it and simply ignore advertisements. If you use your blog and your blog posts as nothing more than a relentless vehicle to sell your products and services, people will quickly get sick of your blog and move on.

On the other hand, if your blog content is valuable and interesting and you build up trust and loyalty with your readers, they not only will not mind the occasional advertising

in a sales pitch, they both expect it and appreciate it if you're presenting them with high-quality products and services.

I have found after years of blogging and being online that people do not resent your need or effort to build a business or make a living. It has to be balanced with the appropriate value you represent to the reader and must never violate the trust and loyalty you have established with them. You earn the right to sell to your customers when you have earned their trust by treating them right and building up "value points" with them over time.

Do not try to disguise blog posts or e-mails as valuable free information when what it really is an advertisement for something you are selling. People are not stupid, so do not treat them that way or you will destroy the trust that they have in you.

If you are pitching something, then pitch it. Do not pretend to be writing a blog post under the guise of valuable free information which is really nothing more than an advertisement in disguise. People will see right through it and equate the sneakiness with dishonesty.

TIP:

Do you hope to monetize your blog, but insist on every service and widget being free to you? Is this a smart business decision or lack of investment?

Many bloggers start blogging because they hope to make an income from blogging. Even if they do not start out that way, the vast majority of bloggers either attempt or wish they could monetize their blog. Many of those same bloggers will never pull one dollar out of their own pocket to invest in their own success, or to reward other bloggers or services that help them along the way (either with a donation or a purchase of their product). These same bloggers consider themselves as "frugal" and "savvy" to never pay a dime for anything and they build their blog on the back of free services and free information. I have never seen that mentality pay off.

If you are completely unwilling to invest in your own success by investing in good products, services, and information that will help you succeed, then what makes you think you will attract the kind of people who will then turn around and invest in your blogging effort to help them succeed? The old adage is true for blogging too: you get what you pay for. There is also the timeless truth that you "reap what you sow." When you are generous and invest in the success of other people, you are sowing the seeds of your own success. I have watched this principle play out as true 100% of the time over the last 25 years.

You should certainly be frugal and not waste money, but that is different than being cheap and not wanting to invest in your own success or the success of others.

TIP: **If 10,000 new people saw your blog today, how many would come back a second time? Do you grab readers and give them a reason to return?**

Many novice bloggers never stop to put themselves in the shoes of first-time visitors to their blog. Often their blog is set up in a way that simply feeds their own ego or is just set up in some haphazard and unplanned way because they never stop to think about a quality layout.

You have already won the loyalty of your repeat visitors. When they come back to your blog, they know what to expect. If you have a decently designed blog, they know how to find what they are looking for. On the other hand, first-time visitors have never been there and if you make them work hard to find your best content, or it is confusing as to where they should start, you will lose them and they will never return.

Make sure that new users know exactly where to go, and know exactly what to click on or where to visit to find your very best content and resources so that you make the very best impression you can on them within the first minute of their visit. If you fail to do this, you will probably lose them and never see them again.

Learn to role-play as a "first-time visitor." Go to your home page and ask yourself: "what would I think, what would I do, what when I click on, what would I find if I saw this page for the first time?" Ask other people to do that for you and give

you an honest evaluation. If you really want a hard-hitting critique, then pay another successful blogger to give you the honest brutal truth of their opinion about this. Here is where I shamelessly plug my critiquing service to you. I have been blogging and helping others build blogs for well over a decade; and I promise you, I have absolutely no problem or hesitation in giving you an objective and honest evaluation of your blog design and what your first impression to new users will be. Visit RiggsDesignWorks.com

TIP: **Ways to create interest in your writing: surprise readers, leave them hanging, common sense, specific answers, tell a story, or fuel curiosity.**

It goes without saying, but you want your blog content to be interesting. There is no better surefire way to make sure your readers do not come back to your blog than to bore them to death. Do not mistake your own interest in what you write as a guarantee of automatic interest from your readers. There are several ways to create interesting content. Here are a few:

Surprise your readers. This one is a little bit hard to explain because it has a lot to do with the personality and expectation of your specific audience. Once they become a little bit accustomed to your usual content, throw a wrench into the works once in a while and surprise them with something different. I am not saying throw in something that does not fit your blog topic or your readers' expectations, but rather I am talking about something that will cause them to raise their eyebrows a little and end up feeling like "hmmm, that was

unusual" or "wow, I wasn't expecting that." Only you can determine what type of content will have that effect but it is an effect that will leave an impression with your readers.

Another technique is to leave them hanging and wanting more. You do not want to use this method all the time or people will come to expect it and grow tired of it. I have known bloggers who constantly throw out teasers as a routine and I would simply get to the point of ignoring them because I knew I should expect that from them. Use this technique sparingly and with savvy. The "until we meet again" or "to be continued" cliffhanger or teaser is a great way to build expectation for future content. Make sure that you actually follow up and not leave them hanging too long.

Offering good old common sense, specific answers to obvious unanswered questions, or telling a great story also generates interest with your readers and fuels curiosity. Generating curiosity results in loyal readers and return readers, both of which are the holy grail of blogging.

TIP: **Signs of a failing blog: declining stats, inconsistent/boring posting, unfocused vision, lack of attention to detail. Danger Will Robinson!**

When you first start blogging, it is all a lot of fun and adrenaline. Most people will burn out and quit within a few weeks or months. Those who persevere and continue to consistently produce good content month after month, year

after year, increase their chances of success even if just by attrition.

Successful bloggers will objectively evaluate their blog on a routine basis and look for signs of boredom, lack of focus, or what I call "tired writing." Tired writing is blog content produced from a sense of duty but lacking any sort of passion or freshness. All bloggers run the risk of tired writing and we have to constantly be on guard for it.

If your traffic statistics are noticeably declining, if you are getting feedback about uninteresting and boring content, if you have become inconsistent and frequently put off writing, or if your writing has become sloppy and careless, you need to step back, refocus, and re-energize your blog effort. It is beyond the scope of this tip to tell you how to do that. My purpose here is to warn you of this because it happens to most bloggers at some point in time.

TIP: **Brain freeze? Ideas: How-to, Top 10, Pros & Cons, Tips & Tricks, Lessons Learned, I Predict, Compare A to B; now get writing!**



If you have never experienced writers block or a brain freeze when it comes to producing a new blog post, do not worry - it will happen soon enough. Here are some quick creative ideas to help you get over the hump:

- **How-To:** Write a post about how to do something, with step-by-step instructions, screenshots, and other educational content.
- **Pros & Cons:** Write down an idea or suggestion or product then give a list of Pros and Cons related to it. You can call it Pros & Cons, or Good & Bad, or Advantages & Disadvantages depending on the topic.
- **Tips and Tricks:** Start with a couple of paragraphs of explanation about the topic followed by a list of tips. People love to know time-saving and cool tips and tricks. What is your blog about? What are you good at? Write some tips. You do not have to be an expert... you just have to know more than your typical readers.
- **Lesson Learned:** Explain a problem, bad result, or unexpected difficulty, and follow it with the lesson you learned from the experience. Unlike "A Story" above, this is usually not some personal circumstance but relates to a business, a hobby, or a specific effort.
- **Prediction:** Predict the future of some topic, some event, or some time period. My predictions for 2013; what I think will happen to the blogging industry; I predict the following for our economy; my predictions for the adoption community.
- **Comparison:** A vs. B; choose this or that. Compare two products, two choices, two solutions, two problems, two

people, or two points of view. Unlike a debate, a comparison points out the differences in two or more things usually without presenting a "winner" or "preference" - although there is no rule that says you cannot draw a conclusion.

TIP: **You can't find time to study, blog, write, or learn? You must be that one person who wastes ZERO time on passive screen time. Focus on priorities.**

I have written a lot about what I call P.E.S - passive electronic stimulation. Basically that is a fancy way of saying "wasting your time in front of a screen whether it is a TV, a computer, or a phone." Most people waste a remarkable several hours a day staring at a screen being passively stimulated by entertainment or information emanating from glowing LEDs. While there are certainly some benefits in arguing for just relaxing and enjoying some screen time, it is also hard to argue against the fact that people waste a ridiculous amount of time that could be used in pursuit of their goals, helping others, or improving themselves.

If you find yourself saying that you do not have time to write on your blog, educate yourself about online business, or simply work on your blogger business, then my first response would be to ask you to evaluate how much time you are wasting passively in front of a screen.

I do not say this to boast but I am often asked: "how do you accomplish so much and produce so much?" It is not that I am

remarkable or exceptional, it is only that I choose to trade many hours of passive screen time for many hours of productive time. Imagine what you can accomplish if you are simply to trade two hours a day of surfing the Internet or watching TV for two hours of productive writing or building your business. Over the course of one single year, that is over 700 hours of productivity you have gained and that is just by trading passive time for productive time - for a couple of hours a day.

If you are typical, you spend somewhere between four and eight hours daily engaging in passive electronic stimulation. Trade in four hours a day of that and you will gain 1400 hours - or the equivalent of two months of 24-hour days - of new time that you can spend increasing your income, improving yourself, or enjoying life.

Like I said, it is all a matter of priorities. If you decide "you need your down time" to the tune of several hours a day in front of a screen, then do not gripe about not having time to build your business or write on your blog.

TIP: Concise, crisp, succinct, to the point... does this describe your blogging or do you meander along blah-blah-blah-ing people into a coma?

A novice mistake in blogging is to rattle on and on and on under the mistaken idea that more words equals more interesting content. It is more common for bloggers to write

too much than to write too little in their attempt to explain every point and answer every perceived objection.

One thing I really appreciated about the emergence of twitter was the exercise in learning to write very concisely and carving out all unnecessary words. Get into the habit of editing your content and making it as concise and to the point as possible. Your readers' time is valuable, so do not waste it on unnecessary words. Here are some pointers:

- Remove words that state something that is already clearly implied.
- Remove all the really really good modifiers meant to exaggerate your very very awesome point. See what I mean?
- Take out all the rabbit trails. Stick to your main point and if you have wandered off onto some side point carve it out and save it for another post.
- Resist the temptation to preface, disclaim, and answer all the perceived objections you think you will get. Just make your point and let the readers respond. You can use follow-up posts or replies to comments to answer objections.

TIP: The keys to blog success: take NO shortcuts. Make sure you provide interesting content, nice images, useful information, and meet your readers' expectations.

Despite all the gimmicks and scammers out there trying to sell you shortcuts and magic tricks, like most good things in life there are no "get-rich-quick" or fast tracks to success when it comes to blogging. Yes there may be a remarkable exception or two out there but there is a reason why those are remarkable exceptions.

For the rest of us, it takes hard work and dedication. It takes perseverance and consistency. You have to produce interesting content presented in a visually interesting way. You have to give your readers truly useful and valuable information and you have to routinely meet their expectations.

By doing this, you will build trust and loyalty, grow your audience, and methodically develop a successful business and online blog.

TIP: My opinion: The #1 key to blogging success is perseverance. Most people give up and will not pay the price. Stick with blogging and win by attrition.

In my opinion, the single-most important and number-one key to successful blogging is perseverance. The average blogger will start with lofty ideas in an adrenaline-filled rush but will fizzle out in a matter of weeks. Another huge segment of bloggers will be done within a few months.

Perseverance, discipline, and consistency over time will automatically elevate you into the top 10% of bloggers, giving you a huge chance of success just by the sheer merit of sticking with your blog. Beyond that, of course it depends on you creating quality content and high value for your readers. But quality content and high value will be of no use if you cannot do it consistently over a long period of time.

Lots of bloggers start out on fire with the greatest content on the planet but they fade away quickly if they do not have the mental fortitude and commitment levels needed to be successful. This is true in any kind of business and is no less true for an online business or a successful blog.

TIP: Blogging is a long-term sport. If you are not in it for 3-5 years, you are not serious. You have to outlast the other 98% who will quit.

I'm often asked how long it will take to get a large audience and a lot of traffic for a new blog. When I started 15 years ago, that timeframe was a matter of weeks or months because there was not much competition. Now that timeframe has easily grown from a couple of years to (realistically) 3 to 5 years.

Do not let that discourage you. There are very few businesses that do not take a handful of years to build up and become successful. If there was a business that you could build "easy and quick," then everyone would actually be doing it as opposed to scamming you with gimmick programs and

seminars about their "easy and quick and no work and no talent needed get rich quick business guaranteed."

Roughly 98 to 99% of everyone who starts a blog or an online business will quit in the first year. If you are fully committed in your mind to stick with it for 3 to 5 years, then you honestly do not have a realistic expectation of the work and time involved in being successful at any business, online or not.

TIP: **Avoid responding defensively to negative comments or readers. Tomorrow they will have forgotten all about you, while you linger in anxiety.**

One of the most difficult skills for new bloggers to learn is how to handle negative, critical, or harsh comments. Your first reaction will be to respond defensively and to become emotionally distraught. This is natural so do not get too wound up when it happens.

You do have to grow a thick skin when you blog publicly. You will get negative comments ranging from mild criticism to extremely ugly and vicious insults. You should simply delete the latter and never think about them again. The vicious insults will almost always come from anonymous readers and you should not give them the time of day or a second thought. All they are looking for is a reaction and they do not deserve one from you.

As for negative comments and criticism from sincere readers, resist your first temptation to shoot off a reply comment or follow-up post to rebut them. I have found after 15 years of blogging, that for the most part if you will simply wait a day or two, the dozen negative comments will lose their intensity and you can simply move on.

If after a couple of days you still think you need to respond, write a follow-up post but let someone else you trust objectively read it and give you their opinion about whether it is necessary or not or whether you are simply responding out of anxiety. Remember, most people who criticize simply move on and do not even think about you the next day, even though you may be languishing in stress over what they wrote. Do not give people that kind of power over you. If it is accurate criticism that deserves a response, give it. If not, just move on and learn to not let it bother you. Moving on without letting negatively bother you will not come naturally; it is definitely a skill that has to be developed.

TIP: **This is an easy formula for writing a post. Introduction: Here is what I am going to tell you. Body: Tell them. Summary: Here is what I told you. Classic.**

This is a tried-and-true pattern or method for writing a good blog post. That does not mean all your blog posts have to use this method, but it is something useful to fall back on if your creative juices are flowing a little on the thin side.

Start out with an introduction and an explanation of what you are going to write about. Follow that with a body of content that communicates exactly what you said you would communicate in the introduction. Then write an ending summary that restates what you just told them in a concise, nutshell, bullet-point kind of summary.



The pattern again: 1) Here is what I am going to tell you, 2) Tell them, 3) Here is what I just told you.

That may sound redundant but it is the classic method of communicating in which you are repeating and emphasizing your message in a way that people can remember.

TIP: Have you viewed your blog on iPads, iPhones, tablets, and smartphones? More people are viewing blogs on mobile devices. Make sure your blog is readable.

When I started blogging 15 years ago, all the way up until about 2008, you primarily only had to be concerned with how your blog was displayed on desktop or laptop computer screens. The market-share for desktops and laptops is shrinking dramatically while the share of mobile screens is growing exponentially.

Be sure to check out your blog on iPads, iPhones, Android tablets, and other smartphones. Make sure people can read your blog and do business with you online using those devices or you will be alienating a large part of your potential audience.

TIP: Yes, quality content trumps quantity... but quantities of quality content is the golden goose of blogging. It is hard work but worth it.

I am often asked whether quantity of content is more important than quality or vice versa. In my opinion, both are

important for successful blogging. Aim to have a large quantity of high-quality content.

Of course you can argue that a high quantity of poor-quality content is a disaster and you would be correct. That would be followed closely by how ineffective your blog would be if it contains only a small quantity of high-quality content. One or two brilliant blog posts will not equal blogging success. 100 mediocre or bad blog posts do not equal success either.

So it is not a definitive matter of one or the other. You need high-quality content and you need enough of it to sustain the expectations of your readers over the long haul. It is hard work but any successful business requires hard work.

TIP: There are a lot of "experts" selling their expertise when the only thing they have ever accomplished is being an expert. Check them out first.

You should always be skeptical of writers, blogs, and websites selling their expert advice on how to monetize your blog or build an online business. The vast majority of them have never made any money except on selling their products about "how to make money online." It simply becomes a cycle of the experienced suckers finding new suckers who will open their wallet and perpetuate the cycle.

There are honest and successful bloggers and online business operators who have proven their ability to generate income

from various legitimate sources and have created products to help you learn how to do the same. Of course, I would like to think that I am one of those and I know they exist because I have learned from many of them.

The snake-oil salesmen are not hard to spot because the only product or income they can demonstrate is from the sales of their products about "how to make money online" or "how to make money blogging." Usually they are offering just a typical rehash of stuff you can find on 1,000 other blogs. What you will find missing is long-term experience, a demonstrable well-known reputation, and diversity in their established business (in other words: have they made money or created successful businesses doing anything else? For example, I have had successful online magazines, subscription sites, blogs, and design businesses).

TIP: Your blog's success is all about YOU. Not in an egotistical way, but in the way you interact, communicate, and invest time in your readers.

Always remember that no one cares about your blog as much as you do. Your blog's success depends on you. That is not egotistical or arrogant, that is reality. For most blogs, the blogger will be the face and personality of the blog and/or the online business.

In that sense, you will be branding YOU. Keep that in mind every time you write content, interact with a client or reader, or present a product or service you are asking your audience

to pay for. It all reflects on you. Everything you write, do, or say either helps to build the brand of "you" or tears it down.

Building a successful blog is hard work and takes time. It can be ruined or significantly damaged by just a few careless or thoughtless actions. The success of your blog is all about the choices you make and how you treat your audience. Always keep that in mind.

TIP: **Growing your blog does not happen magically; you have to work hard on your content, and invest time in visiting other blogs and making friends.**

People commonly ask me about how they can grow their blog. They mean: "How can I increase the number of people who consistently visit my blog?"

There are no shortcuts. If anyone offers you a service, no matter how cheap it is, you should ignore it because they are all gimmicks and scams. If there was an easy and fast way to bring high-quality new traffic to a blog then everyone would know about it and do it.

Of course you have to create consistent and high-quality content, but beyond that you have to invest time in other blogs and other resources online. You have to get out there in the virtual world and meet new people, help others, and create exposure for yourself. It is truly a numbers game. The

more people you are in front of, the more opportunity you have to let them know about your blog or online business.

Visit other blogs and leave sincere comments. Visit forums and discussion groups that are relevant to your blog topic. Write guest posts and editorials for blogs and magazines that fit your readers. Use your e-mail signatures and business cards to let people know about your blog.

Be creative and look for opportunities to serve other people in such a way that it opens the door for you to be able to point them to your online presence.

TIP: **Many bloggers want public visibility but do not want to be accessible. If readers cannot contact YOU, you are telling them: "love me but I don't love you."**

A lot of bloggers want the popularity, notoriety, and success that come with a large audience and high public visibility but then want to be completely inaccessible to those very same people. It is like the Hollywood celebrity who wants all the fame and adoration and glory but then claims people are not giving them their privacy.

When you remain faceless and anonymous behind a keyboard and a sterile contact form, you are sending a very clear message to your readers that you are important but they are not. You want them to love you, but you do not want to have to love them back. There are exceptional bloggers who may be

able to overcome this and succeed anyway, but generally speaking if you are not personable and accessible to your readers they will move on and find someone who is.

TIP: People are busy and spend less time commenting on blogs. Do not take that as a sign of disinterest. Monitor your traffic stats.

I have been blogging for almost 15 years so I have been able to watch long-term trends. One of those trends is that people are commenting less and less. It used to be that you could gauge the popularity of a blog by how many comments they got on their posts. This is no longer true.

People read so many different blogs, and there is so much competition for their time, that unless those readers are new to the Internet or actively commenting for the purpose of building their own online business or blog, there has been a very obvious trend of less and less commenting.

Do not be discouraged by this. It means that you have to switch from gauging your blog's popularity based on comments to monitoring more objective measurements like website traffic statistics.

If you think about it though, there is one good thing about less and less comments. It means that YOUR comments will stand out more and not be lost in a sea of other responses. So use that silver lining to your benefit and take the time to comment on other blogs to build more exposure for yourself.

TIP: A serious blog takes an investment just like any other serious success. Too many want blogging success without investment, sweat, and time.

For the last 20 or 30 years, we have all seen the proliferation of "get-rich-quick schemes" and supposed business opportunities that require little or no ability and almost no effort or time on your part. Unless you are 12 years old, you also realize that it is all a bunch of garbage.



Blogging has seen its share of garbage gimmicks and scams as well. As you have jumped into the blogging world, there is no doubt you have probably had a lot of this junk dumped into your in-box as well. Do not be fooled by empty promises that will only empty your wallet.

Blogging is a business. Just like any other business, if you want to be successful at it (and especially if you want to monetize it), this business takes hard work, lots of sweat, and lots of time. That has been true about all successful businesses since the dawn of mankind and it is no less true for having a business online or a successful blog.

TIP: You can waste a lot of money on guarantees and promises of "online riches." Do not be fooled.

Scammers make money on that promise alone... .. their only success is getting people to pay for the "secret." Online business is real business that requires hard work, time, and a good product/service.

At this point in the history of the Internet, I think a lot of the scammers and gimmicks have been exposed but there is still a lot of trickery and opportunity out there for you to waste a lot of money on completely worthless promises of quick and easy "online riches."

For the most part, the only thing those people have ever sold is that workshop or e-book or information about how to get rich online. At some point, they were probably suckered into

buying it, they created their own version of it, and they sought out a new generation of suckers to buy their version. Do not fall for this.

There are legitimate products, blogs, books, and workshops to teach you the real process of being successful in an online business or blog. These legitimate products will never promote a "quick or easy" way to make money online because it is neither. Be sure to check out the background of anyone offering this type of material and make sure that they have truly been successful online or at business in something other than suckering people into buying get-rich-quick information.

TIP: Be careful about the advertisements you put on your blog. You are putting your implicit mark of approval on them and asking your readers to trust you.

When you put an advertisement on your blog, you are saying two things to your readers. First, you are telling your readers that you approve of those advertisers. This is what can be dangerous about advertising systems such as Google AdSense where you have no control (or limited control) over which advertisements appear on your site or blog. If an advertisement appears that is contrary to your blog message or offensive to your readers, your readers do not care about whether you have control over the advertising content or not. All they care about is that you have violated their trust in you by presenting something that is not consistent with the trust you have built with them.

That brings us to the second point. When you put an advertiser on your blog, you are sending a message to your reader to "please click here and patronize this business and buy their product or service." If it is not a product or service that you would buy yourself or that you would recommend, you are violating the trust you have worked so hard to build between you and your reader.

People do not mind advertising that leads them to products and services that truly benefit them. They will not be offended that you have put an ad in front of them. But if you violate the trust by putting junk in front of them just to make a few bucks, you will quickly destroy the loyalty you have built up and the reputation you have earned. Keep that in mind as you decide on the advertising that will be presented to your audience.

TIP: **Should you give time, energy, and space to widgets and "stuff" on your blog? CONTENT (your blog posts) is what attracts and keeps people coming back.**

The real estate on your blog is valuable. You want to fill it with things that are both a benefit to you and a benefit to your reader. Novice bloggers make the mistake of filling up their screen space with all sorts of junk, widgets, and gadgets believing that the presence of lots of "stuff" somehow makes their blog look credible.

I think a lot of this is due to the "monkey-see-monkey-do" syndrome. Many new bloggers simply mimic what they see on

other blogs - who themselves have just mimicked what they saw on other blogs. Novice bloggers have gadget envy and want to install every new widget or gadget or banner available down to that two-mile-long double sidebar on their blog.

That is a bad habit and a big mistake for several reasons: widgets are often incompatible with each other; widgets slow down the load time of your blog; no one cares about or looks at your 400 gadgets, blog rolls, or icons in your sidebars; and it makes your blog look busy and disorganized.

All this junk also tears down the styling of your blog because every widget has its own color scheme, styling, and graphics which may compete with or conflict with the style of your own blog. Basically it ends up looking like a junk drawer.

Be very picky and choosy about giving up the real estate on your blog. Make sure it fits your style, benefits your audience, and helps you in some way promote the success of your blog.

TIP: **Do you know WHY you have a blog? Why are you writing it, what is your goal? What results are you hoping for? What is your plan to get there?**

Hey, I think I'll start a blog and make money. So I run on over to Blogger or WordPress and I set myself up a new blog, pick a shiny new template, and start writing about my two-year-old's bathroom habits or how much fun my last round of golf was. Not much of a plan, huh?

If you want to have a successful blog, and especially if you want to monetize it, you have to have a vision, a plan, and goals. Otherwise you're just out there making noise and creating activity for activity's sake. You need to be able to answer the question: "why do you blog?" The answer to this question will determine your goals and plans.

You also need to be able to clearly answer about your blog: "what do you hope to achieve?" And: "what results would indicate your blog is successful?" If you do not know the answer to those questions, you cannot possibly know the path to getting there or the goals you need to set to help you achieve success.



There is nothing wrong with impulsive and shoot-from-the-hip blogging if you are just doing it for fun and have no business or monetary goals. But if you are trying to build a business and you do want to produce income from your blog, you are surely shooting yourself in the foot if you cannot answer the questions we have discussed here.

TIP: If you have reports, guides, how-to's, eBooks, or other files people get from your blog, be sure to treat the file name like a HEADLINE.

Think about it: "great-blog-report-ver-2.pdf" is forgettable, while "Brent-Riggs-Top-10-Things-All-Great-Bloggers-Do.pdf" is valuable marketing.

I have a big folder of downloaded e-books and PDFs from other bloggers with file names like "e-book_PBM_ver2.pdf." Really? If I go back and look at that later on I will have no idea what that is or who wrote it. I will be faced with a decision of opening it up just to find out what it contains rather than being attracted to it by a filename that acts like a headline: "Power_of_Blog_Marketing_by_Joe_Smith.pdf"

TIP: COMMENTING on blogs is a great for new exposure and generating traffic **** IF **** your comment is relevant, sincere, and adds to the value of the post.

Leaving sincere comments that genuinely add to the conversation and increase the value of that bloggers post or information is a great way to get exposure for your own blog. Almost always you are able to leave a link back to your own blog or website.

There are lots of bloggers out there that will teach you to scurry around on blogs leaving quick and obviously self-centered comments with a link such as: "Thanks, loved your post." This is an insult to serious bloggers. Trust me.

Leave a sincere and meaningful comment if you leave one at all. Otherwise you are just lazily trying to get attention on the cheap - and a well-deserved reputation will soon be yours.

TIP: **Photos are a statement about the quality of your blog. It is not easy to improve photos - it takes effort. What do your pictures say about your blog?**

There is really no excuse these days for poor images on your blog. There are any number of software programs that will help you improve your own images, or stock photography libraries that will allow you to use royalty-free images.

If you have haphazard, poor, or uninteresting images on your blog, guess what kind of statement that makes about your blog content in general? It is not a trick question.

There are free services where you can get a few decent images and other paid services like my favorite (istock.com) where you can get eye-popping world-class images that will instantly set your blog apart visually.

TIP: **Your blog design should ENHANCE your content and make reading your blog comfortable. BUSY-ness is a distraction, not a sign of creativity.**

Novice bloggers make the mistake of "the more the merrier" when it comes to putting stuff on their blog. Lots of badges, icons, advertisements, gadgets, widgets, and every other imaginable doodad is pasted onto every inch of their two-mile-long homepage.

Have you ever seen that TV show about hoarding? Many blogs remind me of this show. It seems like bloggers put anything and everything they can find on their blog and once it is on there they can never part with it. Hoarding on your blog is about as attractive and successful as those hoarders are on that TV series.

For every item you have on your blog, you should be able to articulate how it enhances your content, helps you reach your goals for your blog, and most importantly how it benefits and positively impacts the experience of your readers.

TIP: Few people today are good readers. If you want to be a serious writer or exceptional blogger, **READING is your #1 training choice.**

Reading will cultivate your writing. It promotes discipline, education, and self-improvement. If you routinely read for several hours rather than waste your time being passively stimulated by an electronic screen, by default you will elevate yourself in intelligence and creativity over the vast majority of your blogging competition.

Read other bloggers. Read business books. Read classics. Read self-improvement books. Read the Bible. Notice I left out trivial-junk reading like People magazine and any number of social sites online. That is not creative and mind-building reading... that is just more passive stimulation on paper instead of a screen.

I can hardly say it with enough emphasis: **READING** is a discipline of successful people (who often trade **SCREEN TIME** for it).

TIP: **Struggling with blog-writers block? List your hobbies, travels, leisure activities, jobs, or accomplishments . . . you thought of something now, didn't you?**

It is common to get "stuck" as a writer. Maybe you are tired, a little burned out, or not feeling well. Sometimes your creative

juices just are not flowing or your passion is waning a bit. Here is a list of ideas to help you get moving:

Write about one of your hobbies. Make sure it is relevant to your reader expectations or use a hobby story as an analogy that fits your blog topic.

Apply the same process to your travel, job, achievements, or leisure activities... think of something you have done or experienced that will bring a personal touch to your writing. You can present it symbolically, as an analogy or a lesson learned, or as a transition into the topic your blog is built around.

TIP: **I consider Twitter and Facebook updates to be "microblogging"- easier to do frequently, and short so that people have time to read them. Microblogging helps you write more concisely.**

Most people use Facebook and Twitter for purely personal reasons. A lot of people are getting burned out on the latest group or game on Facebook, or hearing what you had for dinner via Twitter. Consider using Facebook and Twitter as a way to help people, and to help your blog. I use Twitter to communicate blogging and spiritual tips... and notifications of new blog content. Same thing with Facebook, even though I have to admit I am kind of worn out on Facebook because I get routinely flooded with messages and invitations to any and all types of time wasters.

Twitter also has the added benefit of teaching you to write more concisely. You are forced to carve out all the useless words and get straight to your point in as few words as possible. For this reason alone, Twitter is a good practice for writing.

TIP: Writing accuracy projects the image of your website. A personal blog can have a few spelling and grammar errors, but errors are a credibility killer for serious blogs.

The quality and accuracy of your writing should be directly parallel to your blogging purpose. If you are simply writing a

personal blog and could not care less about building an audience or monetizing it, then it does not matter if there are some typos or poor grammar. It is your blog so it does not matter. It only has to be what you want it to be.

On the other hand, if you are trying to build a business with your blog, or you want people to invest in your products and services, then accuracy, spelling, and grammar become a very serious issue. A low quality of any of those will send a clear message to your clients or readers.

My advice? Invest in a good proofreader to professionally edit your post content and information products.



TIP: Your blog post should reward the reader. When they are done, they should be glad they traded part of their life to read what you wrote.

Always value your readers' time. They only have a small amount to devote to blog reading and they have chosen to invest time in yours over the literally millions of other blogs out there. Never take that for granted.

Make sure everything you write, everything you e-mail, and every communication you ask them to invest in is worth their time. Is it worth your time? Their time? If not, do not post it or send it.

It takes a long time to build up trust, and just a few abuses or thoughtless episodes to begin to destroy it.

Each time someone reads your post or e-mail, whether they articulate it or not, they should be able to state: I am glad I traded part of my life to read that.

TIP: **Did you miss out? Too late to start blogging? NO! Most blogs are not worth reading and very few stick with it. Now is a great time to be new!**

I get a lot of e-mails from people who see the mountains of bloggers ahead of them (more like the Himalayas of bloggers) and do not even want to start. They think they missed the boat.

While I will not argue that 20 years ago would have been a better time to jump on board, you have to keep in mind that something like 55 million new users a day are hopping on the Internet. You only have to capture a tiny sliver of the reading market to have a fabulously successful blog.

There are two other things you have going for you even if you have got in the game late:

1. Most people will quit in the first few weeks or months, so all you have to do is hang in there and you will rise to the top by attrition.
2. Most blogs range from ho-hum to terrible.

There is no real “kind” way to say that so I will just be blunt. Very few people launch well- written, interesting, and consistent blogs. If you can do that, you will be one of the best in short order! So get busy, it is never too late.

TIP: **No one cares about your blog. Why? Irrelevant fluff - same old repeats - trivial, egotistical, and unoriginal content. All are interest killers.**

Wow, that sounds pretty harsh but we have to learn to be our own worst critics if we want to continue to produce high-quality content and serve our readers. You should frequently evaluate your blog (and ask others to) by asking yourself these important questions:

1. Has my content or topic become irrelevant? Does it matter to anyone? Do people care?
2. Have I gotten lazy with my writing and begun to repeat and rehash the same old thing? Has my writing gotten passionless and obligatory?
3. Has my content drifted towards being trivial or inconsequential? Is it really helping my readers by meeting their expected needs in the way it did when I first earned their loyalty?
4. Has my blog become an ego soapbox? Is it all about “love me,” “look at me,” “me, me, me”?

There are many ways to make your blog dull, uninteresting, and irrelevant. You must be on guard not to slip into any of those bad habits.

TIP: Can you really make money with a blog? Yes. It takes consistency, hard work, multiple income streams, and self-education.

Yes, you can make money blogging. You hear that a lot from the sellers of gimmicks and junk but what they mean is “you can make US money by buying our ‘how to make money’ materials then you can make some too by finding some more suckers to sell it to.”

Do not let the hucksters ruin the reality: the Internet is the largest and best business platform in human history. There is a mind-boggling huge market to serve and only your creativity can limit you.

You can make money blogging. Thousands and thousands of people are doing it every day. You only need a teeny tiny sliver of the market to make a very nice income.

You can do this a variety of ways: ad sales, e-books, affiliate programs, writing for pay, proofreading, researching, design, reviews... the possibilities go on and on for the go-getter and hard worker.



The key? Learn, learn, and then learn some more. Keep your eyes open and work hard. “Luck” is when preparation (education and hard work) meet an unexpected opportunity. Be ready for it!

TIP: Cheesy clipart, amateur graphics, and crummy images send a loud and clear message about your blog. Want to guess what that message is?

Like your clothes, a company’s branding, or a craftsman’s attention to detail, what people SEE causes them to make snap judgments about you. It is just human nature. You can whine that it is unfair or pontificate about how beauty is on the

inside but that does not change reality: people stereotype, react, and instantly categorize your blog based on what they see before they ever read a word.

There is no excuse to post poor images given the simple and powerful image-editing software that is available, some of it free. Cheesy, cheap, and ridiculous clipart is a thing of the past. There are dozens of quality clipart services where you can get inexpensive high-quality art for your blog. If you are not a graphic artist, do not think a graphic-design program is going to turn you into one. Spend a few bucks on a graphic designer and have them do your blog headers, blog badges, and major graphics so that you can have design elements you are proud of.

TIP: Encourage readers to e-mail you. Some people are too shy to ask questions in the comments section of your blog.

One thing I have learned to do that I find very profitable on many levels is to make sure people know how to contact me directly and encourage them to send me questions and comments directly.

Many people do not want to comment publicly for various reasons. By giving them a way to contact you directly, you establish a personal connection with them and build loyalty

Another benefit is that you will discover a lot of needs, and get a lot of questions; both of which become great sources of new content for your blog!

TIP: Ask your readers for advice, ideas, and opinions.

Your audience is one of your greatest resources. Not only can they give you a lot of great ideas if you simply ask, people love to get recognized for the great idea or comment. So it is a win/win situation.



Ask them to submit questions they want answered, topics they want discussed, or projects they would like to see you do.

Ask your readers for THEIR opinion about your posts or ideas. You will get a ton of good feedback and ideas just by asking for, valuing, and recognizing your readers' opinion.

Bonus Quick Tips:

1. Give your readers an easy way to find you on Facebook, Twitter, etc.
2. Respond to comments on your blog as often as possible and with a full reply. If your time is short, at least say "thanks" so they know you read it.
3. Have a clear comment and privacy policy so your readers feel safe sharing their ideas and opinions.
4. Treat your readers the way you would like to be treated. The Golden Rule applies to blogging too.
5. Give credit to people, places, and resources that have given you feedback, content, or help. Some people feel like this takes the spotlight off them but remember the timeless principle: what comes around goes around. You can never be too kind and appreciative.
6. Create flagship content – this is your “best stuff” that you will point people to immediately when they first visit your blog
7. Do not avoid the popular blog topics – no matter how busy a particular blogging niche may be, there is always room for more. The Internet is a vast and growing market. Jump in!
8. Right after you set up a blog, set up an e-mail list - do not put it off. It is too important to figure out later on how you wish you would have set up the list at the start.
9. Use the tools you have to give an impression of “bigness” and “establishment” – there is no need to look amateur, new, or “mom and pop” on the Internet. Being online is the great equalizer... you get to communicate to the very same audience the biggest corporations in the world do.
10. Always believe in yourself. No, I do not mean the self-involved pop-culture silly version of confidence. I mean genuine self-confidence cultivated by hard work, continual education, and commitment to persevere. You CAN be a successful blogger and you CAN make money doing it. Just imitate those who are successful and have a dogged, relentless determination to make it happen.

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65 Great Headlines To Get You Started

Great headlines kick start everything else about blogging. You can write a great blog post - but if you have a sorry headline no one is going to read it.

To the contrary, you can start with a great headline and often a stellar blog post will follow. In fact, I routinely teach people to come up with their headline first and let their blog post take shape around it.

A Great Trick

Here's one of my favorite tricks for coming up with new content. When you are reading other blogs, take notice of headlines that grab your attention. If it grabbed your attention, you can bet it probably grabbed a lot of people's attention.

STOP!

Don't read the blog post. If you read their blog post at this point you will bias yourself about the content you are going to create. Go start a new blog post maintaining the core point of the original headline, but make sure to re-write the headline into your own words (meaning: don't rip off other author's exact headline).

Without having read the original post, make an outline or go ahead and write your blog post that follows from your headline.

Two things happen by doing this: 1) you come up with your own fresh content and possibly a different spin than the original author and 2) you will be amazed when you compare your content against theirs.

When you finally read the original post, you probably will get a few good points from them that you missed. By not reading their post first, you now have come up with a blog post that is all your own - and maybe even a little better.

Great Headlines

There will be times when you will come up with original headlines that really spark interest. There are however, certain formulas for headlines that are proven to work really well.

That makes for a lot of copycatting out in the blog world but if you are creative and write good content, these formulaic headlines are still a great way to come up with content and build loyalty and interest with your audience.

Here's a whole collection of headlines to jump-start your blogging empire:

Discover the Truth About ____

Everyone wants to be sure they know the truth about important topics. This kind of headline appeals to people's interest in being right about things and confident about their belief or practice.

5 Myths About ____ Exposed

No one likes to be fooled by myths or perpetuate them. Exposing myths also gives you an air of expertise and credibility.

Why My Opinion on ____ Matters

Stating that your opinion matters sets you up as an expert and authority on the topic. Make sure that you actually follow it up with an opinion that makes a difference.

Ten Things You Don't Know About Me

The more your audience becomes engaged with you and your content, the more they will want to know about you. Don't make this kind of blog post an ego trip. Share things that are genuinely interesting and help reveal the character and habits that made you the kind of blogger people are loyal to. The phrase "you don't know" stimulates curiosity in readers to want to find out what makes you tick.

3 Ways To Make Guest Posting More Effective

Guest posting is often presented as one of the primary techniques to grow your business and audience. Any time you can write a blog post that would genuinely help people be more successful as a guest-post author, it will be a popular post. Any time you use words such as "effective," you are declaring the value of your content.

Six Essential ____ for Each Blog Post

Blog posts are made up of different elements. There are common traits to a successful blog post that you can educate your readers about. Whether it is writing, visual elements, or content, a headline like this that contains the word "essential" creates the need for the reader to want to know this material.

How I Got My First 1,000 Subscribers

Readers love to know how to do things. One of the primary goals of blogging is to build a subscriber list. "How I" types of blog posts are always going to get attention if your readers become accustomed to them containing truly valuable and educational insights.

24 Hours to More Traffic

Whenever you imply in your headline that something valuable can be obtained in a short period of time, you will generate interest. People love to learn, produce, or achieve quickly. Any headline that implies you can show them how to do that will grab them.

How to Create ____ in 24 Hours

Using the word "create" in the headline communicates that you are going to teach the reader how to go from nothing to something. By placing a timeframe on it, they can immediately decide if it is something they want to invest their time in: How to create an e-book in 24 hours; how to create your next

product in seven days; how to create a frenzy of interest in 30 days. You'll notice from the last suggestion that it doesn't even have to be something tangible.

Ten Things Nobody Else is Talking About

This type of headline implies exclusive knowledge or insight. Any time a headline does this, it will cultivate a natural curiosity with readers. Wouldn't you want to know what it is that nobody else is talking about and (by implication) should be talking about?

How I Made My First ____

One of the most proven methods for building an audience and increasing loyalty is to teach them what you did to be successful. Whether it's how you made your first million, how you got your first thousand readers, or how you landed your first big guest-posting opportunity, any time you can teach your audience how you did something successful – the post will be popular.

7 Things that Drive Me Absolutely Nuts

If I have an audience that trusts my opinion and I put out a headline that says something "absolutely" causes a certain reaction in me, they will probably want to know what it is. Something I absolutely must do; something that absolutely infuriates me; something that absolutely got my attention. The word "absolutely" declares a sense of urgency and importance.

Why I Don't Worry About ____

This headline implies that there is a common thing people worry about relevant to your audience. If you can present compelling and persuasive arguments about why they shouldn't worry about it, not only will they appreciate you for it, the post will enhance your credibility and expertise. The phrase "why I don't" implies exclusive and uncommon knowledge - because of the opposite thought which is that most people worry about this even though they shouldn't.

Wake Up With ____ In Your Bank Account Tomorrow

People love to see things happen in short time frames. The phrase "wake up" implies that something will happen quickly, by tomorrow. You could use this "wake up" declaration followed by just about any type of result.

The Top ____ (number) ____ Blogs (type)

Whenever you list the very best of something, the people who trust your knowledge will want to know what those are. Even if a reader doesn't know you that type of headline carries a natural weight of curiosity even though that has diminished to some degree because it is used so often.

Twelve Things I Wish I Knew Twelve Months Ago

Hindsight is a great educator and any time you can use your experience to communicate lessons learned or advice to your audience, you will build interest and loyalty. We all wish we

could avoid common mistakes and the phrase "I wish I knew" gives the reader the feeling "I better read this or I might regret that I could have known this but didn't take the opportunity."

Three Things I Was Dead Wrong About

Admitting mistakes or analyzing failures are always interest grabbers. If you, the expert, can be dead wrong about something, it is going to create urgency in the reader to want to know what those things were so that they can avoid them. After all, if you are dead wrong about it, how easy is it going to be for me (your reader) to be dead wrong about it?

A Dozen Things I Would Do Different

Listing things you would do differently implies knowledge gained by hard work and experience that will save the reader time and possible error. If you, the blogging expert, would do these things differently, the implication is that I the reader will probably need to do them differently as well.

The Keys/Things That Make My Blog Successful

If you have a successful blog, people are attracted to you and want to know how you did it. This kind of knowledge-sharing is one of the best audience-building techniques.

The Top ____ Tools Every Blogger Should Know About

"Should" is another word that declares importance or urgency. If I should know about something, then it makes me

less than an expert or professional if I do not. Also in this headline, whenever you give the top number of something, you're making the statement that this is the very best that people should know about.

Great Blogs You Have Never Heard Of

There are a lot of great blogs out there, too many for most people to know about. Making a list of great blogs and websites will be much appreciated by your audience.

Seven Reasons ____ Is Wrong

It always gets attention when you can definitively and persuasively communicate why something is wrong. It implies that you are going to tell them the right way. It also implies that this is not common knowledge, or you wouldn't have to expose why it is wrong.

My Best ____ Tips for Growing Your Audience

Everyone wants growth, everyone wants to know what the best is, and everyone loves the format of tips that are easy to read and implement.

Why I Absolutely Will Not ____

If people trust you and you make such an emphatic statement (that you absolutely will not do something), it is going to generate curiosity with your audience. If one of my favorite

bloggers wrote that they would absolutely not do something, I would want to know why.

Everything You Don't Know About ____

This kind of headline implies that this knowledge is something you should know about; and that if you don't know about it, the items could be detrimental.

Six Things You Must Change About ____

Any time you use the word "must," it gives an emphatic feel to the message. If I trust a certain blogger, and they tell me I must change something, then I'm probably going to want to find out what they're talking about.

10 Pages Every Blog Must Have or ____

This kind of headline would lend itself towards a post series describing each page that you should have for your blog, and the consequences of not having them. It implies there is some sort of danger or consequence to not having these pages, which will naturally pique curiosity.

The Most Useless ____ Online

There is lots of junk on the Internet that is not worth anyone's time, effort, or money. Whenever you can alert your readers to something that falls in that category, you are doing them a great service and they will be genuinely interested.

Ten ____ That Are a Total Waste of Time

Productive bloggers and online business owners do not like to waste time. Any time you can alert your audience to activities, trends, or habits that will drain their precious time and energy, you will get their attention.

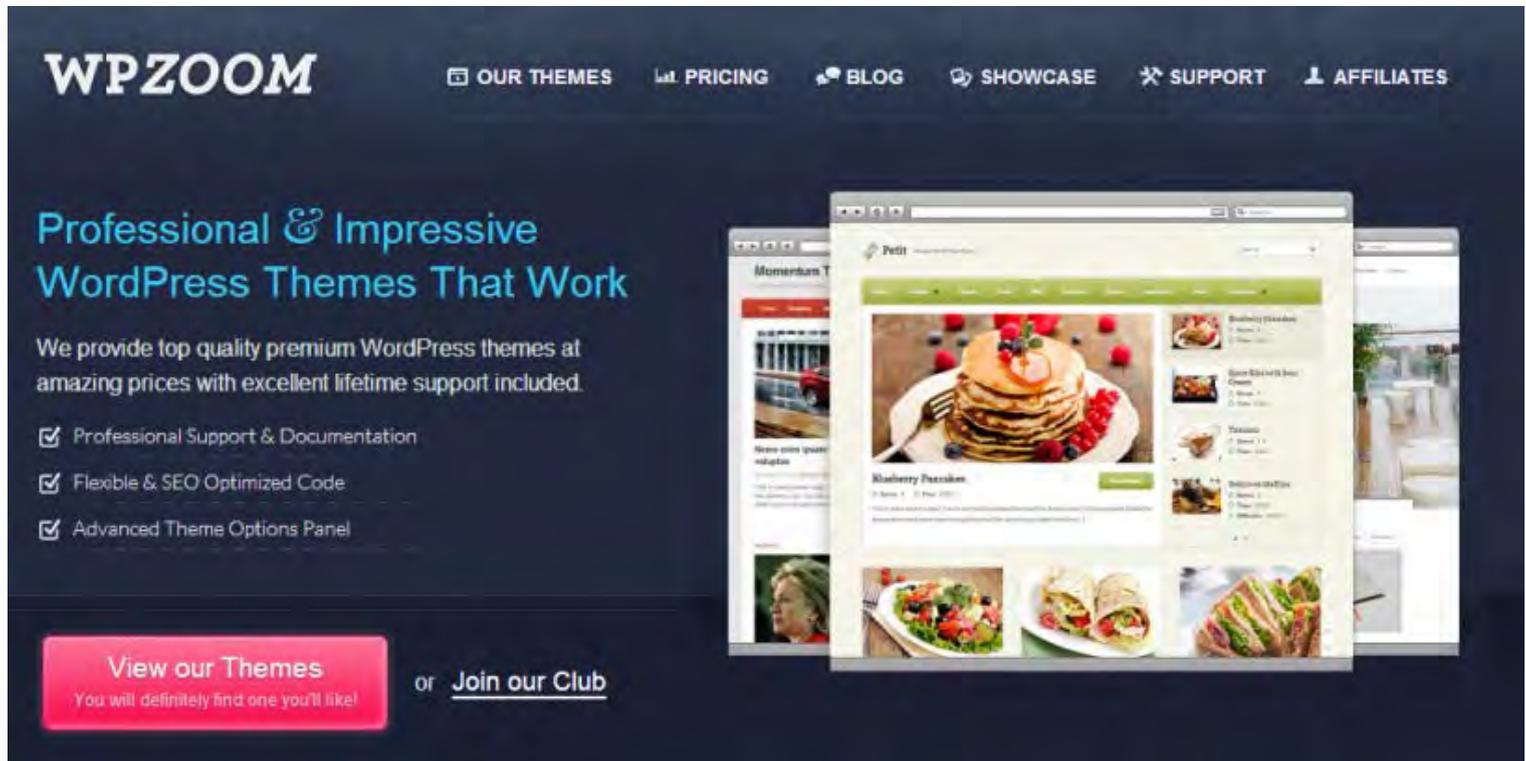
Bonus Headlines

Here is a list of bonus headlines. You get the point by now so I'm not going to explain all of them:

- ____ Proven Strategies for ____
 - ____ Tips to Speed Up ____
 - ____ Practical Tips for ____
 - ____ Steps to 1000 Daily Blog Visitors
 - ____ Warning Signs That ____
 - ____ Ways to Make Money with a Blog
 - ____ Major Mistakes to Avoid When ____
 - ____ Reasons Why I am an Affiliate for ____
 - ____ Popular Affiliate Programs for Bloggers
 - ____ Tips for Using Affiliate Programs
 - ____ Ways to Make your Blog More Attractive to Advertisers
 - ____ Reasons Why Your Blog is On the Road to Nowhere (and What to do)
 - ____ Ways to Battle Writer's Block
 - ____ Reasons Your Blog Is Not Making Any Money
- ____ Ways to Increase the Know/Like/Trust Factor with Your Audience
 - ____ Things I Know About Making Money Online
 - ____ Keys to Spectacular Guest-Posting Success
 - Use These ____ Design Elements to Create the Optimum Blog-user Experience
 - The ____ Worst Blog-Writing Blunders
 - The Top ____ Ways to Get the Traffic You Crave
 - Kick start Your ____ by ____
 - Fool-proof Formula for ____
 - How to ____
 - How to Make Enough Money to Quit Your J.O.B.
 - How to Design a ____
 - How to Get More ____ for/to your Blog
 - How to Create/Write a ____ that Goes Viral
 - How to ____ and Get an Immediate Response
 - What to do if Your ____ is Struggling
 - New-Blogger ____ to Avoid
 - The Best ____ Strategy
 - The Main Reason Your ____ Will Never Last
 - The Secret to Staying Ahead of ____
 - How to Get Fanatical ____
 - What to do When all the Good ____ are Taken
 - Why you Need a ____ Action Plan

The following section of EPIC content is sponsored by:

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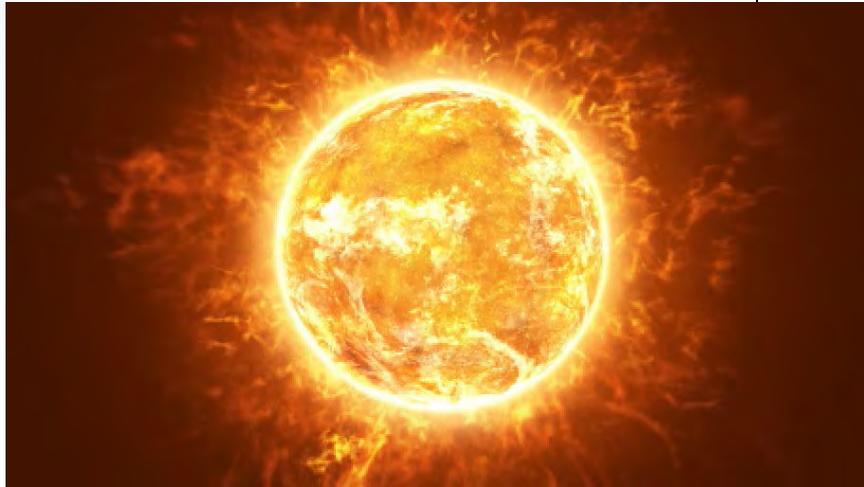
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The advertisement features a dark blue background with a navigation menu at the top. The main text is in a light blue color. On the right side, there are three overlapping browser window screenshots showing various WordPress themes, including a food blog theme with a large image of pancakes and a sidebar with recipe cards.



Over 110 Brilliant Blog-Writing Ideas

Never Get Blogger-Block Again!

Bloggers and writers get stuck. And tired. And sick. And bored. It is often hard to come up with something fresh and original. It is. Trust me. It is.

In order to have a successful blog, you are going to have to routinely dream up new, high-quality content. Every blogger is going to battle writer's block at some point. I have been there and continue to have days where I sit down at the computer to share some of my fresh and unique thoughts . . . but there are not any. The techniques, methods, and list of inspiring ideas I am going to share with you in this book have been helpful to me, and I know they will get your creative juices flowing on the days you need a little brainstorming boost.

But First...

Before I get to the inspiration list, let's just consider the overall direction and general topic of your blog. Your blog topic(s) will always be somewhat of a constraint on your individual post ideas because you are not going to write a post

(or should not) about current politics if your blog is about remote-controlled helicopters.

Deciding on your blog-content theme or primary topic can be exciting, daunting, even terrifying because once you loose that thoroughbred it's hard to change his direction! That is why it is important to pick a meaningful and significant blog topic right from the start. After all, you do not want to be stuck with a blog you find you are bored with or uninspired about a week later.

Think about your passions.

You might work as a check-out assistant during the day, but your true love could be a world away from the supermarket. Try making a list of what you are passionate about: hobbies, experiences, jobs, people, leisure activities, etc.

After you have compiled a list, search around online to see what other blogs there are that cover the same sort of topics. Are those blogs thriving? Could you do better? Do you see a gap in the market? You will rarely find a topic that is not being covered in some way on a blog; it is also just as rare to find a high-quality blog that you cannot compete with or do a better job at than them. If your blog topic is something you are passionate about, then you will be that much more inspired when it comes time to start writing.

Find something with some mileage.

Dedicating a blog to a very small and particular niche is probably not a good move unless you have a real game plan for monetizing it. In other words, if I'm starting a blog about only canary-yellow '70's Corvettes because I know exactly why and what I am going to do with it, I will not be frustrated when I quickly run out of new topics to write about. The more specific a niche, the greater chance you will ultimately limit its audience reach and restrict the topics you can write on.



You may be really fond of a particular breed of pure-bred, long-snout western Ohio miniature pigs, but be wary of limiting your blog to one specific kind of these curly-tailed creatures or else you will soon run out of material. Instead,

create a blog that talks about all different breeds of pigs so that you will have plenty of topics to write about. Keep this rule in mind: the more specific your niche, the easier to find your target audience but the more limitations you'll have. The broader your topic, the more competition you'll have but the great potential audience too.

Consider the lifespan of your blog.

When starting a blog, it is always a good idea to decide how much time you have to devote to it. Will you want to write a post per day, once a week, or 2-3 a month? Also, how long do you plan on keeping your blog going? Is it purely a personal thing to chart something that is happening in your life (e.g. pregnancy, illness) or are you hoping to carry it on for the foreseeable future?

Maybe you are unemployed and want to blog about the process of going to job interviews. If that is the case, hopefully at some point you will get a job and then what will happen to your blog? Have an exit strategy or better yet, an expansion strategy.

It might be best to stick to topics that you have felt strongly about or things you have had been passionate about for a long time (rather than opting to write about fleeting life experiences). Life has a habit of changing. You decide on your hobbies and passions - so if you want your blog to last, stick to things that you have more control over.

All Blocked Up?

First rule: if you sit down to the computer and cannot come up with anything to write, get away from the computer.

Refresh your mind. Contemplate the list in this book. Get a new perspective. Go out and find ideas and direction from the world around you. Put yourself in a place where you can purposefully watch, listen, and see what inspires you. Discover what people are talking about, what they care about, and what needs they have.

Simply getting out of the house might help you to overcome your writing block. Be careful though not to just hit a coffee shop, suck down caffeine, and stare at your free-wifi-enabled one-eyed monster. If you are just going to surf the web, you might as well drink free coffee at home. Aim to be in a mix of people, possibly even people you know, to be a part of conversations that might provide fuel for your writing. Motivation and ideas can be gathered anywhere.

Where can you go to gather ideas? Parks, markets, grocery stores, hardware stores, entertainment venues, museums, places of worship, airports, car dealerships, coffee shops, the post office, or even the sidewalk in front of your home.

Anywhere you find people living life will provide you with writing ideas by observing and listening to what their needs

are and how people respond to those around them. You might feel like you are “procrastinating” by leaving your computer and heading out into the world, but think of it as a “brainstorming session.” Set yourself up somewhere and have something to take notes with. You will NOT remember those great ideas if you don’t write them down. Trust me, there’s nothing quite so frustrating as to have a flash of creative brilliance and just KNOW you can’t possibly forget something so inspirational only to get back to your computer and totally draw a blank. Write it down. Take notes. Let humanity inspire you.

Some thoughts on how to do this:

- Pay attention to see how people talk with the servers at a restaurant.
- See how people interact with each other in a slow-moving post office line.
- Notice how children and adults interact at your child’s school.
- See how people treat seniors at the grocery store.
- Observe how families/spectators interact with players at a sporting event.
- Notice how children interact with each other at the park.



- Watch how teenagers shop together at the mall.
- Observe conventions, trade shows, and events that are not necessarily your “thing” but are full of people talking and interacting.

The Ultimate, Inspiring, Creativity-Boosting, Brilliance-Enhancing, Blog Post Brainstorming Writing Reference List

Over my years of writing, I have compiled my own reference list of “blog post types” that I frequently look at to get ideas. I do not just wait until I am feeling dull or blocked. I will

routinely view it simply to fuel my brain and get my writing pot boiling.

The list I have created is a compiled list I've developed over time. I would be lying if I said I sat down one day and wrote this. This list came about over time and I just kept adding to it as I ran across new ideas, either my own or by some other writer.

Having a reference list like this is invaluable. I trust you'll use it often and find it as inspiring as I do.

Question & Answer

Someone poses a question and then you answer it. Readers might ask questions... in fact, you should INVITE your readers to ask questions. They are a great source of content ideas. I have written hundreds of posts by simply ending every other regular post with something like this:

"What are your questions for me about...." I've published a couple of books with several hundred of these "answered questions" as the content. They are probably my



favorite type of content because you are writing about what your readers want to know.

Tips and Tricks

Start with a couple of paragraphs of explanation about the topic followed by a list of tips. People love to know time-saving and cool tips and tricks. What is your blog about? What are you good at? Write some tips. You don't have to be an expert... you just have to know more than your typical readers. Use the Internet to find tips you haven't thought of. Sometimes writing tips is not just dreaming up those tips, but it's compiling them into one convenient list for the benefit of your readers.

A Story

Once upon a time something happened to me; maybe I learned something from it, and now I'm telling you. People love personal stories... they can either be pure entertainment or perhaps a lesson learned. Make sure your story is "timeless" if possible.

You want your great story to be read five years from now and still be relevant and understandable. The "story" post has the added advantage of hooking into emotion, which is really important when it comes to memory, impact, and fueling the desire to "pass it on."

“A” List

This is the BEST of something... best websites about a topic, best writers on a subject, best restaurants in Dallas, best blogs about adoption, best free graphics tools on the web. Use the Internet to research and you’ll often find good information that will help you determine your “A” list.

You need to decide how to present the list: is it a measurable list that you can “prove” with data or evidence? Or is simply your opinion? If provable, reference that data. If an opinion, communicate to your readers what makes your opinion authoritative or qualified to declare an “A” list on some topic.

Quiz or Test

Pose a series of questions or offer a checklist that allows the reader to figure something out. The purpose can be to test someone and show them their current level of knowledge, or to teach them something by given them answers (letting them “test” adds interactivity).

For example, maybe I write a post with “five questions that will reveal how good of a husband you are...” Then I could wait and get answers from readers and follow up with other posts. Or, I could write about my own answers (an attempt to teach or inform) and have them compare their answers to mine.

Another good use of a quiz is to test their knowledge about a topic that you have written a book on. If you demonstrate to someone a lack of knowledge on a topic they are interested in, it’s not a huge step to then market to them a book you have written on the topic.

Informational

Explain something, define something, or expound on something. What are your readers interested in? Do a little research on the Internet and write an informational post about it. You do not have to be an expert on the topic, go research it. You are not coming up with original thoughts; you are working from existing information.

This brings up a good point to keep in mind: use your resources. Very few writers ever come up with original, ground-breaking content. Writing is more commonly about absorbing information then writing it in your style, fit to your readers. Don’t get stuck thinking you have to “dream up” everything you write.

Lists

This might be a list of great websites, great books, or great people to follow on Twitter (like me! www.twitter.com/Brent_Riggs or www.twitter.com/linkytools). Come up with a top-ten list of something that your readers are interested in. Think about



what YOU know... make a list of the five best, or the twenty great. Or just the Top Three. People love lists... it's a proven format that almost always works. When does it NOT work? When the list is boring, irrelevant, off topic for your readers, old news everyone already knows, or poorly written.

Problems & Solutions

Present a problem, and then offer a solution. If you are an expert (or pretty experienced) on a certain topic, then you should be aware of common problems. Use your experience to offer solutions. This is a great way to become popular in your

niche. Or, if you are not enough of an expert in your opinion, pick common problems people have and research solutions on the Internet. You don't have to come up with original solutions; you just have to communicate answers to readers who do not currently know them.

Keep this in mind about being an "expert": YOU are the expert if you know MORE than the person you are communicating to. You do not have to know more than other experts... only more than your target audience. So don't shy away from being an "expert" because you know you are not in the top 10% knowledge level for the topic. You only need to know more than your audience and communicate that knowledge to them. Solicit their questions about the topic, research it, and become even more of an expert as you present answers.

Lesson Learned

Explain a problem, bad result, or unexpected difficulty, and follow it with the lesson you learned from the experience. Unlike "A Story" above, this is usually not some personal circumstance but relates to business, a hobby, or a specific effort.

Everyone has experience. Communicate that experience. What did you do wrong? What did you do right? What would you NOT do if you did it all over again? What would you do that

you failed to do the first time? What are the pitfalls to avoid? What are the “musts” (must do, must have, must avoid, must learn)?

Take any project, event, effort, idea, business, etc., and communicate what you learned about it.

Rants

Everyone has a gripe, something that annoys them - a soap box. Sound off and let your readers know your opinion. CAUTION: use this one sparingly. It's easy to become a ranter that constantly sounds off but offers nothing constructive.

Gripping or complaining is EASY... it's only useful on a rare occasion if you previously established yourself as a positive problem solver too.

You have to earn the right to gripe or get on a soap box; but if you do, it can skyrocket your popularity and traffic. You have to have thick skin because rants draw criticism and opposition. Be ready for it.



Inspirational

Find something that lifts the spirit, motivates, tugs at the heart strings, makes you love life, and restores your hope in mankind again. This could be a story of an overcomer, some victory in life, or a heartwarming tale.

Anything with deep emotion has the potential to really connect and then be passed on. Caution: do not go for the heartstrings in a manipulative manner or in every post. People can quickly grow emotionally tired of constant appeals or tearful stories. You can easily wear out your readers and they will become desensitized.

Prediction

Predict the future of some topic, some event, or some time period. My predictions for 2013; what I think will happen to the blogging industry; I predict the following for our economy; my predictions for the adoption community.

Predictions are fun and can gain you some quick traffic and popularity. Depending on the types of predictions, you could quickly be recognized as some sort of guru if your predictions come true (caution: or an idiot if they don't!). But if your predictions are simply whimsical, trivial, fun, social, or cultural, then you are not held to an accuracy standard but rather whether your predictions are fun to read or not.



Hypothetical “What If”

Write about a change, event, or circumstance that has not happened. What if we really did have total personal freedom and responsibility? What if we got rid of all welfare and handouts? What if education was all privatized? What would happen if we could never buy something we did not have the cash in hand for? What if our industry removed all the regulations? What if success really was easy and required no effort?

Or more humorous “what if’s”: what if girls ran the NFL? What if animals could talk? What if babies could say what’s on their mind? What if every teenage boy pulled his pants up?

You could go for the interesting and thought-provoking option: what if you had 60 seconds to live, what would you do or say? What if you really did have one wish that could be granted? Only your imagination holds you back on a “what if” post. You are not bound by facts, reality, or debate.

Debate

Present a “pro” and “con” on a topic. Cover both sides objectively, and then let the reader decide. Present equal and fair arguments and support for each position or viewpoint, trying not to influence the reader towards one conclusion or the other. The goal of this kind of post is to let the reader decide their own conclusions based on your information.

Or: blatantly take one position, and then invite the readers to debate you. You have to be ready to defend your position and take criticism for it (possibly), but anytime you can effectively use controversy or hot-button topics, there is a great potential for attention and reader interest. You have to be careful

though and be ready for a possible negative backlash. It's one of those things where there is a great potential reward but it comes with great potential risk as well.

Reviews

Review books, writers, other blogs, products, or anything that your readers would appreciate an honest evaluation on.

Most people think of reviews as more like a recommendation, but reviews can really be anything. It can simply be your opinion without any recommendation (good or bad). It can be a clinical review where you are not offering an opinion or trying to influence your readers one way or another, but are simply trying to inform.

You can also use reviews as contests and giveaways. You can review a product or service and arrange with the provider to either give away some freebies or offer discounts exclusive to your readership.

One thing you never want to do is to give a dishonest positive review and recommend something simply to make money. The first time your readers feel ripped off or taken advantage of, you can forget any future reviews; if you are lucky enough to not have your blog totally die. If you ever gain the reputation of recommending junk simply to make a few bucks, do not be surprised when that reputation spreads like wildfire over the Internet.

Interviews

Interview someone interesting, notable, history-making, wise, or an expert on something. Ask questions, and let them answer.

TIP: let them have input on the questions. They know what they know, and they can help you come up with questions that bring out their expertise or story.

One technique I use is that I will start with one set of interview questions, answer them, and then allow follow-up questions that I integrate chronologically into the overall interview. Then I will answer the following questions and allow several more rounds of questions to be integrated in. When you are finished, it looks like a natural steady stream of questions that were asked of you even though they were done in several rounds of questionings and follow-ups.

Interviews are really good because most of the content is usually coming from someone else, your readers gain value from it, and many times the person being interviewed will make that interview available to their readers and you have gained more audience exposure as well.



The one mistake to avoid with an interview is not being organized. By staying organized and staying on track with a logical set of questions, you avoid ending up with an interview that might be interesting but did not accomplish anything for your readers.

When you outline an interview, make sure you have a goal in mind of what you want to teach your readers or what value you want them to see in the interview. Make sure the entire interview accomplishes that goal.

Case Studies

Write about something that happened when a technique, solution, product, or idea was tried out. Pick a person or

company who applied a solution or idea and examine the results and lessons learned.

Case studies allow your readers to see into the processes, mindsets, and inner workings of an attempt to accomplish something. It is one thing for me to tell you that you can go out and build your own online business. It's another thing for me to present case studies of people who have done it so that you can see how was done, what worked, what did not work, and what things you can do to mimic their success.

Many successful bloggers and companies like being a part of a case study because it is in essence additional promotional marketing for them because they become well known to whoever is reading the case study.

Profiles

Profile a notable or interesting person. This is not the same as an interview. A profile specifically gives information, facts, and history about the person specifically.

The profile may contain biographical information but it is not specifically a biography. You can pick out any aspect of the person to concentrate on that you feel would be relevant or interesting to your audience.



You might profile their work or some accomplishment, a failure, a great success, or an adventure. There are so many ways on the Internet to find out information about notable people; you should never have any problem finding profile content.

Excerpt and Link To Another Post

Most bloggers read a lot of other blogs and websites. Pick out good posts and articles. Write some comments about the material, and include an excerpt and link back to the original. I often do this with news stories.

There's a fine line between simply stealing content and pretending it's an excerpt, and actually excerpting content with proper credits and links for the benefit of your readers. If you are simply being lazy and want to republish something you found on another blog, then get permission. Don't pretend it's an excerpt.

The best kind of excerpting in my opinion is where you post 5% or 10% of someone else's writing (along with appropriate links), and the rest of the post is your own commentary or opinion.

You may ask "why would someone care if you post their content on your blog? Aren't they just getting increased exposure from your audience?" That is true but you have to balance that with search-engine penalties for duplicate content. The best way to handle duplicate posting is to get permission from the author.

Comparison

A vs. B; choose this or that. Compare two products, two choices, two solutions, two problems, two people, or two points of view. Unlike a debate, a comparison points out the differences in two or more things usually without presenting a "winner" or "preference," although there is no rule that says you can't draw a conclusion.

If you have a hobby, then choose two different competing products or services within that hobby and compare them. You might compare two of your affiliates against each other, which could result in some additional revenue if someone uses one of the affiliates.

Comparison posts not only educate your readers but give them valuable information upon which to make a choice about something; research they would have had to do on their own.

Research

Do the work of gathering up information and putting it in one place on your blog. Compile information and resources on a topic, problem, person, hobby, skill, or industry. Research is the work of gathering up information and putting it one place, which readers appreciate.

Research is valuable to your readers because it saves them time. If you have a blog about tennis and did some research on the newest rackets, then you have helped your readers. If you have a blog about purebred dogs and have done research on the newest breeding techniques, your readers will appreciate the valuable content you gathered for them - saving them the effort.



Research is a way to create content without having to write it. Most of the time, you are compiling the research, organizing it, and then presenting it properly to your readers as a convenience or a service.

Compilation

Unlike research, this is more like a reference list of links, sites, blogs, and resources about a topic, event, or something specific. For instance, I might compile a list of links and descriptions on Christian history websites, or “personal finance” blogs.

You are really only limited by your own imagination when it comes to compilations. You can compile certain types of books, a specific segment of information, directories... Really any category of information that you can find on the Internet can be compiled into a single useful resource.

Satire

Satire is... satire. Here's the definition:

- Witty language used to convey insults or scorn; "he used sarcasm to upset his opponent"; "irony is wasted on the stupid."
- A literary technique of writing or art which principally ridicules its subject often as an intended means of provoking or preventing change.
- exposing human folly to ridicule; "a persistent campaign of mockery by the satirical fortnightly magazine."
- a humorist who uses ridicule and irony and sarcasm.

Be careful with satire. It's one of those types of content that can make you really famous and popular, or come back to bite you in the butt and get your blog shut down. It's a high risk, but also very high potential reward. Only you know if your personality can handle the volatility and unpredictability of controversial or satirical content.

Series or Multiple Parts

Instead of writing really long posts, break them up into parts or create a series that covers a different part of the topic with each post. You can often get a couple of weeks of posts from one series, or by breaking up a long post.

It's my best guess after a decade of blogging that around 350 to a max of 500 words is about the comfortable attention span of most readers.

So instead of writing a single thousand-word post because you want to get everything in one shot, consider breaking that into two or three smaller posts. This not only gives you more content that you can schedule, but also makes it easier for your readers to digest.

THE HOLY GRAIL OF POSTS: A Viral Post or Idea Virus

Okay, this is the HOLY GRAIL of blog posts. A viral post is one that people are compelled to pass on to others, and like a snowball rolling downhill gains momentum and grows.

Viral posts are rare and often unexpected. One viral post can launch an entire blogging career. There's no formula for a viral post, you just have to constantly evaluate whether or not your post would be something your readers (and their friends) are COMPELLED to share with others.

Many posts get shared with a few people... few posts take on a true viral cycle. It takes great writing, great timing, and great luck/blessing/fortune (choose your flavor).

Collation Posts

Just like when you collate papers out of the copier, you are putting them in the correct order and proper organization; that is what a collation post is. It takes information from multiple sites and sources, and then organizes the information and presents it in a logical and useful order.

Guest Posts

Guest posts are exactly what they sound like; you are allowing or inviting other people to write blog posts to publish on your blog.

If your blog is successful to any degree, you will quickly begin to receive requests from guest bloggers. The motive behind guest blogging is to grow your own audience and increase your exposure to other communities.

Guest posts can be a great way to build reservoir content but remember that with each guest post you are somewhat diluting yourself as the primary personality of your blog. You are also potentially sending your readers to other blogs within



your niche or topic. Only you can weigh the benefit or risk involved with guest posts for your blog.

Ask the Readers

Really stuck? Ask your readers what they would like to see you write about. Ask them for questions. Ask them what problems they are having (related to your topic).

Ask them what their favorite content is on your blog and then focus on that. Ask them what their favorite content is on OTHER blogs, and then write your own versions.



Ask readers to help you write something. Run a contest and pay a reader for giving you a great idea.

The larger your audience, the more great ideas you will be able to get from them.

Monthly Reports

Monthly reports, updates, and running results or totals... it might be progress reports on a project, updates on your goals, running totals, or results on something you are tracking.

Monthly updates or reports are something you expect so it should be something you can fall back on. Nothing says it has to be the same number of updates or reports on certain dates. It's your blog, so change it up if you want.

Review/Describe Other Blogs

Readers like it when someone they trust recommends or reviews other blogs. It saves them the work of having to evaluate them. You may introduce your readers to blogs they otherwise would have never crossed paths with.

You don't have to review them just for the purpose of a positive referral. You can review other blogs like a "directory" just to inform your readers what the blog covers. Of course, you can give the blogs ratings too but be sure to be fair and do your homework.

If you do an objective review and link to a blog, those blogs may notice and give you a plug as well.

Update, Expand, or Elaborate on a Previous Post

You have written some great stuff in the past. There is no rule that says "one and done." Rewrite it, update it, or take a different angle on it. Learn to repurpose your best stuff and present it in many different ways.

I'm not talking about cheap or lazy duplication (although republishing timeless posts occasionally is certainly a good practice so that periodically your new readers get exposed to them too).

When you do repurpose or republish, include a note about the previous version and why you are posting it again. That way your long-time readers won't think you are just being lazy or have run out of juice.

Personal Experience, Story, or Tale

Personal content is a little risky, but with big potential payoff. If you can write personal stories, experiences, and opinions that are interesting, not annoyingly self-centric or egocentric, AND have value for your reader, you will have a valuable source of emotionally appealing content.

I've seen some huge successful blogs that were personal to the core but they pulled it off by making you feel like you knew them, or that their experience was meant to help you. I've seen other personally revealing blogs that were boring, way too much information, trivial, or nothing but a shrine for the blogger ("love me," "help me," "need me," or "worship me").

Some people have a personal story that is so compelling, involving so many lessons learned and so much experience, that it can support an entire blogging effort.



Almost all really good blogs have an element of the "personal" in them. The trick is using just enough to help people feel they actually know you while not crossing that line into "I don't care what kind of cat litter you prefer or that yet another girlfriend dumped you."

Pure Fiction

I just used to write a series of blog posts I called "truth or fiction." They were stories about stuff that happened to me but I would embellish them greatly with some of it being true, and some pure fiction.

I then invited readers to be part of a contest to see who could figure out which part was true, and which part I made up.

Ever heard of a parable? A parable is a story that teaches something. If you like the creativity involved in that, you would write parable-type posts meant to teach your readers something real.

This would be a very specific and special type of blog writing, but being able to write “fiction” makes your content limitless.

Why You Should Spend More Time Reading Blogs

It is important to read other blogs as a way to increase your own skills and knowledge on your chosen blog topic. Reading other blogs will also give you ideas, inspiration, and provide fuel for your creative juices. Here’s a quick rundown of why it is important for you as a blogger to read as many other blogs as you have time for:

1. You need to know what other people are reading and talking about. Sometimes you might be at a loss for new content ideas and checking out other blogs will give you an idea of what other people are interested in. Then you can add your ideas and wisdom via your blog. By adding a post about a trending topic, you might even be able to pull in some search-engine traffic. Keep in mind that whatever you write on should be of interest to your

current readership or you might lose them by writing about every passing trend that hits the internet.

2. You might gain a new perspective on your blog topic. By reading other blogs, you will gain access to the thought process and ideas of a variety of people; undoubtedly, this will give you more to think and write about. You might have to read through several recycled posts to get to one that offers a new insight, but it is worth the effort for you to find a new idea that you had not previously considered.
3. You might gain additional income-generating methods. The opportunities to make money online are numerous and after a while you might think that you have considered everything under the sun. But as technology changes, and the Internet evolves, new opportunities will present themselves and you just might read about one that interests you.
4. You will get new ideas for your own blog posts. Creating quality content for your readers on a regular basis can be difficult. Many bloggers struggle to come up with new and exciting information for their readers. If you regularly read high-caliber bloggers related to your field, you will be exposed to new ideas and blog material.
5. You will enhance your writing skills. Even if you already consider yourself to be an excellent writer, reading other blogs will expose you to new writing styles and new ways to present your ideas to your readers. If you are not an

excellent writer, reading good writing is a great way to expose yourself to new words and phrases that you can work into your own writing as you practice. Your writing will improve over time as you soak in quality content while continuing to provide quality content to your own readership.

Without neglecting your own blog, read and digest as many other blogs as possible to load up your mind with knowledge, ideas, and creativity.

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80+ Online Business Tips

In this section you'll find a treasure of online business tips, ideas, advice, and lesson learned that have made a difference to me over the years.

If you have any tips you think I might want to add to this section, send them to me along with your name and link. If I publish your tip, you'll get credit for it.

Strive to create a business around something you are passionate about.

I have a hard time not wanting to work. Why? Because I love what I do and I'm very passionate about it. In fact, I'm blessed to have several things to do professionally that I am wild about. Every morning, I wake up with a choice of things that I cannot wait to get started on. Build your business

around something you are truly in love with and you will have no problem being motivated and driven to do whatever it takes to succeed.

I read a lot of the younger crowd saying this - but it comes with a caution. Often I get the feeling that the way it is communicated, doing what you love is "code" for doing something that is easy, takes little sacrifice, and won't come with times where you feel like giving up or quitting. Working a passionate business is much like a good marriage: you are totally committed to it and completely in love, but there are still times it drives you crazy and you don't get along. Don't mistake doing something you are passionate about with the

idea that it is easy or will not have its extremely difficult times.

Decide upfront how much of your personal resources and finances you're willing to invest (and lose in a worst-case scenario).

Whenever I think about doing a new business or pursuing any idea that will require risk and investment, I like to think of what the worst-case scenario will be. How much money could I possibly lose? How much time and effort could end up resulting in nothing? What will I have to give up to give it my best try?

If I am willing to live with whatever the worst-case loss is, then I know that I'm ready emotionally to take the risk. Just having gone through this exercise will help you identify pitfalls and potential problems that might occur; also this exercise will prepare you emotionally to not to be surprised if the worse actually does happen. It's something you considered, weighed and accepted upfront. Should the worst come to fruition, you will have already decided that you are willing to bear the cost.

Decide upfront how much time you are willing to commit when building and maintaining your online business. Consider whether you are willing to give up time previously devoted to hobbies or other interests while you are focusing on your online business.

Many people do not count the cost of what it takes to build a profitable online business. They have fallen for some get-rich-quick "you barely have to do anything" scam or they just simply have not been taught this basic business principle. Counting the cost is not just considering how much money is involved. You have to think about how much time it will take, how much emotional energy is needed, and the effects of setbacks and failures that will occur along the way.

You have to consider other things that will be affected such as your time, your family, your marriage, your hobbies, or your leisure activities. Being successful at any business (whether online or not) requires time and dedication. You need to determine upfront how much time you're willing to commit on a consistent basis and predetermine what other things are going to be replaced or reduced in order to give you that time.

As you plan out your initial steps to build your business, think about what you consider to be your optimal work/life balance. Is it realistic given your goals for your business?

If you are determining what it will take to build your online business, think about how it affects the balance of your work and personal life. Are your goals realistic? Are they reasonable? Are your goals achievable? A lot of people start out with very high and lofty goals that require a remarkable amount of discipline and way more hours than they are truly willing to put in.

For a lot of people, their online business is something they are building “on the side” while they do their regular job. Or perhaps it is a stay-at-home parent who manages the house and family and is building an online business in addition to that. You have to set your business goals realistically in light of whatever other responsibilities you have. There is one surefire way to become completely discouraged and quit, and that is to have unrealistic goals about how fast or how big your business will grow if you have not considered it in light of your overall life.

For most people, multitasking is a productivity killer. Find time when you can focus solely on your online business – with no distractions.

For most people, multitasking absolutely is a productivity killer. Some experts will definitively declare that it is a productivity killer for ALL people. I disagree with making that kind of sweeping statement because you simply cannot apply your own conviction on this to every single person. I do believe we can be safe in saying that for the vast majority of people, trying to multi-task several things will significantly hinder your overall productivity.

When you get ready to write something, turn off your phone and turn off your email. When you're creating a product, try to isolate yourself from distractions or other urgent tasks that will pop up in front of your face and demand your attention. Each time you have to switch gears in the process of multitasking, your brain has to disengage from one focus,

reengage another, and then repeat the cycle when you're ready to go back.

Many people fool themselves into thinking that the busyness of multitasking is the same thing as being productive. I can assure you it is not. There are times when I am trying to write something, stopping every few seconds literally to answer an email quickly, snagging a phone call here and there, while having someone stand in front of my desk waiting for my attention. This "feels" like I am really doing a lot. But most of the time it just ends up being a lot of activity without a lot of things accomplished.



Even now as I write this sentence, my phone and email are turned off so that my focus and attention is not broken. By

doing this, I can easily turn out to or three times the amount of content in the same amount of time.

Brilliant ideas are a dime a dozen.

It's true, good ideas are cheap. What I mean by that is it is very easy to come up with good ideas. I have lists after lists of what I consider to be extremely good ideas for projects, books, and businesses. That's the easy part. What is hard is to execute those ideas at the right time in the right way to create something valuable that people will want.

You will find as you grow your business that good ideas will come at you from all angles and you'll be tempted to be distracted into pursuing them because they sound like such a good idea. But an idea is only as good as the plan and commitment to make it happen. Learn to write down good ideas as they come to you, but learn to be disciplined about which ideas to act on and give your time to.

Make sure your business goals are clearly written so that you can be accountable to them; also, written goals help you gauge where you are making progress and where you need to focus your time and resources.

Talking about goals is a lot like talking to people about having a personal budget. Everyone nods their head and agrees that goals are something you should have but rarely does anyone actually write out their goals. I'm not sure why, because it is a proven fact that having specific written goals helps you to be

focused, gives you a way to measure your progress, and allows you to allocate time and resources to achieving those goals.

There's nothing quite as frustrating as working your behind off month after month, year after year, and realizing you are no closer to what you hope to achieve. The reason can usually be boiled down to this: you don't know what the destination is so you're not traveling in that direction. Having a goal is like choosing a spot on the map and then planning a driving route to get there. If you just hop in the car and start driving 18 hours a day, you're going to end up tired and frustrated if you haven't mapped a route to your destination. A business is exactly like that. Most people just hop in their "get busy" vehicle every day and start driving it without any plan or directions to get to a specific destination. Then at the end of the day, or month, or year, it will be frustrating to realize you haven't actually gotten closer to or arrived at any place you want to be.

Write down specific goals and make sure that everything you are doing is filtered through those goals and helping you to reach that destination.

Do not act impulsively and bail out on your stable income (day job) too quickly.

I get really aggravated at some of the over-the-top promises and "rah rah" hype that some online business snakes foist onto otherwise sincere people who just want to work hard and do something for themselves or their family. Now having said that, some of that blame can be put on the "get-rich-

quick" mentality of a lot of people. They are susceptible to overhyped promises of "online riches with little effort" because they're undisciplined and have little in the way of a work ethic to start with.

My point is, don't get overexcited and pull a Merle Haggard on your employer: "take this job and shove it." I am probably showing my age because I'll bet a lot of you have no clue what I'm talking about. There was a famous song back in the 1970s (I think) by Merle Haggard where he walked in and said to his boss "take this job and shove it." A lot of people get way ahead of themselves based on over-sensationalized promises by Internet marketers of how rich they are going to get in a short period of time - and they go and quit a perfectly good job.

My advice to you is to choose a period of time from one to three years where you are willing to work doubly hard maintaining your regular job while you build up your side business. When the appropriate time comes, you can make a relatively safe decision about going full-time with your online business.

The copycats prove you are doing things right. Take them as a compliment.

If you are new to business in general, or new to being online specifically, you may find it surprising and aggravating that people will steal your content and ideas. Get used to it - it is a common practice on the Internet. Remember, unlike a local business, being on the Internet puts you right smack in the middle of a billion people and many of them are devoid of any

real values at all. If they can steal your content or ideas and simply put it out there as their own and profit from it, they will do it. The better and more profitable your idea, the more it is going to be ripped off by other people.



There are two positives you can take away from this. First of all, if you are being copycatted then it proves you are doing something right. Secondly, even when your stuff is being used by others like a knockoff Gucci handbag, it's still going to result in positive exposure for you because it is spreading your ideas to people who would have otherwise never heard or seen them. Search engines and other things that track content on the Internet are getting pretty good about knowing where it originated in penalizing duplicates.

After many years online, I have simply quit being concerned in any way about people ripping off my content, products, or ideas. There is nothing you can do about it, so there's no need to worry about it. Just make reasonable efforts to copyright, trademark, or patent your online property, and be satisfied after reasonable attempts to address infringement (as opposed to going to the extreme: stressful and anxious attempts to battle every incident).

Online business is a process - not a product.

What I mean by that is: be careful of all the marketing scams and overhyped promises of online business products. You're not going to buy a \$497 "business in a box," load it up on your computer, and have the money start pouring in. If there was actually such a thing, whoever owned it would not sell it - they would just use it for themselves.

Be very wary of people who promise surefire systems and online business products that require little time and little knowledge. They get very rich selling that to unsuspecting, lazy, greedy, or just innocently naïve people; their claims of "I got rich online and so can you" are not based on any other business than selling other people their get-rich-quick products.

Online business is a process, effort, and commitment just like any other business. You can't pour it out of a bottle, or take it out of the box and, like magic - the money starts rolling in.

Make sure you regularly spend time thinking about your overall plan and goals for your business.

When you start your online business, it's good to have goals but goals are not any good if you don't ever go back and review them, revise them if needed, or adjust your business plans to fit them.

Periodically and routinely go back over your goals and make sure they are realistic given your experience and results up to that point. There's a fine line between unrealistic goals that need to be adjusted, and challenging goals that require your business activity to be adjusted. Just the process of reviewing your goals, evaluating them, and routinely examining them will help you improve both your goals and your business.

Spend time every day getting to know your market and audience - what do they need? What can you provide to help them reach their own goals? How can you connect with your audience?

Online business is no different than traditional business with respect to knowing your audience and market. You should dedicate time every day to learning more about your target audience: what are their needs, what are their problems, what is it that they want. How can you help them reach their goals and be successful? What are ways that you can connect with them and engage them?

The more time you spend discovering new truths about your audience and answering those questions, the more you will be

able to accurately create content, products, and services they will need.

Do not hesitate to admit and correct your mistakes; people will appreciate your openness and honesty.

Everybody makes mistakes and everybody knows that. Your customers and audience know you are not perfect. What they need to be assured of is that you are honest and humble and willing to quickly fix those mistakes. The more you serve your audience with integrity, the more forgiving they will be when a mistake occurs.



Be open and honest about a mistake, and do everything you can do to immediately and completely correct it. A word of

caution from my experience: don't announce a mistake and cause anxiety for your audience that they otherwise would not have even known about. Let me explain.

Early on when I was first building sites that had thousands of subscribers, the first couple of times something major went wrong, I immediately jumped out there and sent a message to every subscriber alerting them to the problem and assuring them that I was working a solution as fast as possible. What I learned over time is that I was causing a lot of anxiety for no reason. If I would have simply fixed the problem (while just communicating with those readers who actually noticed there was a problem), 95% of my users would have never even realized the situation existed. So my lesson to you is this: whenever you make a mistake or there is a big problem occurring, jump on it and respond to it as fast as you can while openly and honestly responding to anyone that was affected. Do not increase your stress level or introduce stress to segments of your market who would have otherwise been unaffected and unaware of the mistake in the first place.

When you do receive criticism (in the form of a negative comment or an email), try not to be offended or take the criticism personally.

If you're going to do business online, you will want to grow your skin a little thicker and learn not to be defensive or take it personally when you get criticized. The moment you open your online doors, the whole world will be your potential customers and the fact is that not everyone is nice, patient, or forgiving. In fact, you will find that doing business online

introduces you to a lot of nasty, critical, and unhappy people who will be ready to tear you down as a hobby. Learn to ignore them.

On the other hand, when you receive criticism that is based in fact, you have to embrace it and learn from it. Don't be defensive or get all upset about it and feel like you need to justify yourself to the world. If you give in to that temptation, you will find yourself spending most of your time responding to and correcting the perceived slights against you. Evaluate criticism for any truth and make changes accordingly. For the rest of the criticism that is baseless and useless, trash it and move on.

Building relationships through world-class customer service is the key to establishing a positive reputation with your audience and gaining their loyalty.

If you want to quickly set yourself apart from your competition there is one assured way: world-class personal customer service and always doing business in a completely honest and generous way with each and every person.

The bad news is that the world can be a very dishonest and impersonal place and many businesses are no different. The good news is that makes it easy for you to rise above that standard and build loyalty by being honest and responsive in your business. It is hard to come up with some revolutionary new product, service, or content to set you apart - but it is easy to ascend over your competition by focusing on your integrity and willingness to serve other people.

Across the board with my online businesses, I can honestly say that I have a widespread and well-known reputation for being responsive, personally accessible, and honest above reproach. I have no doubt that this is a major factor in the success I've been blessed with.

Create a network or business mesh.

There are a lot of people, resources, and online communities that can help you and your business. You can do the Lone Ranger thing if you want, but online business is typically much more fun and successful if you build a network of people and resources that not only benefit you, but you benefit them.

Build up relationships with other online business operators, vendors, contractors, and experts. Help them and ask them to help you.

Do not be afraid to go after the big highly competitive markets.

A lot of people doing online business are scared of the big highly competitive markets. They feel like they have started too late and the competition is just too big.

There are two problems with this kind of thinking. First of all, the big boys don't stay big forever. Businesses come and businesses go - and they are always susceptible to new competition that is willing to work harder, provide a better product, and treat their customers better. Secondly, in a huge competitive market there is also a huge target audience. You

only need a small segment of that market to be wildly successful. So don't be overwhelmed and feel you need to compete for the business of every single potential customer. Identify a target audience and focus your efforts on those people.

The bigger and more successful an online business becomes, usually the broader and more general their target audience. This leaves them susceptible to flank attacks by new business startups who come in and pick off the edges of their market.

If you can identify an ignored market, however small it may seem . . . go for it!

If you can identify a need (even for a very small market) - do not ignore it. A few bucks here and a few bucks there can add up to real business. The Internet is a market of the "exponential." It is so huge and vast that what we would consider a very small niche market online can in reality be thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of potential clients. Unlike a local traditional business where a niche would suffer because there are just not enough potential customers, online business opens up the entire world to you.

I have a friend who wrote a book about "sweating," yes sweating, and the last time I checked he had made over \$650,000 just selling that one little e-book. Never think that your online business is too specialized or the market too small. There is a mind-boggling amount of people online and

you only need to reach a small fraction of them to be successful.



Whenever possible, personally respond to all of your readers' inquiries.

A lot of online business is faceless and inaccessible. The only contact you have with them is through forms or email. You never see a face, talk on the phone with them, or get a personal reply. All you get is copy-and-pasted statements and auto responders. If you want to grow your online business and have an audience that is loyal to you, then learn to be personally accessible and respond to them.

As they begin to achieve some success, a lot of business owners consider themselves too busy to respond to typical client inquiries. They believe what is most important is for them to be out there doing the “big picture, big vision” things. They delegate the handling of readers and clients to other people and forget that it is their own interaction with their audience that brought them to this place of success to start with. If your business has grown because people know you, and trust you, and could interact with you... Then don't be surprised if your business diminishes the day you decide you have more important things to do than be accessible and responsive to your customers and audience.

Delegate other responsibilities to other people and continue being that loyal and trusted person your audience has come to know.

Show your readers you have integrity; never offer or promote anything you wouldn't buy yourself.

A lot of new online business people make the mistake of throwing junk products at their audience simply because it results in a few quick bucks; and, at least temporarily, business growth. Over time, this strategy will just get you the reputation of being a huckster who can't be trusted.

Never offer or promote a product or service to your clients that you wouldn't buy yourself and be glad to have spent the money. It's easy to deceive yourself about this so you have to be honest in careful as you evaluate it. Think about how you would feel if someone came along and convinced your spouse

or kids to spend hard-earned money on the offer you are about to promote. Would you think it was a waste? Would you think it not worth what it was priced? Would you want your money back?

If you wouldn't want your spouse or kids to spend money on something, don't ask your audience to invest their hard-earned dollars on it. It is never, never, never worth some additional revenues to you to ask your customers to buy something you wouldn't buy yourself. What comes around goes around, and you reap what you sow; these are universal truths you cannot avoid.

Let your audience see your passion for your business - at every possible opportunity.

If you are passionate about your business and products, it will show through in how you communicate, how you present, the quality and attention to detail you provide, and how you serve your business and audience.

Your passion lets people know that you believe in and trust the very thing you're asking them to invest in.

Never hesitate to give lots of credit and recognition to anyone who helps you promote your business.

Too often people are scared to give credit to other people and recognize them for their contributions because they believe it will detract from their own. This is a serious mistake. You

should always generously and unflinchingly thank, recognize, and elevate other people who do things to help your business, promote you, or add value through feedback and suggestions.

People love recognition and it is a primary tool in building customer loyalty. Even when you read about someone else receiving recognition, you appreciate the business owner who does this and realize that it could be you someday. Never miss a chance to say thank you, publicly recognize, or help someone in your audience. It will always come back to benefit you.

Continually educate yourself in communication, marketing, and business methods.

A trademark of the successful businessperson, whether it is online or traditional business, is that they continually educate themselves about how to communicate with their audience, market their ideas, and operate their business. You can never learn enough or exhaust what there is to know and improve. Rather than it making you feel overwhelmed, it should encourage you that there is always room to improve and do better.

Read blogs or websites of your competitors and experts related to your business type. Review and evaluate the marketing used by those in your niche. Educate yourself about small business needs: sales, marketing, accounting, and management. Your business or blog will only be as successful as the amount of time you invest in learning how to continually improve it.



Affiliate marketing is important. Learn how to use it to boost your business success.

Not everyone has products or can readily create them. Affiliate marketing is the idea of selling other people's products and receiving a commission for doing so. There are hundreds of companies who offer content, products, and services that you can sell to your target audience and create an income stream from them. Even if you have your own products, affiliate products can add additional revenue.

If you do have your own products, you should look into having your own affiliate program where other people sell your stuff and you pay them a commission for doing it. Check out sites like commissionjunction.com, share-a-sale.com, and clickbank.com.

If you don't like your own idea, then other people probably won't either. Trust your gut.

You have a conscience and intuition for a reason. Trust your gut. If you are considering an idea or promotion that just doesn't feel right to you, then pause and have some serious consideration and evaluation before proceeding.

If something about what you are doing just doesn't feel right and you are not completely at ease with it, there is probably a good reason. If you ignore your intuition, it will become less sensitive. If you plow ahead even when your conscience is throwing up red flags, you will become desensitized to it. Learn to know when your head and heart are trying to get your attention.

Do not be afraid to sell your expertise and experience.

Many people who are new to online business or blogging are afraid to assign value to their expertise or knowledge because they don't want to face rejection or criticism. They give away their experience for free, not because it fits a larger plan to build their business, but because it's harder to deal with people saying "no."

You have lived a unique life and you have unique expertise and experience. Do not sell yourself short. In one sense, you may give some of it away just like I do when I write blog posts and put out free content, but it is not because I don't value my expertise or experience - rather it is part of a larger plan to monetize my business in other ways.

My point is this: don't give away your expertise and experience simply because you don't value it highly enough.

Make sure you educate yourself on how to use contextual linking.

Contextual linking is taking keywords within the body of your content and linking them over to other content, products, or services. As people read through information online, they have already become accustomed to the fact that a link is something to click on and follow.

Inside of your eBooks or blog posts, learn to link keywords over to your existing products, related blog posts, or other promotions. Make sure the link makes sense or your readers will feel deceived. It's like an old trick they used to do on Google: they would put up an ad that said something about Britney Spears in a bikini and when you clicked on it, the link would take you to some site selling shoes or vitamins. The ad got attention through deceptive content, but it made people click. So make sure your keywords are linked to related content or products that make sense for that keyword.

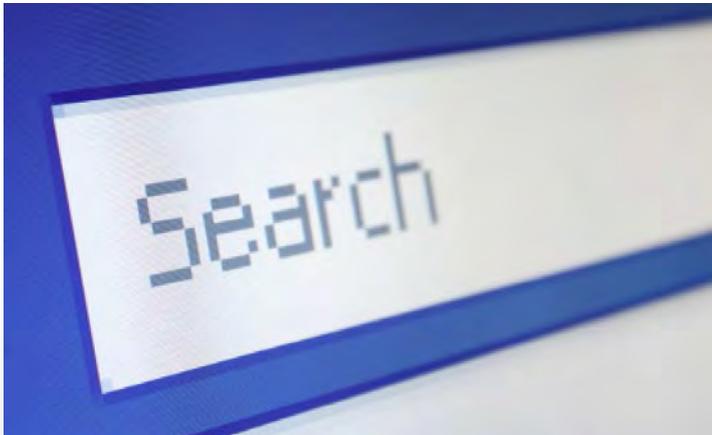
The additional links also have the added benefit (when done logically) of creating a more effective web of links for search engines to follow.

Make sure you educate yourself about the different ways you can earn advertising income.

There's a misconception with people who are new to online business that all you need to do is throw up a blog, write an occasional blog post, install some Google ads, and the money will start rolling in. Wrong. It doesn't work that way.

There are lots of different ways to make money from advertising, but it is becoming harder and harder because of the number of websites and blogs. People are becoming immune and desensitized to advertising, much like they have towards commercials on TV. You need to educate yourself on the various ways that you can profit from advertising if done correctly: contextual ads, direct advertising, pay per click advertising, product reviews, etc.

Unless you have a very heavily trafficked blog, the advertising model should not be your primary goal for income, but rather just one of many income streams.



Each time you consider promoting something you are not totally in favor of, remember that a few bucks for a short-term sale is not worth jeopardizing a long-term relationship.

You will often be tempted to promote something to your audience that you are not 100% comfortable with or sold on. Always remember that squeezing a few bucks out of your audience for a short term sale will jeopardize your reputation and loyalty with them.

Think long-term. Never trade a few dollars today for a long-term loyal customer tomorrow. It's not worth it.

The key to online business success is your subscriber list.

There are two things that stand pretty much above anything else in an online business. The first, of course, is your content or products; without which it doesn't matter how big your audience is, you don't have anything to sell.

The other is your subscriber list. This is your Golden Goose, your entrance to the Goldmine. Your email-subscriber list should be protected, respected, and a continual focus in your business. This list is how you communicate with your audience directly, and is a tangible gauge of the loyalty and reputation you have built up. People know how to unsubscribe. If you are not serving your audience well, they will tell you loud and clear with the unsubscribe link.

Your email-subscriber list is second only to your content or product and really you could consider them equal. Those items deserve the vast majority of your time and attention.

Continually educate yourself about search-engine marketing.

Search engines can play a major factor in your online business. While building up your audience directly should be a primary goal, never ignore the effect that placing well in search engines can have.

Big search engines like Google and Yahoo do millions if not billions of searches a day and can lead a lot of people to your business. Learn how search engines work and how to optimize your content and website so that search engines will rank you highly in results.

It's okay to fall in love with your business. Your enthusiasm will be contagious.

When you are passionate, enthusiastic, and in love with what you do, it will show in your content, customer service, and products. The opposite is true as well. If you are not completely convicted and sold out for your own business, there is no way that you can convince an audience to be.

Don't try to fake it. That might work for a short time, but you cannot manufacture artificial passion and enthusiasm for very long. Love your business, love your topic, love the things you

promote to your audience, and it will go a long ways towards them loving it all too.

Make sure you educate yourself about membership sites.

Membership or subscriber sites are another way to make money online. You should educate yourself about them before just dismissing the idea as irrelevant to what you do.

You have experience and expertise. What product, content, or service can you offer that people would be willing to pay \$20 a month for? What about \$10 a month? What about \$1 a month? Doesn't sound like much, does it? That's because you aren't doing the math involved with the potential size of an Internet market.

Let's say conservatively there are 100 million people out there on the other side of your keyboard that you can reach via the Internet. If you wanted to make a modest income from your online business of \$48,000 a year, that's \$4,000 a month. If you had a membership site that offered exclusive content, products, consulting, or other services for \$1 a month, you would need to build up 4000 subscribers. That is a miniscule .0004% of the potential Internet market (and 100 million people online is a very low estimate by a long shot).

My point is this: you only need a miniscule sliver of the available customer market at \$1 a month to create a nice income for yourself. What expertise, help, or service could you offer that someone would be willing to pay \$1 a month for?

Make sure you educate yourself about social-networking advertising opportunities.

Besides just actually having your own accounts to social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, you need to educate yourself about their advertising offerings. Gazillions of people are on the social sites. Done correctly, these sites are a great place to advertise.



If you cannot measure your business, how can you know if it's truly on the right track? Use your written goals to gauge where you are and where you want to go.

Learn to use your goals and available statistics to measure your progress and determine objectively if your business is on

the right track. If you do not have goals to use as guideposts, then how will you know if you're going to end up where you want to be? If you do not have statistics and reports that are measuring your business activity and results, how do you know if it is increasing or decreasing or doing what you want to do? If you fly blind by the seat of your pants, don't be shocked if you crash.

Learn to say no to people and opportunities that negatively affect your ability to build your online business.

As your business grows (and your audience), you will be faced with many people wanting to distract you with all sorts of offers and requests. This will increase dramatically once you start seeing some success with your business. You have to find the right balance between giving some direction to people, but make sure you are able to say "no" sometimes or you will quickly find there is not enough time in the day to focus on the things that made you successful in the first place.

Expertise and authority are the new online currency. You can increase both.

Expertise and authority are valuable. Use them to create content that become valuable products. That is what is meant by "online currency." You can actively increase both of those by self-education and good marketing. You can increase the value of your business and products by simply increasing your expertise; which comes down to a relentless passion for

continual improvement, and continual learning that will benefit your audience.

Take risks and be curious.

A business is risky and successful businesses take risks. There's no such thing as a risk-free business - or everyone would be doing it. Let your curiosity lead you to consider risks, especially those with potential big upsides. Over time, you will learn to evaluate the risks and choose those that are worth it and those that fall into the category of "too risky" because there's just not enough potential reward to warrant it.

Be prepared to take losses and sustained setbacks; both are a part of growing and learning online business skills.

We live in a culture that wants everything easy and fast. People give up at the first sign of adversity or setback. Be committed to your business and be emotionally prepared that hardships, losses, and even significant setbacks are going to occur. It is a natural part of the process.

You'll learn more during your failures and setbacks than you'll ever learn during the successes. Success tends to make us lazy and think things are easy. Obstacles and trials strengthen us, educate us, and expose our level of commitment. When a failure or setback occurs, you don't have to have a big grin on your face but deep inside consider yourself fortunate that you will be able to learn lessons, change things that need to be

changed, and move on from a setback with things being better than ever.

Do not just build a business - build a community.

I know a lot of online business people who could care less about building relationships or community around their business. All they are trying to do is make a sale and take money out of people's wallets. As long as you are ethical and offering legitimate products, there is nothing morally wrong with that approach but I'm not sure I could find it personally fulfilling.

Money comes and money goes. What remain are our relationships and the legacy of the valued and loyal community we surround ourselves with. View your business as part of a bigger purpose of doing something with your life that you are proud of and will have no regrets about.

When you need to spend money on your business, treat it as an investment in your success rather than a burden.

A lot of people want to do an online business and never invest or risk any of their own financial resources. Some of this comes from the get-rich-quick mentality that is promoted by a lot of the gimmick marketers.

There are times when you'll need to spend money to grow your business; it might be for software or services, to create a new product, or to hire someone to help you. See it as an investment in your future - not a stressful burden. There's a

reason why the saying is true: you have to spend money to make money. There is no doubt that the Internet and online business have cut the startup costs dramatically, but low startup costs are different than having a cheapskate mentality that everything must be free. Invest in your own success.

Know when to pull the plug on a certain project or initiative. Not everything is going to work.

Not everything you try is going to work. That's why you need to have good statistics and measurements in place to help you know when something is worth a continued commitment or whether it's time to pull life support.

Knowing when to quit is as important as knowing when to start or when to persevere. There is no doubt that you will look back and learn some lessons over time that will teach you to know better when to quit, but some people are so enamored with their own ideas that they are unable to see inevitable failure. Learn to take objective advice and unemotionally and impersonally evaluate hard statistics and measurements. Part of making things work is knowing when some things aren't going to work.

If you do not respect your audience and buyers, do not expect them to respect you.

If you view your audience as nothing but a pocket book for you to pick, don't expect them to be loyal to you for help building your reputation. It's true that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but if you become one of these

online business people who continually hawk a bunch of junk and overhyped gimmicks, it will not be long before you'll be looking for an entirely new group of people.

Beyond just losing your reputation and loyal audience, is it really the type of life and legacy you want to live? Is hooking some suckers and draining them of some cash the type of noble and honorable business you want to invest your precious life in?



Always see yourself as a student; let each day or project teach you something new.

You can always learn something from every person, every project, and every day. No matter what I have done in life, whether it was when I was a Drill Sergeant, taught network engineering, or even as a pastor, I never looked at anyone, any task, or any circumstance as something that I was above being able to learn from. By having that attitude, I learned some of the most valuable lessons and wisdom from some of the most unlikely students or beginners. Be on the constant lookout for something new you can learn from whatever it is you are doing at any given moment.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, hire people to help you reach your goals.

There are only so many hours in the day and so many things you can do. As your business grows, you will need to learn to delegate and invest some money in help. If not, you will reach a threshold where you will be working so hard doing so many things that you accomplish nothing.

It's always a difficult transition because you want to control the things that have made you successful up to that point, and you're probably finally making a little bit of money and you have to turn around and give it to someone else. That is all part of a growing business. Invest in some help and you will find two people can do five times as much as one.

Learn from your failures; they will teach you as much as your successes.

Ask any person who has a significant amount of life and business experience and they will tell you that you learn more from failures and setbacks than you do from successes. Successes do not typically cause you to dig deep and evaluate what you are doing with a penetrating focus.

Failures and setbacks put you into a desperation mode that forces you to objectively and brutally evaluate what you're doing in order to avoid the same failures again. Embrace your failures as a golden opportunity to improve, learn lessons, and avoid future mistakes.

Never forget that your online business is not your entire life; don't assign yourself value based on the success or failure of business.

Our business efforts are a large part of our identity - that is a fact. However, success or failure in business should never be the sum total of our value as a person. If the results of your business completely override what you accomplish emotionally, spiritually, and with regards to relationships, then you have got your priorities out of order. Your online business (while very important) should not be the master key that determines the value of your life or identity.

If you don't have a plan, you don't have a plan.

Well, duh. But as simple as that sounds, most people with an online business still don't have a plan. Then when their plan that they don't have doesn't work out, they can't figure out

why they didn't accomplish the plan they never planned. You feel me?

Have a plan. Work the plan. Refer back to the plan. Adjust the plan when needed. If you don't have a plan, don't be shocked when your plan doesn't work.



Always know how much of your product/service you need to sell to reach your goals.

Most people create a product or service and put it out there to sell with absolutely no goals or realistic expectation of what needs to sell in order for them to reach the level of success they want.

For example, if your goal is to make \$5000 a month online, do you know how you're going to reach it? Write down simple formulas (goals) that will give you targets to shoot for. For example, "1,000 subscribers to pay me five dollars a month for a subscription to my newsletter." Just a simple statement like that will help you focus on what you need to do to reach that goal. Other examples:

- Sell one \$10 product per day times 20 business days per month (\$5,200/yr); get five new subscribers a week at \$10 per year (\$2,600/yr); and make \$250 a month in affiliate product sales (\$3,000/yr) for a yearly income of \$10,800
- Sell 25 seats per month to my Guru Workshop at \$99 each; 40 related products a month at an average of \$12/each; build up my newsletter subscription to 500 subscribers at \$4/month each; and selling \$300 in affiliate products each month for a total monthly income goal of \$5,255

By setting realistic and easy-to-understand goals like this, you know what you need to work towards each month to reach that goal.

Try to figure out what your customer wants, before they even know they want it.

One way to create products and services is to listen to your audience or poll them about their needs - or problems that need solutions. Another approach is to create a need to make them aware of a problem that perhaps they were not thinking about.

A good example of this (but bad for society in my opinion) is how the pharmaceutical companies put a commercial on TV and tell you that there's a chance that eight out of 10 people have a certain condition or disease and may not even know it, so hurry and run to your doctor and ask him about this new drug or request this new test. The pharmaceutical manufacturers are creating a need or an urgent problem that you hadn't even thought about.

Taking that same concept, you can research needs or problems that are relevant to your topic that have not yet been discussed or addressed with your audience and bring those up. If they are real problems that could eventually have some negative consequences for your audience, they will appreciate that you have brought it to their attention and provided a solution.

Like all business, online business requires discipline.

The overhyped marketing of online business has done a disservice to it. The Internet represents an unfathomable opportunity for any person to work hard and build their own business. Unfortunately, all the junk that has been hyped in the get-rich-quick garbage has given an overall impression that assumes you set up a blog and the money will start pouring in. Millions of disillusioned people will testify to you how inaccurate that is.

Online business is no different than traditional business. You have to work hard, have a plan, serve people, have a good product, and conduct business with integrity and honor if you

want to be successful. There are no shortcuts and anyone that says there is will shortly be asking you for some money.

Forget tradition, online business has no rules beyond having honesty and integrity.

The Internet has completely turned several industries on its head. Publishing, music, design, communications, news, and certainly business. Nothing in the history of mankind has caused so much upheaval in so many traditional businesses. And that is caused a lot of people to dig in and want to protect their territory, claiming that the new way of doing things online is not the right way.

In my opinion, the only rules about online business are that you do it with honesty and integrity and have a noble purpose (and yes, making a profit is a noble purpose despite the class-warfare rhetoric we hear so much of today). Beyond honesty and integrity, don't let anyone tell you there's a certain way things have to be done or certain industry experts you have to go through to get it done. The power of the Internet is that it has totally empowered individuals to build businesses on their own.

Do not be like the slow behemoth corporations, learn to make decisions quickly and change course whenever needed.

The days of being like the slow, lumbering corporate bureaucrats are over when it comes to the online business entrepreneur. You can make decisions and changes quickly,

and change course almost instantly. There is a huge difference between being impulsive and rash versus having the courage to take risks and make decisions quickly.

The Internet has caused the patience level of customers to be very short and finicky. If you answer them with tired policy statements or “will get back to you in 14 days after we review that” they will quickly move on to someone who is more responsive and less bureaucratic.

The power of online business is that your electronic presence, products, or services can be changed instantly if circumstances demand it.



Be different - rise above the mass of mediocrity and low quality.

Countless numbers of online businesses and blogs are started every day. Almost all of them are boring, poorly done, and at best mediocre. That’s the bad news.

The good news is: it doesn’t set the bar very high for people who are committed to quality, stellar customer service, and a genuine level of high integrity. Because of the poor work ethic and generally low character of many people who get into business, you can quickly set yourself apart by working hard, offering value at great prices, and treating your customers right.

Always think about the marketing and branding of your business.

With every email, every message, every social media communication, every project, every blog post, and every single thing you do publicly during the course of your business, you should always be thinking about the marketing and branding of your business.

The way you do things, the way you present things, how you label them, the styling... Everything you do that ends up in front of your audience in any form or fashion sends a marketing message and contributes to your overall brand. You should be on high alert all the time about every single thing that ends up in front of your audience and ask yourself how it

contributes to your marketing - positively or negatively - and how it reflects on your overall brand.

Everything about your business and products should have a familiarity that is recognizable to your audience.

All of your products, all of your online presence, and all of your social media should have a particular style and familiarity about them that creates a cohesive image that becomes recognizable to your audience.

If you have two products that bear no similarity in style, essence, or message, then you're causing those two products to completely stand alone rather than benefiting from the synergy and crossover exposure that would occur if they had a cohesive marketing and branding design. It doesn't mean everything has to be templated and all look exactly the same, but it does mean that people see familiar aspects of it that remind them of your overall business.

Do not become impulsive during the first stages of your online business. You need to be excited – but careful.

It's easy to get impulsive when you first get started in your online business. This is usually caused by enthusiasm and excitement - which are both good of course. During the startup phase, it is great to have a coach or mentor that you can run your ideas by to get an objective opinion. By doing this, you can avoid a lot of unnecessary waste of money and time.

After your online business has been established, you have to dig in for the long haul.

Most online businesses don't last more than a few weeks or six months at most. People jump online in a blaze of glory and quickly flame out once the initial excitement is over and it's time to dig in and methodically sacrifice over a long period of time.

Building a business typically takes years - not months and not weeks. Yes, there are success stories of quickly successful businesses but that is not typical. That's why I hate most of the online business products out there that make it sound easy and normal to make a ton of money really fast. That message leaves a lot of people broken-hearted and disillusioned before they ever get a chance to see their business be successful.

Spread your presence all over the Internet (known as online business branding).

Just like traditional marketing, you have to get your brand, logo, and message out in as many places as possible. Advertising, forums, discussion groups, other blogs, products, shopping systems like Amazon and Yahoo, search engines like Google... Spread yourself out all over the Internet. The more presence you have (in more places), the more chance you have to grow your audience.

Always exceed your customers' expectations and be extravagantly generous with your services.

If you want to build audience loyalty and get repeat business, the fastest way to do that is to establish yourself as world-class in the department of customer service and generosity. It doesn't mean you have to give away everything for free; there are a lot of ways to be generous to your clients.

Consistently exceeding your customers' expectations and showing them appreciation is a guaranteed way to build customer loyalty and grow your audience through word-of-mouth recommendation.

Quickly admit, apologize, and learn from your mistakes.

We all make mistakes and your audience is not going to expect you to be perfect. If you make a mistake, admit it, and go above and beyond to fix it. Generally speaking, people are forgiving and understanding if they see you quickly and genuinely jumping on any mistake without being defensive or making excuses.

The best way to deal with mistakes is like the best way to remove a Band-Aid: just rip it off and get it over with. It's going to hurt but better it hurt intensely for a second or two then drag it out as a slow painful process.

Note: remember that you aren't as important as you think you are. What I mean by that is everyone is not sitting around having an anxiety attack over your mistake. We often make things into a bigger deal than they need to be because we forget people are not as emotionally invested in our stuff as we are.

If you are not failing anywhere, than you are not trying enough new things (or potentially rewarding things). Take risks.

If you are experiencing no setbacks, no failures, and no difficulties, chances are you are playing it too safe. If you are comfortable and satisfied with where you are at - then good for you. But if your business is not growing or achieving success at the rate you hoped for or set goals for; and, you are experiencing no failures or setbacks, most likely it means you're just not taking any appropriate risks.

With risk comes potentially greater failures - but also potentially greater rewards.

Make a purposeful decision to remain enthusiastic, even when you face setbacks and discouragement.

Business is hard, stressful, and sometimes discouraging but to be honest, your market doesn't care. Everybody has difficulties and no one wants to hear you whine about yours. Make a conscious and willful choice to remain optimistic and enthusiastic about your business and let that show through to your readers and clients. You will quickly gain their admiration when they see you positively dealing with setbacks and discouragement.

Keep your business as simple and organized as possible.

You can quickly get overwhelmed with all of the different ways people tell you to organize, dissect, and systematize your business. Plan this way, use this software, right out each step

and flowchart it, track everything like this, and use this service to analyze that... It can get overwhelming, complicated, and out of control quickly.

Keep your business as simple as possible, stay focused on your core tasks such as creating content and products, and work on building your client list or email-subscriber list. As you grow, you will identify systems and software that will truly be useful but at first you need to be careful because everyone will be reaching out to you and trying to convince you that they have a service or product that you cannot live without in your online business. You will quickly find all your time and emotional energy eaten up with planning, tracking, and logistics if you are not careful.



Be relentlessly positive and optimistic, because there is good reason to be.

The Internet represents an unprecedented opportunity for you to create your own business. For this reason alone, you should remain relentlessly positive and optimistic. The entire world market is at your fingertips- just on the other side of your keyboard. There is nothing like it and maybe never will be again. It is hard to imagine a single thing that has transformed the world of business to a greater degree and in as short a time as the advent of the Internet. It is truly an exciting time to do business.

Trust your gut when you are considering how to run your business. Most of today's online practices are fairly new – you should trust your instincts when making decisions.

The Internet has changed things dramatically in an unbelievably short period of time. Given that, there are not a lot of precedents or tradition by which to gauge much of the online business arena. In many ways, that is a good thing because you are only limited by your own imagination as to how to conduct online business.

If there is a downside, and I don't really consider it to be one, it's that you don't have a lot of examples or proven history upon which to base some of your decisions and strategies. Trust your gut, and as long as you are operating with a foundation of good customer service, honesty, and integrity, you should be fine making decisions about your business.

Educate yourself with a rabid intensity.

You should be constantly learning and educating yourself about all aspects of your business. If you are not passionately driven and relentless about learning everything possible about your market and doing business online, you will quickly be surpassed by others.

The process of learning will fuel a lot of creativity and ideas for you. It will keep you fresh, energized, and youthful. Unlike a couple of decades ago, you cannot make the statement “we’ve been doing it this way for 10 years and it’s always worked” to justify stale and out-of-date practices. Online business and blogging are fast-moving and ever-changing technologies. That means you have to put more effort into keeping up, but it also means there is more opportunity for success and improvement.

You have to move fast in online business; procrastination and plodding will leave you far behind your competition.

Technology and the Internet is a fast-paced and always-changing environment. What works today (and put you ahead of the crowd) will be old news by the time the snow melts or the leaves change color. You have to stay sharp and continually educate yourself about all sorts of things: software, technologies, news, marketing, etc.

For you folks out there who are not a twentysomething like me (I’m 48 years old), being older is no excuse for not having the same passion and drive to stay on the cutting edge as the

fresh-out-of-college kids do. Sometimes people my age get jealous about or criticize some 23-year-old who is successful, but don’t admit that we are unwilling to put in the same energy, commitment, and focus as they are.

“Value” is an important keyword for your online business. What are you doing to add value for your audience?

Always remember that your business is about giving value to your audience. Every product, email, blog post, or message that you send to your target market needs to be of value to them. If you are not continually giving value to your audience they will quickly abandon you. It’s not about you, it’s about them.

Continually ask yourself each time something will land in front of your clients: “Will this be valuable to them? Will they be glad they invested their time or money in it? Will they see this as benefiting me or benefiting them?”

A successful online business requires hard work and a long-term commitment. Be willing to pay the price.

We are not a culture anymore that teaches hard work and sacrifice to achieve success. We have become promoters of gimmicks and get-rich-quick schemes promising people that, with very little effort and even less knowledge on their part, they can buy this or that and quickly have the money pouring in the door.

Of course we know this is ridiculous and the only people that get rich are those selling that type of product to naïve and greedy people. A successful online business requires a lot of hard work and commitment over a long period of time. You should count the cost of that upfront and decide if you're willing to pay the price.



Learn to see the Internet as the equivalent of 2 billion people standing outside your shop window.

The reality is this: on the other side of your keyboard are a couple of billion people you can market your business to and sell your products. It is absolutely a mind-boggling, unfathomable opportunity unprecedented in world history. You only need to capture a miniscule and microscopic sliver of this market to do extremely well.

Twenty five years ago, you would have had to spend a remarkable sum of money over a long period of time to have a target market ranging in the millions of people. The Internet has made the entire world your potential audience and buyers. It is absolutely and utterly amazing.

If your blog becomes an afterthought, your online business will suffer.

A lot of people have built up their online business based on their blog. The mistake that is often made is when some business success has been achieved, and then the blog becomes a second-priority afterthought. They hire some other people to do the writing, and turn their focus more towards promotions and marketing.

This is the same mistake that many traditional businesses make when they forget what it was that made them successful in the first place. Restaurants cut back on the quality and amount of food that made them popular. Services began to skimp on customer service and quality of material in order to save money. Corporations become faceless and bureaucratic and lose the personal interaction and engagement that gained them success in the first place.

If your blog is what build your audience, don't start to neglect it once you achieve some success.

Do not be the Lone Ranger. Look to those who have already succeeded and can give you good advice.

There are many reasons why people want to go it alone and not reach out to build a community with other online business owners and bloggers. Sometimes they are territorial and are afraid to help their competition. Some people fear their audience will migrate over to someone else if they promote or mention another online business. Sometimes people are just insecure and lack the confidence to communicate with someone they see as more successful.

Ignore any selfish or negative reasons that are causing you to isolate yourself and not collaborate with other people online. For the most part, other online business owners are typically generous with their knowledge and willing to help - based on the assumption you are willing to reciprocate and do your part in serving them the best you can too.

Strive to interact and respond to your audience routinely and relentlessly.

There is no better way to build loyalty and relationships with your audience than your personal interaction with them. Take every opportunity available to you to respond to their comments, reply to their emails, or reach out to them in some way.

Whenever possible, give them recognition for any contribution they have made to the value of your online business. Auto responders are great way to send back various types of service information but try as often as you can to communicate with someone with a real email response. Note: people are so accustomed to auto responders that you need to

be sure your personal email does not sound like one. Include some fact or statement that will make it obvious to the reader it is not an automatically generated email response.

Stay on top of new developments and trends in your business market.

Use search-engine notifications such as Google Alerts to monitor the Internet for you and send you news about new technology developments or trends within your niche. This will save you time because you won't have to go out searching for it yourself. Set up various alerts based on phrases or keywords and Google will send you emails when they find results that match.

When an idea/method is working, you need to harness that momentum and push even harder.

When you figure out something that works, learn to strike while the iron is hot. Things change very quickly on the Internet and what works today may not work tomorrow. Whatever is getting you proven results today, harness that momentum and benefit from it while you still can.

Carefully monitor those things that are working today to make sure they are still working next week or next month. Online business is such a fluid and changing environment that you can never assume what is hot and productive in January will still be true when the April showers come.

Do not oversell; honesty and integrity are the foundation of online business.

Overhyped, over marketing, over-the-top, sensationalism, get rich quick... The online business world is full of people promoting junk products with that mentality. I've never quite understood the business approach of "overpromise and under deliver." You have to have the mentality that you are okay with robbing a customer of a few bucks and then never seeing them again once they figure out you ripped them off.

Never oversell. Long-lasting relationships with customers who trust you is the way to build a long-term successful online business. Avoid the hype, avoid all the marketing gimmicks that smack of "buy now, you'll never get this chance again, a \$40 million value for only \$19 and if you buy today will send you three additional ones just pay separate shipping and handling for \$20 million each." That kind of infomercial nonsense will quickly earn you the reputation of being a huckster.

Don't worry about your competition; the Internet opens the door to a market big enough for everyone.

If you are in a highly competitive market that has a lot of players, don't worry about your competition. There are more than enough potential buyers on the Internet. You only need to reach and build a relationship with a miniscule percentage of them to do quite well. Learn from your competition and do what they do even better, but don't worry about the idea that there may not be a big enough market for all of you. Millions

of people a day join the Internet community and all those new users put you on equal footing with your competition.



If you are attempting something no one else has ever done, think about it carefully.

There are two sides to the Internet coin. On one side you have the fact that all of this is relatively new, there are not a lot of established guidelines or traditions you must follow, and only your creativity limits you and how you can do online business.

On the other hand, common sense tells you that if you are about to do something that no one else is doing or has never been done, you need to take a careful look at it and make sure there is a reason no one else is doing it. Perhaps you have come up with something cutting-edge and it will be wildly

successful or perhaps no one is doing what you are about to do because everyone else is figured out it doesn't work.

Your subscription list is your most precious possession

Okay, maybe not your most precious possession but definitely it falls into the top two or three when it comes to your online business. Your blog content and product are probably equally as important, but your subscription list is one of the most valuable aspects of your business. It is your lifeline to your target market and audience; it is your established list of highly interested and highly focused readers and buyers.

You should never abuse it, sell it to unscrupulous or overzealous marketers, or do anything to cheapen its value. Once the word gets out that signing up on your list means getting a bunch of junk mail and gimmicks dumped on you, you might as well find another business.

Learn to use your successes as marketing tools (but be honest).

Many online business people and markers exaggerate and overstate their success. For example, maybe their average consulting fee is \$1,000 but they had one client willing to pay \$5,000. So they jump out there on their blog and in all their marketing materials and start claiming that people are lined up down the street to pay them \$5,000 for consulting. It's deceptive to take your most extreme example and promote it as the norm for your business; but that is what a lot of

marketers do and that doesn't even count the online business owners who just flat-out lie about this kind of thing.

You should absolutely use your successes in marketing your business, but you should never exaggerate or sensationalize them to the point that you're basically lying. People aren't stupid, so don't treat them like they are.

Always keep in mind that people who buy from you actually are real people.

That \$129 you just received came from a real person. That is money that they earned and chose to invest with you. They had 1 million other options on how they could've spent that money. They have families, bills, and other needs, but they sent that \$129 to you. Never forget that behind every cent in every dollar taken into your business is a real person who chose to give it to you. Once you begin to see people as impersonal objects that you extract money from, you begin the downhill slide into manipulation, customer neglect, and loss of integrity.

Educate yourself about Internet marketing

While there are many similarities to traditional marketing, online business comes with a lot of new ways to market. It is no longer just the idea of advertising and sponsorships. You should continually educate yourself about all the different ways to market your business and products on the Internet. What you know today may be obsolete or changed tomorrow

so education has to be a continual process throughout the life of your online business.

You only get one first impression with each potential audience member or buyer.

Never forget that people have literally millions of choices online. You only get one first impression and with the amount of competition and options the Internet represents, it is rare that someone is going to come back and give you a second chance.

Continually think about what the experience is like for the person who has landed on your blog or product page for the very first time. Whatever impression you give will probably be the only chance you'll ever get to secure them and build a relationship. The sheer number of choices on the Internet make potential new buyers or readers fickle and impatient. That's just a reality you have to live with. Make sure your first impression is your best impression.

Constantly get feedback from your audience and customers.

There is no one better than your readers or buyers to tell you how you are really doing, and they will. If you ask them directly for

feedback, that is one way to know what they are thinking. You can also know their thoughts about you or your business through statistics, numbers, and measurements.

We can fool ourselves about how we are doing but we can't fool the audience and the customers. Listen closely to them and you will find out what you are doing well, what you need to change, and even what you should completely quit doing.

Do not listen to critics or people who tell you cannot succeed in online business.



I've waited too long. There's too much competition. I gave it a try and it didn't work. I've lost a lot of money and tried everything.

You will hear all sorts of criticism and negativity about doing business online. This is not unique to the new world of Internet business. This kind of naysaying has been going on about all types of businesses throughout history. Ignore these types of people. Ignore people who tell you that you cannot create a business online.

The Internet offers a mind-boggling and unprecedented opportunity to have the entire world as your potential market or audience. I repeat this statement routinely to people: "you only need a microscopic fraction of 1% of the potential number of people on the Internet to buy your product or read your blog for you to be fantastically successful."

The Internet has provided a remarkable opportunity for people like you and me to have our own business and succeed.

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Digital Photography 101

*If you are reading EPIC Book **in the print version**, the interior of this book is in grayscale, not full color. You need to see this section in full color. Email me (brent@brentriggs.com) and I will send you the electronic version so you can see the images and illustrations in full color.*

Dedication

The image on the left was a photo that I turned into a painting of my daughter Abby after her hair grew back following two years of chemo for Leukemia. This section is dedicated to her unflinching spirit and courageous victory over cancer.

What's the point of this section?

One of the best parts of a good blog is great images. For many bloggers that involves actually taking your own photos of kids, projects, food, events or people.

The digital cameras of today are magnificent. No longer is great photography only available to professionals who know all the technical ins and outs of a camera and film. In fact, I would bet that some of you reading this have never even actually seen camera FILM!

While most digital cameras today have an “auto” setting that is pretty decent, educating yourself about a few basics can dramatically improve your photography quality past a mediocre “point and shoot” mentality.

When I first started using cameras seriously I couldn’t find “just the basics” explained anywhere in an easy to understand, non-techno-geeko style, so I wrote my own. All of the obvious personal photos in this section were taken by me and improved using what I will teach you here. I included this section in the EPIC Book for these reasons:

- To explain the basics of digital photography in a way you can actually remember and use.
- To give you what you **really** need to know and leave the rest for the schmucks who love to impress their friends with all that technical mumbo-jumbo.
- To tell you the basics RIGHT NOW so you can start shooting better photos by lunch time... probably amazingly better.
- To help you save money by giving you the skills to do family portraits, senior pictures, baby photos, and event shooting.
- To finally make that digital camera fun, easy to use, and productive - instead of a toy you wish you wouldn't have spent the money on.

What do guitar lessons have to do with digital photography? I thought you'd never ask...

Many years ago, I decided to take guitar lessons and signed up with a local guy who advertised professional instruction. I went to three or four lessons and he showed me all sorts of theory, technical information, and in-depth instruction about the guitar. I learned absolutely nothing.

Then, one of my friends who plays guitar said, "come on over and I'll show you a few things. You'll be playing in no time." After spending a few sessions with him, learning just what I needed to know to start playing simple songs, I was amazed at the difference between the "professional instruction" and "just show me some of the cool stuff I need to know to get started." He said, "here, do this, now do that and practice this little trick". Just like that, I was playing my first song even though I had no idea what the heck minor, diminished, and augmented triads were.



Just knowing some basic cool stuff is never going to make you a professional guitar player, but there is an awful lot you don't have to know just to be able to strum a three-chord country song. The basics of good digital photography are kind of like that... you don't have to be an expert and totally educated in all the professional, technical, and complex topics that can drown you when you first ask the question or type in a Google search for "learn digital photography."

My personal strength as a teacher and writer has always been to take complex and/or broad topics and distill them down to simple and easy-to-understand basics. It is with this gift in mind that I wanted to write a digital photography book.

If You Are a Pro, This Section Is Not for You

If you are a pro, you don't need this book. Let your brother-in-law's wife who just bought her first Canon Rebel read it. In fact, this section may irritate you professionally because you're going to feel that I have oversimplified many things and left even more out. This digital photography overview is Brent Riggs' version of what the beginner enthusiast or casual digital camera owner needs to know to begin taking excellent photos. That's all this section is meant to be, nothing more. Expectations are everything.

The Mission

What you'll find in Digital Photography 101 is everything I wish someone would've told me the day I bought a digital camera. When I first began to self-educate on digital photography, I was buried in a bunch of technical explanations and hard-core professional photography information. If you want to move into the level of "serious amateur on your way to being a professional," then all of that complex technical education is useful. But not for the rest of us...

I want to be the guy who teaches you the cool stuff today that will allow you to shoot incredibly better photos tomorrow. I want to filter out everything you really don't have to know to start producing great images for your blog right now. That is the mission of this book.



Quick Start

If you only want to read one chapter and make your photos a hundred times better, then you're on the right page of the right book. If you are like me, sometimes you just want to get the "super distilled, what really matters, cut to the chase, just tell me what I need to know to start shooting great photos by lunchtime" information, and then get busy trying it out.

If that describes you, you're in luck... here's the quick-start basics:

Tripods

Whenever possible, use a tripod. Camera shakes and vibrations can cause blurring. The difference between soft and blurry images vs. sharp, in-focus photographs are like the difference between hearing me sing in the shower or attending an Andrea Bocelli concert.

If you don't have a tripod, get one. If you're shooting and you cannot use the tripod for whatever reason, learn to hold steady by maintaining a good solid stance and properly gripping the camera. Keeping your camera as still as possible is one of the most important aspects of getting a good, sharp image.

Basic Modes



Today's digital cameras already have preset modes that do a decent job. Learn them. Typically you'll have portrait, landscape, macro, night time, and sports modes. Each of these will have preconfigured settings that will set your camera up for you and give you a decent chance at a good

shot. Learn those modes and use them. The "fully automatic" mode is often adequate when you have good lighting in a typical casual setting. When shooting a specific type of shot, use a basic mode to match (such as portrait mode).

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

Lighting

Avoid using flash if at all possible. Natural diffused light is always the best for photography. Imagine sunlight shining through a sheer curtain hanging over a window. That is diffused light. Outdoors, overcast skies, or shade is always better than the harsh lighting of direct sunlight. If you must

photograph in direct sunlight, have the sunlight shining on the back of your subject.



If you're forced to use a flash, do not point the flash straight at the subject; bounce the light from the flash off the ceiling or another wall.

Good Blur

Most of the time when you hear the word "blur" in the same sentence as "photo," you automatically think BAD! Not so my friend. From now on, "blur" is your buddy.

You know those photos where the background is blurred and the foreground just seems to jump out at you? That's "good blur." The correct term in photography is "bokeh." You'll hear it stated many times in the guide that the aperture value

determines the background blur. Here's a sample of blur, and no blur:



This is my daughter Abby. As of the time of this photo, she is fighting Leukemia, so you'll see photos of her with varying amounts of hair. Notice the blurred background? Good blur!

My daughter Hannah is up in a tree:



No blur in this photo makes the leaves nice and sharp because they are part of the story in this photo.

Bad blur is when you do not hold the camera steady and things that SHOULD be in focus are not.

Focus

Using the correct basic mode on your digital camera will give you a good chance to get the kind of sharp focus you want. If your camera and lenses have autofocus, use it. Position the autofocus points in your viewfinder on an area that has crisp lines and contrast that can be picked up by the camera. On portraits, focus on the subject's eyes and use the largest aperture available to get that nice blur in the background. For macro shooting, use a large depth of field to focus the entire object. When shooting landscapes, use a wide angle lens and a large depth of field.

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

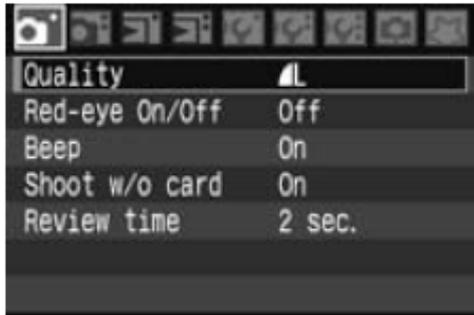
Rule of Thirds

Don't put your subject in the boring center of a boring picture. Put the subject or point of focus off center. I explain this later on.

Format

Many photography books and professionals will tell you that "raw" is the only format you should shoot in. If you are a

professional, get on it. However, for the casual photographer and serious amateur, the quality of the JPEG format is absolutely the perfect setting.



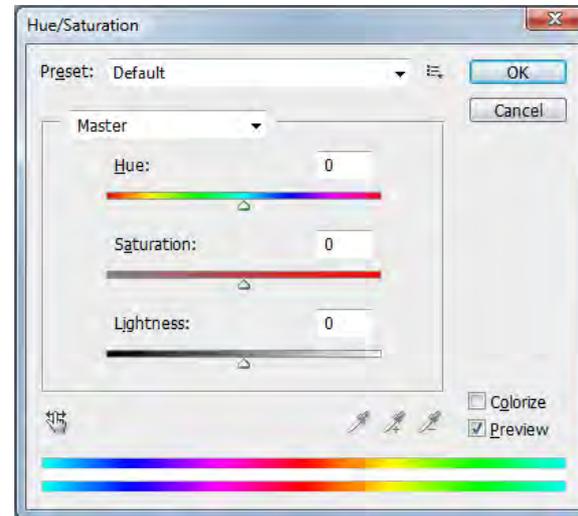
Basic Post Processing

Post processing is just a fancy way of saying "cleanup and polish up your photos in an image editor." There are basic things you can do to almost every photo to improve it. In this quick-start section, I can't go into great detail about each of these four basic tasks. I'll let you know what they are here

Post Processing: opening your photos in image editing software to make improvements.

but you'll need to do some further education to become proficient at them. The reason why I mention them in this quick-start guide is because these four items alone are enough to dramatically improve almost all of your photos:

Cropping your photos means cutting off the parts of your photo that do not add to the quality of the photo. It is a sort of "zooming in" on the most interesting aspects of the photo. By learning to crop your photos, you give the appearance of always having captured the perfect composition and framing of the subject.



Saturation is adjusting the brightness and vibrancy of color. If you de-saturate a photo, you are moving it towards being a grayscale image. If you saturate, it's just the opposite. You are causing the colors to be more rich and intense. Typically you'll want to increase the saturation on your images to help bring them to life. Be careful, as oversaturation looks unnatural and can easily ruin a photo.



That's a COLOR photo...



... and that is a "grayscale" or "black and white" photo.

Levels, or "fill light" as it is called in more basic software, is the ability to control the shadows, mid tones, and highlights of a photograph. It is the overall lightness and darkness of your image. Typically, you will slightly increase the

highlights, lighten the mid tones, and darken the shadows a tiny amount. Not always, but often. By adjusting the levels, you increase the contrast and richness of the image. Software like Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro gives you tools that allow you to independently adjust all three, where more basic software like Picasa gives you one control and the software does the thinking for you.

Sharpening is a filter that gives the appearance of causing your photo to become more focused. Over-sharpening can cause an unnatural graininess whereas proper sharpening can transform a soft image into a spectacularly crisp photo. Except in photos where the blur is on purpose, sharpening is a terrific, and standard, improvement to your photos.

A sharp, in focus image:



A soft, out of focus shot:



The Basics

If you immediately flipped the page and are still reading, then you probably aren't one of those quick-start junkies. You want to learn more before going out for a test drive. The next logical step is to teach you some of the basics about photography. Usually this is where most books venture off into a bunch of complex concepts and you feel like you just

enrolled at some photography school where you could have a pop quiz any minute and the main point of the course is to demonstrate the superior knowledge of the instructor. The good news is, I've kicked the instructor under the bus and taken over the class.

Knowing the basics means consistently getting good shots of your kids and friends.

I'm going to do my best to take the technical issues and put them into plain English and easy-to-understand analogies... and leave out stuff doesn't really matter. I'm going to tell you everything I wish someone would have told me the day I bought my first digital camera.

Remember That You Are Still Under Oath

Before we start with the basics, I need to tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the whole ugly truth about photography: sometimes you have to spend money to get better photos. You can wring out the very best possible shots from your little pocket digital (or even your new Rebel) with the stock lens - but it can only take you so far. Granted, that "so far" can be some pretty decent pictures if you know what you're doing but if you're going to truly move to the next level of photography excellence, at some point you're just going to have to spend some money - particularly on lenses and lighting.

I just want to plant that seed in your mind so that it doesn't come as a huge shock when it finally dawns on you that you



can't take world-class photos with \$267 worth of photography equipment and Windows Photo Gallery.

With that said, let's move on to the basics I wish someone would've taught me when I got my first digital camera.

Tripods

When at all possible, shoot on a tripod. No matter how hard you try, you simply cannot hold your camera as steady as a tripod can UNLESS you buy a piece-of-junk tripod. Skimping

on a tripod is almost as much a waste of time as deciding you don't need one at all.

There's nothing quite like the feeling of watching the leg of your tripod collapse and seeing your camera falling to the ground. Or the irritation of having your camera slowly lean to one side because the top of your tripod does not have sturdy controls. If you have a heavy lens, a low-quality tripod will often result in your camera sinking forward and you'll get some nice shots of the ground or people's feet.

Get a decent tripod, preferably one with a ball mount, and whenever possible, USE IT. Here's a link to the tripod I use:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001Q206EQ/ref=oss_T15_product

Flash

There is one basic rule about using flash. Now, try to follow me here because this gets pretty technical and there are a wide variety of interpretations. Ready? Don't.

Try as hard as you can to avoid using your flash. It throws harsh, washed out light onto your subject; and, except in cases where you're trying to blind a potential mugger, keep your flash put away or turned off.

When there are situations that call for the flash, learn to use the light indirectly, diffused, or as a fill to light up dark shadows. I'll explain those things here and there throughout this book as it applies to different parts of photography. It is appropriate to tell you here that your built-in pop-up flash is even more of a satanic manifestation than a mounted flash. Do yourself a favor and get a decent mounted external flash that works automatically with your camera model (of course I'm talking about those of you who own DSLR's, not pocket digitals; a DSLR is one of those "real" cameras that have changeable lenses and look like the old film cameras. DSLR stands for Digital Single Lens Reflex camera if you want to sound really smart and impress your friends). To be on the safe side, get a flash from the same manufacturer as your camera body. For example, I have a Canon 40D and so I purchased a Canon Speed Light flash so I would never have to worry about it working correctly with my camera.



To be safe, or when in doubt, avoid using your flash. Learn the other techniques for increasing the amount of light (exposure) to help you avoid the flash of death on your images.

If you MUST use a flash, point it up and bounce it off the ceiling or a wall.

Exposure: the amount of light your camera sensor receives given the other settings.

Lenses

If you have a pocket digital, you don't have to worry about lenses. They make it simple by slapping one in there for you and that's what you're stuck with. More and more people, however, own DSLR's because the prices are dropping as fast as the quality is rising. A DSLR typically comes with a standard decent lens. The stock lens is usually just enough quality to start you on the salivating process for one of the remarkable lenses that are available today. Nikon and Canon are two of the more popular brands and both offer a dazzling selection of high-quality lenses, and I should warn you: an addicting selection of lenses.

Camera lenses are definitely the area where spending some money pays off. It's just a fact that buying a couple of higher quality lenses will result in an exponential increase in the quality of your photography especially in lowlight or zoom-action situations.



For this basics section, know this about lenses: a zoom lens allows you to bring a faraway subject closer to you. A macro lens allows you to take close-up shots of typically small objects. A wide-angle lens allows you to shoot things like landscapes. I will give you more information and recommendations on lenses later in the book.

Camera Settings

Remember, this is the basics section. I'm not going to explain each of these settings at this point but I want you to be aware of which settings you should be interested in as you learn more about photography. They are ISO (this refers to the camera sensor's sensitivity to light), white balance (the camera stability to adjust to the lighting which might be

tinted blue or yellow, or could be dull and gray), exposure (how much light to allow into the camera), aperture (the size of the opening of the lens which allows you to control how sharp or blurry parts of the image are at varying distances known as "depth of field") and shutter speed (how fast the camera opens and closes the shutter). These are the most common settings you want to learn.

Lighting

There are two sources of lighting: natural and artificial. Whenever possible, natural light is always preferable to artificial light from flashes and lighting equipment. As an amateur photographer, always look for sources of natural light that are also diffused. The best way to explain diffusion is with the curtain in the window analogy I mentioned in the quick-start section - imagine rays of sunlight shining into a window through a sheer white curtain.

You end up with a soft, gentle light resulting in smooth color and tones - rather than harsh shadows and washed out highlights. As a photographer, you are always looking for a source of natural diffused light which could literally be through a curtain in a window or an overcast sky (clouds are one of nature's best diffusers) or sunlight reflected off a wall or other surface.

When natural light is not available, learn to diffuse the light from your flash or lighting equipment using soft boxes, reflectors, or material. More on that later in the tips section.

Focus First Then Frame

Point your camera at the object you want in sharp focus. Push your shutter button halfway down. You should see some indication that your camera has attempted to focus on the object.

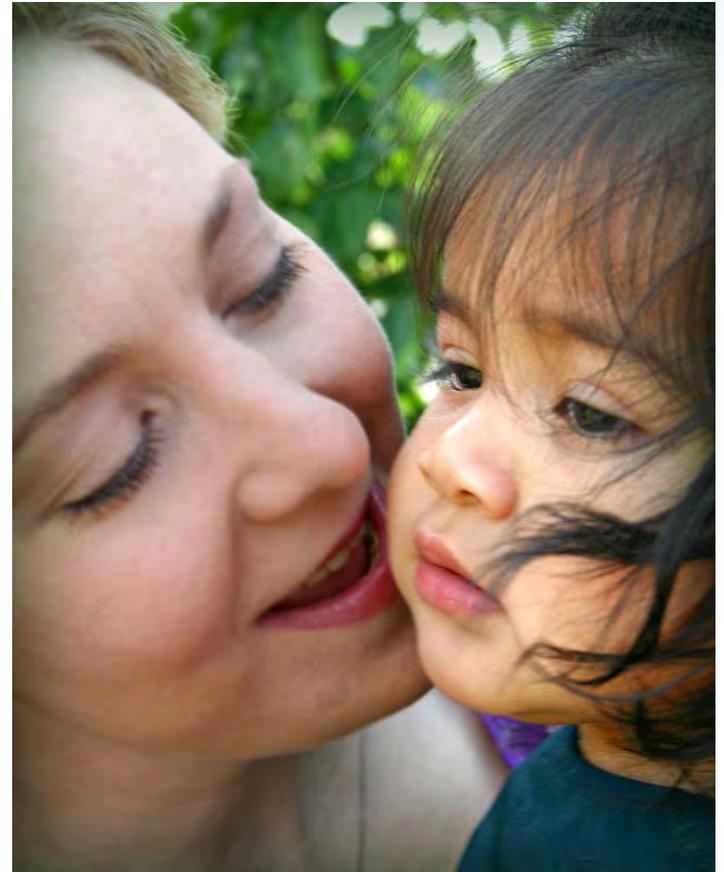
Without lifting your finger, you can now move your camera lens and frame (or compose) the photo however you want (for example, move the subject over to the side of the image).

Learn to focus first, then frame, EVERY time you take a shot.

Other

In the quick-start section, I talked about basic post processing and cropping. They are in the quick-start section because they are obviously basics. Refer back to the quick-start guide if you need to refresh your memory, or hang on and I'll talk more about them in detail later in the book. I mentioned them here just to re-emphasize that cropping and simple post processing are basic skills you want to learn.

Post Processing: opening your photos in image-editing software to make improvements.



My beautiful bride and Abby on Easter Sunday out in the front yard.

Tools, Examples, and Demonstrations

Sharpening

Sharpening is a filter found in most image-editing software that allows you to increase the perceived focus of an image. Over-sharpening can cause a grainy, noisy effect; but, in general, sharpening can improve the quality of almost all of your images.



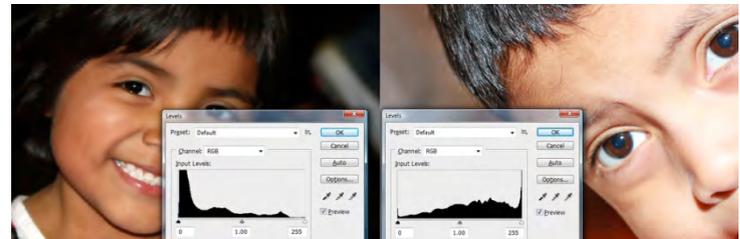
Saturation

Saturation is the function that allows you to increase or decrease the intensity and vibrancy of the color in your images. Properly used, saturation can bring an image to life. Improperly or overused, it can make your photos look unnatural and have some really strange color.



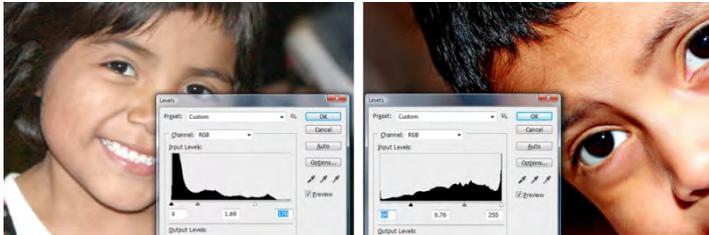
Levels or Fill Light

As I've already explained, "levels" is the ability to control the shadows, mid tones, and highlights of your photos. In conjunction with histograms (which give you a visual indication of the values of the tones in your image), levels can help you dramatically improve your photos. The closest you will get to this in more basic image-editing software is usually called "fill light" or "contrast."



In the left picture, the histogram shows most of the data over on the left side. The left control is shadows, the center is mid tones, and the right is highlights. You can see the right photo is more balanced but still leans towards being light.

I've exaggerated the adjustments, but notice how I've moved the controls and changed the image (the controls are the little triangle sliders below the graph):



The left image has light mid tones and exaggerated highlights. The right image has exaggerated shadows and the mid tones are darker. You have individual control over all three tonal areas. For typical pictures, ones that are not mostly light or mostly dark by design, you're looking for a bell curve histogram which indicates a balanced photo:



Cropping

Cropping is one of the most important skills you will use. Cropping allows you to focus on the parts of your photo that are truly interesting. Skillful cropping can take a boring average photo and turn it into a dramatic image. The best way to teach you cropping is to show you several examples of cropping and explain why I cropped each picture the way I did.



The photo on the left is about the impact of the collision. After cropping on the right, the photo is now about the expressions on their faces.



The left photo is a typical photo and doesn't really draw attention to anything special. After cropping, the photo

becomes a personal interaction between Jasmine and Landis (my youngest son). Abby (my daughter on the left side) is really not adding anything interesting to this shot and the dark piece of furniture on the right is just a distraction. Cropping fixes all of that.

Step Out Of That Photo

A favorite technique I've used over the years and perfected is making a photo look like it is coming out of its borders. I first started doing this for **High School Sports Magazine**, a magazine I helped create and it really set us apart from other magazines. Particularly with sports photography, this technique brings the action to life. I now use it quite often for photographs of children because it really adds a very special interest to the overall composition. The best way to explain the technique is to simply show you step-by-step how to do one.

Here is the original photo. Look for nice edges and objects that can protrude from the edges of the photo such as the ears and paw of the blue dude in this shot.



Draw guides where you want the final edge of the photo. You can now see what I plan to make protrude.

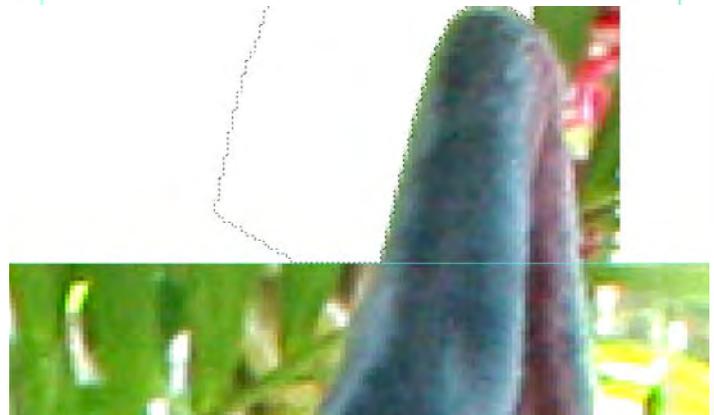
That's my daughter Hannah at Disney world when we went on a Make-A-Wish trip for Abby.



Next, remove the large areas outside the photo frame except for the parts I want to show. Just delete the big chunks of image that you can easily select without touching the parts that will remain and “protrude” from the image.

Then, zoom in and use your selection tools to carefully select and delete the background around the protrusions leaving those areas with an appearance that they are “sticking out” of the photo. Cool, huh?

Protrusions really bring photos to life and they are FUN to do!





Visine Takes the Red out

Cameras often cause "red eye." The flash of a camera shoots light into the pupil of the eye before it has a chance to dilate, thus reflecting the color of red back to the camera.

A lot of modern cameras have a red-eye feature that will fire off a burst of light before the actual shot - giving the eye a chance to dilate. Most image-editing software has a red-eye feature where you simply click the tool, select the red eye, and like magic, it's gone.



Brush Those Teeth Virtually

No matter how white teeth may appear to the human eye, most people have a slightly yellow tint or stains unless they've been to the fancy teeth-whitening doctor.

This is especially useful as we get older. Our teeth have been around a little longer and are not bright white any more (unless they are put in a glass every night).

In your image-editing software, use the selection, saturation, and levels to remove the yellow tint and even brighten their teeth for them (and they will love you for it).

Tips, Tricks, and Suggestions for Taking Great Photographs

We finally made it to the section of the book that is always the fun part. Now, I'm just going to rattle off a bunch of random stuff about improving your photography skills. I've put them in logical groups, but other than that there's really no rhyme or reason to the order. It's just a list of tips and suggestions which have helped me. I wish someone would have told me these tips when I first got my camera.

General Photography Tips

Framing the Picture

There two ways to look at the composition and framing of your photos. First, framing is what you see in your camera's viewfinder or on the LCD monitor right before you're about to take a shot. You can choose framing where the subject basically fills the entire frame, which might be a close-up of a portrait or a vast landscape.

Or, you can choose to have the subject take up a small portion of the frame, allowing the background to provide context and

interest in the story, complimenting the subject. As you consider a shot, determine if the background is important to the overall composition and frame appropriately.



This framing leaves a lot of distracting, uninteresting background.

My daughter Abby is on the beach along with shoes, chairs, trash... all sorts of things that keep you from looking at the subject of the photo, her playing in the sand.



Framing puts the viewer's attention on what is important.

Different Perspectives

Most people shoot their photographs from a boring, straight-on-eye-level perspective. Yawn...

Get creative and change your perspective. Shoot from low to high. Bend down, squat down, or lie down and shoot up at your subject. Find a high spot and shoot down at your subject. Shoot at an angle or shoot from a non-standard side of the subject. There really no rules - the point is to get you to be creative and take shots which are not the same old boring snapshots you've seen a million times.

Timing

The best time to shoot landscapes is 30 minutes to one hour before or after sunset and dawn. The best time to shoot people, wildlife, or plant life outdoors is on an overcast day with soft diffused sunlight. The best time to shoot sports (if you have average camera equipment) is during the daylight hours because you need a lot of light when you're using fast

Shutter speed: how quickly the lens opens and closes in order freeze action or allow different amounts of light to enter.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

shutter speeds. With sports photography, timing is also important with respect to getting the right shot at the right moment... the touchdown, the chest bump, the slide into home plate, or the sand flying out of the trap on the golf course.

Backgrounds

Consider the background of each shot. If the background does not create interest in visual appeal, then frame the picture in such a way as to limit the background, or use your aperture setting to blur the background. Examine your background and remove distracting objects, colors, or textures that will draw attention away from your subject. Consider solid-color

backgrounds such as white or black to provide greater contrast.

On a practical note, background blur can hide the fact that you have not prepared a perfect photo setting... that's a nice way of saying that your house might need to be cleaned or the bushes need trimmed. Background blur can hide a multitude of transgressions.

Camera Orientation

There are three orientations you can shoot from: landscape for wide; portrait for tall; or having your camera tilted a little to the left or right to make the subject appear at an angle in the photograph.

Each of these three can bring an interesting framing to any type of shot, so learn to consider all three no matter what the subject. You'll see that the photos in this book demonstrate all landscape, portrait, and angles shots.



Landscape – My Dad, son Dane and twin brother, Bruce



Angled – Spidey Landis adoring some chocolate



Portrait – my beloved grandmother

Flash Diffusers

A flash diffuser can be a plastic cover that cups over your mounted flash, or it could be a soft box that has white material diffusing the continuous lighting from a light stand.



A diffuser helps keep flashes or continuous light from being harsh and washing out your image. You can buy equipment and accessories to diffuse light or use things from your surroundings like curtains, sheets, a T-shirt, or even a piece of poster board. To do this, let light either pass through these objects or bounce off them. The point is to not let direct light hit your subject.

Flash really washes out the color in portraits. Put a diffuser on the end of your flash and learn to point your flash away from the subject and bounce light off the ceiling or wall. There is

rarely a time pointing a flash directly at your subject is a good idea except in harsh sunlight where you're using the flash to light up the dark areas caused by the sun.

Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds is a great way to instantly increase the quality of your composition. Imagine your viewfinder with a tic-tac-toe grid on it. You have three across and three down. Each spot that two lines cross in the tic-tac-toe grid is an ideal place to place the center of your subject.



You'll notice what this does in essence is keep you from shooting your subject dead center (which is boring beyond belief). By placing the subject on one of the intersections which is one third of the way from any edge, you open up the background and create visual appeal by avoiding the boredom of a centered shot.

When doing the Rule of Thirds, it becomes critical to "focus then frame" as described on page 149. Otherwise, you might be focused on the center of your composition, while the subject you've moved over to a "third" is now soft and out of focus.

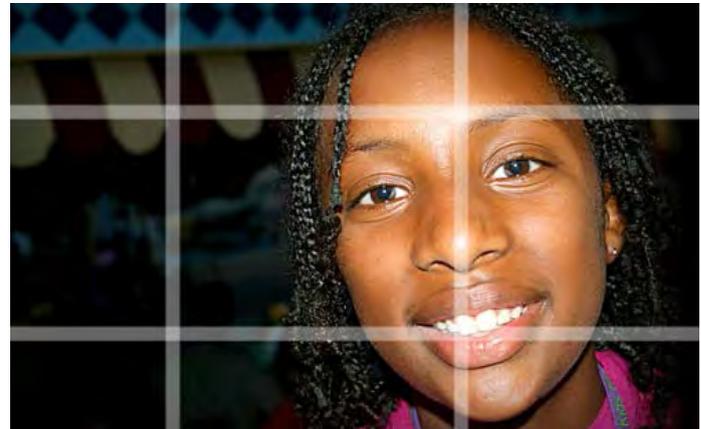
Simply put, do this:

1. Point the camera directly at the subject
2. Hold down your shutter button half way and let your camera auto focus
3. Without lifting your finger, move the subject to a "rule of thirds" position
4. Now finish pressing the shutter button to take the photo

Focus in the center first by pressing the shutter button half way down:



Then move the subject over without releasing the shutter button:



Jumping Jack Flash

Never point your flash directly at your subject unless you are using it as a fill light on purpose. A fill light is used to counteract harsh shadows typically caused by direct sunlight. Let me explain... Even though your scene may be brightly lit, the sun can cause harsh shadows and you might need to use your flash to expose those dark-shadow areas.

When you're using your flash, point it towards the ceiling or a side wall and bounce light off another surface. This helps to diffuse the flash of artificial light and make it softer.

Photo Bursts

Most cameras have the ability to do what is known as "continuous shooting." With continuous shooting, your camera will fire off a multiple burst of pictures. By doing this in sports photography, you increase your chance of getting that great shot at just the right moment. By doing this for portraits or groups, you increase your chance to get just the right facial expression or an entire group with no goofy looks.

Close-ups

Don't be afraid to get close to your subject, whether it is inanimate or a person. Close-ups make for some of the most dramatic and intimate photographs.

Tips for Portrait Photography

Backgrounds

When shooting portraits, quite often you want that nice blur in the background. This allows the subject of the portrait to really stand out in the photo. If there are objects or interesting context in the background that helps tell the story of the subject, then you may want to go ahead and include the background in focus. Remember that the way to control the border in the background is by using the aperture setting which increases or decreases the depth of field.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

Camera Rotation

Use all three angles of your camera for more interesting portraits: landscape (horizontal or wide), portrait (tall or vertical), or slightly angled. By varying the rotation of your camera lens in relation to the horizon, you can add interest to otherwise plain portraits.



Lighting, Lighting, and More Lighting

For portraits, the best kind of light is diffused natural light. Search out natural sunlight that is diffused (such as when it passes through window curtain or bounces off the side of a building). The clouds on an overcast day are an almost-perfect source of diffused light. If there are no clouds, find some shade; shade will always result in much better pictures than direct sunlight. If you're stuck shooting in open sunlight, try having the sunlight shine on the back of your subject.

Closer Is Better

When photographing couples, closer is always better. It is more intimate, more personal, and more interesting. Closeness represents relationship and togetherness. When photographing couples (or people who are related to each other in some way), be creative about getting them closer together, especially their faces.



Spotty Light

Avoid what is known as “spotty” or “dappled” lighting. The best way to describe this is the crazy shadows you get when sunlight passes through a tree with leaves on it. You end up with this mass of bright light and shadow that almost always makes your subject look strange. An exception to this rule

would be something like the light shining through a window frame. Have the shadows of the window frame fall onto the subject, making it interesting, not confusing.

Shoulders

You rarely want to photograph a portrait subject with the shoulders turned squarely towards you. It is unflattering and boring. Have them turn their shoulders at an angle. Try having them drop their front shoulder and leaned towards you slightly. Or have them turn where their back shows to the camera and they are looking over their shoulder at you. Be creative and remember that pretty much any pose (except the straight-on square-shouldered pose) can be interesting.

Chins

Many of your subjects will be blessed with more than one chin. You can help keep this from being over emphasized in your photos by having them lean slightly towards you and raise their head up; which, in effect, turns those three chins into two or hopefully one.

Use a Shallow Depth of Field

Hopefully you recall that controlling the aperture setting allows you to determine the depth of field - which is a fancy way of saying "how blurry is the background going to be?" With portraits, that nice blurry background allows the subject of the portrait to really stand out in the image.

The background blur does not always have to be what is behind the subject. Sometimes it can be a blur that occurs even before the back of the subject is reached. In other words, you might have such a small depth of field doing a close-up shot of a face that the eyes, nose, and mouth appear in sharp focus, but by the time you get to the ears and the hair the image has begun to blur.

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

The Eyes Have It

When shooting portraits, there is rarely an occasion where you will not focus on the eyes and make them as sharp as possible.

The eyes are known as "the window to the soul" for a reason and living by this rule will always keep you in safe territory during portrait shots.



Just Say No to Bubble Heads

When you shoot in shorter ranges or with wide-angle lenses, you risk a portrait subject appearing distorted. The best way I can describe this to you is to get you to imagine how someone looks when you look through the peep hole of your front door. That is an exaggeration but it helps to understand what I'm talking about.

By shooting at 70 mm or higher, your portrait subject is far enough away from the lens to avoid even the slightest fisheye effect, which could make their nose, eyes, or foreheads appear unnaturally oversized. This is particularly important when shooting precious ladies who are especially mortified when you use a camera to blow up the size of their nose.

High Plains Drifter

One of my favorite sets of photography equipment is my "cowboy studio." It is a lightweight, compact couple of bags that have backgrounds, a frame to hang them on, light stands, and soft boxes. You can buy the whole thing in an inexpensive kit (compared to typical professional studio equipment prices). Here's a link:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002VIJ334/ref=oss_T15_product

Wild People

Treat wildlife like people. Focus on the eyes, zoom in, and experiment with close-ups in different depth of field (blurred

backgrounds). With most wildlife shots, like people, it will be the head and face of the animal that will be of greatest interest.

The zoom lens is almost a requirement because most wildlife, of course, are not going to allow you to walk up and ask them to pose. If the wildlife is running or moving, you'll also want to use fast shutter speeds to freeze the action (but don't forget to play around with motion blur and slower shutter speeds to

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

Shutter speed: how quickly the lens opens and closes in order freeze action or allow different amounts of light to enter.

give that feeling of action).

Zoom for More Realism

When shooting people, consider using a good zoom lens so that you can shoot them from a distance. This is typically useful in candid settings when your subjects are not posing. If they don't know you are taking their picture, they are more likely to have a natural expression and be doing something that is a more interesting human experience.

Stealth Shots

You don't always have to hold up your camera to your eye and announce you are taking a picture. Often, I will walk around with the lens cap removed from my camera - kind of holding it in front of my stomach or at my side as if I'm not taking any pictures. Then, I will secretly be snapping pictures, trying to catch situations and expressions that are not hindered by the conscious presence of a camera.



Another trick is to have the camera sitting on a table or your lap (as if you are not using it) and have it pointed in the general direction of something interesting. You can hide a wireless remote in your pocket and fire off shots without anyone knowing you are taking photos.

You are not doing this in the sense of being a private detective or a spy. Stealth shots are to help you capture people and

situations that are unaffected by the change in their demeanor once they realize the camera is being pointed at them.

Group Shot Tricks



When you're shooting groups of people, don't use the common "okay folks, on three, smile and I'll snap the picture." This always ends up in fake expressions and forced smiles. A better technique is: first, always be smiling yourself. As you're setting up the shot, if you are smiling and in a good mood, you get other people to naturally begin to smile and be in a good mood.

Second, when you're ready to take the shot, have everyone close their eyes and say to them "I'm going to count down from three and everyone open your eyes... three, two, one, open." This will help you avoid the dreaded "at least one

person has their eyes closed or halfway closed" that plagues group photos and will also assist you in getting more natural-looking expressions on their face. Using your smile, good mood, and this trick, you'll be able to get much better group photos more often.

Use Shortening

No I'm not talking about a recipe for cookies. I'm talking about a technical term called foreshortening. The easiest way to explain this is to demonstrate.

Have someone stand in front of you, and hold out their hand straight towards your face. At this point, visually their arm appears to be very short and narrow. This is because by pointing their hand at you instead of parallel to the horizon, you have shortened the distance between their shoulder and the end of their hand in your eyes.

When you do a group photo, the tendency is to spread everyone out left to right along the horizon line, making the photo wider and wider. We try to remedy this by squeezing everyone closer together. A visually creative way to remedy this and make the photo less wide-angle is to move your camera position where you're looking more "down the line" rather than simply side to side.



You'll notice the last photo (college folks in green shirts) is simply a left to right, side-to-side arrangement of the group. In this picture (the family sitting on the couch) you still have left to right but there's also front to back by moving your camera angle to the side, effectively narrowing the width of the picture and adding visual interest.

Burst Those Groups

Use your burst mode or continuous shooting when photographing groups to increase your chances of getting a photo where everyone is actually smiling, looking up, and devoid of silly expressions. The more people in a group, the more chance you have of one person ruining the shot - so bursts of pictures give you more choices.

Another trick I use to correct this problem is opening multiple pictures in Photoshop and taking a good face from one photo and merging it onto another photo where the same face has one of those awkward expressions. You can often do this successfully; because, in group shots, the orientation of the face does not change much.

Depth of Field for Groups

Set your aperture for a large depth of field when shooting groups so that everyone in the group remains sharp and in focus.

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

Give Me Some Props

Those posing for portraits are often uncomfortable because they don't know what to do with their hands or feel awkward just sitting or standing there all by themselves. Consider giving them a prop, something to do, something to hold, or something to engage them.

This will help them relax and make them more natural in their expression.

Distraction

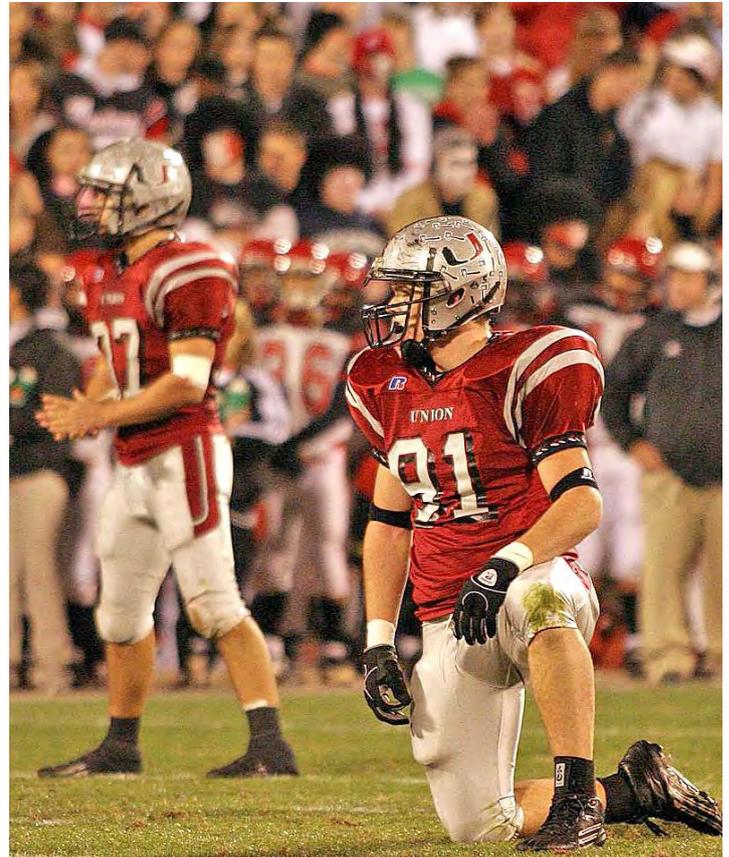
Use your personality, humor, and general good nature (be sure to get one if you don't have that yet) to make your portrait subjects feel comfortable and relaxed. By talking to them about things that are not related to the photo shoot, you'll get them to be less self-conscious and more natural in their expression and posture.

Before the Pose

Under the guise of "I'm just getting my camera set up right," take a bunch of photos before the actual posing begins. You'll often find that these shots are much more natural and interesting than the posed ones.

Real-Life Portraits

Shoot portraits of people living their "real life" as opposed to posed studio portraits. This is my favorite type of photography and I find the level of human interest to be much greater in these candid shots (than when people are posing).



A shot I took of my son Dane playing in the state championship in front of 20,000 people. Yes, I'm proud of him.

Tips for Sports and Action Photography

Can I Just Say One Word: Zoom

When shooting sports or action, it is often impossible to be close to the subject. A good zoom lens is a requirement for any type of success in sports photography.

Can I Just Say Another Word: Shutter Speed

Okay that's two words, and put together with zoom they are the three most important words in sports photography. You must have fast shutter speeds to freeze the action in sports unless you purposely want motion blur to convey movement. Typically 1/640 shutter speed setting is adequate to freeze-frame most types of sports.

To the right is a shot I took of my nephew, Robert (short hair, right side of photo) the moment after scoring a goal. If I would have had the shutter speed wrong, I would have missed this fantastic celebration.

If you're still experiencing blur at that shutter speed, try increasing it but remember: the faster the shutter speed, the less amount of light is allowed to enter through the camera lens and your photos will tend to be underexposed. At that point, if the higher shutter speeds are required, you want to



Shutter speed: how quickly the lens opens and closes in order freeze action or allow different amounts of light to enter.

begin to adjust your ISO setting and f-stops to allow more light into the image.

That Awful Stadium Lighting

When you are at a sports stadium at night, no matter how bright it may appear to your human eyes, I can assure you that it is a lowlight situation for your camera. Even the bright lights of a professional athletics stadium are poor lighting for a camera. You can imagine how horrible the lighting is at a typical high school stadium.

When I used to shoot for a high school sports magazine I created, the biggest challenge was always getting well lit photos in poorly lit stadiums (which was every stadium, no exceptions). So what's a guy to do?

First, shoot "wide-open" which is photographer slang for setting your camera to the lowest aperture your lens will allow. Remember that the lower the aperture the larger the lens opening. The larger the lens opening, the more light that is allowed to pass through the lens.

Second, shoot at the highest possible ISO. Keep in mind that higher ISO settings may cause your photos to have that grainy

Exposure: the amount of light your camera sensor receives given the other settings.

ISO: controlling how sensitive your camera sensor is to light. More sensitive, more grainy "noise".

effect known as "noise." That's the bad news. The good news is that digital cameras are getting so good today that you can shoot at high ISO settings with very little noise. The higher the ISO setting, the more sensitive to light your camera sensor will be, helping you have greater exposure in lowlight situations.

Third, open up your wallet and buy a decent lens. You're not going to take your out-of-the-box f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens to a nighttime athletic event and get good shots. You need to invest in a decent lens with at least an f/2.8 or f/2.4 aperture capability. No, they are not cheap but they are worth every penny if you're serious about taking good photos in lowlight environments.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

Shutter speed: how quickly the lens opens and closes in order freeze action or allow different amounts of light to enter.

Finally, get a lens with image stabilization. Image stabilization helps correct the shaking that occurs during typical sports photography as you handhold the camera or use a monopod (a monopod is a tripod with one leg). Image stabilization will allow you to decrease the shutter speed slightly (allowing more light to enter) while avoiding the blur that can occur at lower shutter speeds.

Know the Right Spot

In sports, being at the right place at the right time is the difference between getting the same average shots everyone else gets, and getting that one remarkable, perfect photo. If you know your sport, then you'll have a better idea of where to position yourself at the right time to get that exceptional image.



It might be in the end zone during a football game, behind first base in a baseball game, or at the far end of a balance beam at a gymnastics meet. Remember to shoot in continuous-burst mode when the moment occurs to give you the best chance of getting a shot at the exact moment you are looking for.

Machine-Gun Photography

Put your camera in continuous-burst mode. Memory cards are cheap. So don't be afraid to rattle off lots of bursts of pictures when shooting a sporting event. With all of the action, it is almost impossible to take that great picture when firing off one snap at a time. By taking a stream of six or eight or even a dozen photos for every "moment" you are capturing, you dramatically increase the chance that you are going to get that perfect shot at the perfect instance.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

More Aperture

In sporting events, there are typically a lot of busy and distracting backgrounds. You've got people walking around, seats full of folks doing everything from picking their nose to falling asleep, and completely shot-ruining objects like fences and parking lots full of cars. By increasing the aperture on your lens (Pop quiz: you should know what this does by now... it allows you to control the blur in the background) you can blur out the backgrounds that will otherwise either ruin your photo or (at best) cause a distraction.

A blurry background in your picture causes the subject to stand out. It is more dramatic, and also has the side benefit of allowing more light to pass through the camera, which helps in lowlight nighttime sports shooting.

Tips for Shooting Landscapes



Timing Is Everything

The best time to shoot landscapes is 30 minutes to an hour before or after the sun rises or sets. That is one wordy way to say "dusk or dawn."

The light during this time is rich, soft, and defused. Add that to some nice clouds and you have the makings of a coffee-

table book cover. Any other time of the day, barring the absence of an overcast sky, you are going to have to deal with harsh direct sunlight. You can get some pretty decent photos (even in bright sunlight) but they are not nearly as brilliant as those taken in the light of dusk or dawn.



No Tripod, Don't Bother

The farther away something is, the more camera shake will affect focus (camera shake is anything that causes your camera to be less than perfectly "sitting still"; this can be from your hands or body moving, to your finger pushing down the shutter button).

Shutter speed: how quickly the lens opens and closes in order freeze action or allow different amounts of light to enter.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera. See page 182



When you're shooting landscapes, it is very easy to get soft blurred images by the slightest bit of vibration or shake. Use a tripod to shoot landscapes, and even better, put a remote switch on your camera so that you don't have to touch your camera at all to take the photo.

A remote switch connects to your camera either wireless or with a cord and allows you to take the photo without having to press the shutter button with your finger, which often causes camera shake.

At dusk or dawn, you are dealing with a lowlight situation and the need to decrease the shutter speed. You will also shoot landscapes with a smaller aperture because you want a large depth of field, and you do NOT want blur anywhere in the photo (a general rule; you sometimes want blur, but it's on purpose).

The lowlight, slow shutter speeds, and small apertures will all conspire to give you underexposed photos, making a tripod even more of a necessity.

Wide-Angle

Use wide-angle lenses to capture the dramatic breadth of landscapes. Lenses from 10mm to 70mm are great for landscapes. Don't be afraid to experiment with a zoom lens on occasion, just to be creative.

Panoramas

You can shoot a series of overlapping shots from left to right and use software to create an amazing panoramic view - which a single frame from your camera is incapable of capturing. Above is the example of a panorama that I took of

the Teton Mountains; this panorama stitches together a dozen photographs into one. Actually, the real photo is much wider than this example.

Many cameras come with software that will automatically help you create a panorama from individual photos. Photoshop also has this capability. If you do not own software that has a panorama tool, then Google it. There's plenty.

Tips for Shooting Macros

Macro is a fancy photographer's term for shooting close-ups of small objects like bugs, flowers, or small products. The primary and most useful tip I can give you for shooting macros is to get a macro lens.

There are different ways to light macro scenes and if you are going to specialize in macro shooting, I suggest you get a book dedicated to it. I'm not going to spend a lot of time in this book talking about macros because it is more of a specialty type of photography that most people do not get into.

However, everyone with a camera takes the occasional shot of a flower or a bug so here are a couple of tips along those lines.



Flowers

The best time to shoot close-ups of flowers is on an overcast day so you will have soft diffused sunlight. You know all those scenic, beautiful shots of flowers with raindrops on them?

Chances are those are raindrops were water bottle drops. Take a water bottle with you and spray a mist onto the flowers you are photographing for that beautiful "dew in the morning" effect.



Avoid taking all your shots looking down onto the flowers. Get down on the ground, lay down on your stomach, then down on one knee... whatever it takes to get down low and take shots at different angles.

Experiment with putting backgrounds behind the flowers. Take some sheets of white or black poster board and put them behind the flowers before you take the shot.

As a general rule, use a high aperture for an increased depth of field so that the flowers are sharp and in focus from front to back. You might want the other flowers that are receding into the background to become blurred, so play around with different aperture settings to get the look you want.

Depth of Field: how far you can move away from the object being focused on before blur begins.

Post Processing: opening your photos in image editing software to make improvements.

After the Shot - Post Processing & Image Editing

It is quite beyond the scope of this book to discuss all the different types of image-editing software. Here is a quick description of three popular and widely available programs:



Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is the king daddy, top dog, professional-level image-editing software. Yes, it is expensive but over the long-term is worth every penny. If you are a student, you should check into educational pricing. Because it is a professional-level piece of software, you do have to spend some time educating yourself, but I can tell you honestly it's really not that hard to learn a handful of basic tools - the ones you will most often use. Add that to a bottomless well of filters and plug-ins that are available and you can be an image-editing pro in no time.

Picasa

Picasa is a free photo organizer tool that is available from Google. It also has some pretty decent but very basic image-editing tools. They are adequate enough for the casual user to make significant improvements to average photos.

Windows Live Photo Gallery

Windows Live Photo Gallery is part of the Windows operating system. Like Picasa, it is primarily a photo organizing tool but also contains a decent set of color correction and image-improvement features.



If you want more full-featured image-editing capability but are not ready to spring big bucks for Photoshop, check out programs like Photoshop Elements, Paint Shop Pro, Photo Studio, and Paint.net. For a budget price, you can get a nice set of features that will allow you to accomplish most basic post-processing tasks.

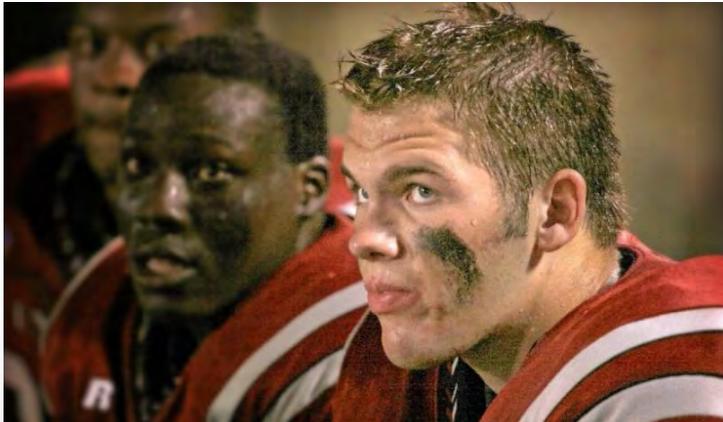
Here is a list of free or low-budget programs you might want to investigate: Paint Shop Pro, Paint.net, GIMP, Corel Photo Paint, and Apple Macintosh software, Photoshop Elements (PC too), ColorIt!, PhotoStudio, Acorn, and Pixelmator.

After you're finished with the photography session, it's time to open up the image editor and start having fun. I have mentioned many of the concepts and topics already in this book, but I'm going to explain and demonstrate them further at this point. The best way to teach you most of this is simply to show you examples. As I show you these examples, I will

tell you which tool I'm using and what I'm doing; but, it is beyond this book to do step-by-step instructions such as "click here, move this, now click over here and change this number." You will need to refer to your software and its help files to learn more about how that particular tool works in the software that you want. I can tell you that if you invest a little bit of time learning the basic tools; 1) they aren't hard to learn, and 2) you'll be glad you invested the effort.

Time to Print

Once you have taken a photo and then edited your image, you are either going to output it electronically or physically print it on photo paper. Here are some general tips from my experience:



Printers - while there are many printers that do a good job outputting photos, there really is only one best printer for home use and that is Epson photo printers. Besides having superior quality and speed, Epson printers also come with individual ink cartridges for each color; this is much more economical than replacing all the colors every time one of them runs dry. It is hard to go wrong with any Epson photo printer.

Do yourself a favor, and spend a little more upfront to buy a large-format printer (up to 11 x 17 or 13 x 19). Once you get the printing sickness, a letter-sized printer will leave you wanting. Make sure you download and install the proper color profile for your printer. Refer to the printer help files for more information about color profiles.

Along with Epson printers, your safest bet is to also use Epson premium photo papers. There are other brands that print quite well on Epson equipment, but make sure you confirm that the paper is compatible with Epson Photo Stylus printers before you spend the money.

Buy an assortment of paper sizes so that you do not end up wasting paper. Typical sizes are: 4 x 6, 8.5 x 11, 11 x 14, 11 x 17, and 13 x 19. Having a box of each of these sizes on hand gives you a lot of flexibility and helps you avoid printing a small picture on a large sheet of paper and having to trim off the waste.

Other Fun Ideas - Photo Books, Online Albums

Instead of an entire shelf of photo albums, compile your photos into a full-color book and use a service like www.lulu.com to print a few copies. I have printed several "photo books," and I can tell you from personal experience, it is really nice to have all of my family and event photo archives available in a printed book and not just in a photo album or on a computer disk.

For example, we went on a two-week Make a Wish trip and I published all of the blog posts and photos in a full-color book. So now we have that memory and event forever immortalized in a nice book that we were able to produce multiple copies and give to other people.

It is also very common to put photos up online in a web-based album. You can use automated photo album tools in software like Picasa or at services like Flickr. If you want more control and choices for photo album themes, my favorite software is JAlbum.com. It is easy to use and offers a very wide range of features, styles, and options for displaying and even selling your photographs.



All That Technical Mumbo Jumbo In Plain English

One nice thing about today's digital cameras is that you do not have to be a technical genius to be a photographer.

That statement makes a whole lot of professionals mad because we amateurs are encroaching on sacred ground, but it is a fact that the technology is allowing the non-technical photographer to do some pretty fantastic work. It was not too many years ago that if you did not have a solid technical understanding of photographic equipment and processes, you might as well not even bother. Then along came Polaroids and pocket-film cameras. Even then you weren't really a photographer; you were just a snapshot enthusiast.

With the advent of high-quality, low-priced digital cameras, almost overnight the opportunity arose to become a decent photographer by simply knowing how to flip a switch to "on," set the lens to autofocus, and choose fully automatic shooting.

A technical understanding used to be a requirement for any decent photographer; now that same technical understanding will take you to a level of excellence above the average photographer.

In this section, I am going to explain the most common technical terms in simple terms and plain English. They really are not hard to understand if they are explained to you properly.

White Balance

What we perceive with our eyes to be white and think of as "white" in our mind is rarely truly white. Depending on the lighting, what your eyes perceive as white will really be some



shade of gray or some tint of color. The white balance in photography refers to your camera's ability to compensate for the ambient lighting where you're shooting.

If there are light bulbs casting a yellowish color on everything, then something white will have that yellowish tint (in reality all the colors of your image are affected by this yellow tint but it shows up most obviously on things that are white). Fluorescent light casts a blue color. A lack of light will cause "white" to look some sort of shade of gray. The white balance of a camera adjusts for all these realities.

ISO

Again, this refers to the film speed. Of course, nowadays with digital cameras, there is no actual film so this is kind of a throwback to how film worked in the old film cameras. It has to do with how sensitive your camera sensor is to the light that enters the lens. The more sensitive, or higher the setting, the more light that is collected when the photo is snapped; However, you also get a higher degree of what is known as "noise" - a sort of graininess in the image. The lower the setting, then the less sensitive your camera sensor is to the amount of light available. This means there is less noise in the image but it also means the image is darker.

The ISO setting helps you to adjust to different lighting situations as you shoot. Generally, the rule of thumb is to choose the lowest ISO setting you can. The reason to raise your ISO is in lower light situations where you need your camera to be more sensitive so that your photos will not

appear too dark. Start with ISO 100 and go higher if the situation calls for it. Today's cameras can shoot at higher ISO settings with little noticeable noise (correcting a technical issue that has been a pain in the photography butt for a long time).



Depth of Field

The background in the previous photo is a perfect example of good bokeh.

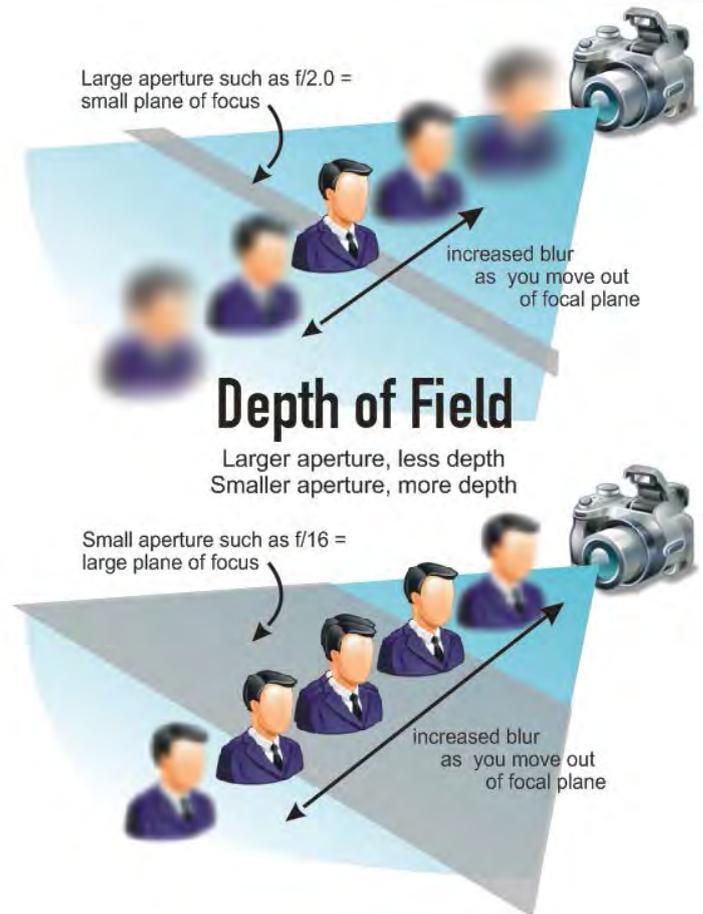
Depth of field refers to how much of the image is in focus given its distance from the lens. The best way for me to explain this to you is to give you an exaggerated analogy.

Aperture: how much the lens opens up to allow light to pass into the camera.

Imagine you are photographing a man standing 5 feet from you. There is a second man that is 10 feet away. If you have a LARGE depth of field due to a smaller aperture value, then both men will be in focus.

A larger range of distance away from the object you are focusing on will remain focused. If you have a SHALLOW depth of field because of a larger aperture value, then the second man will be blurred. A shorter range of distance will be in focus as you move away from the object you have focused the camera on. Another example: with a very shallow depth of field, you could do a portrait shot where the eyes could be in perfect focus but just the distance to the ears would cause them to be blurred.

Setting the aperture allows you to control how much of your image depth is in focus (a.k.a. depth of field). Or more simply stated, it allows you to control the blur of the background.



Typically with portraits, you want a shallow depth of field so that the person is in focus but the background behind them is

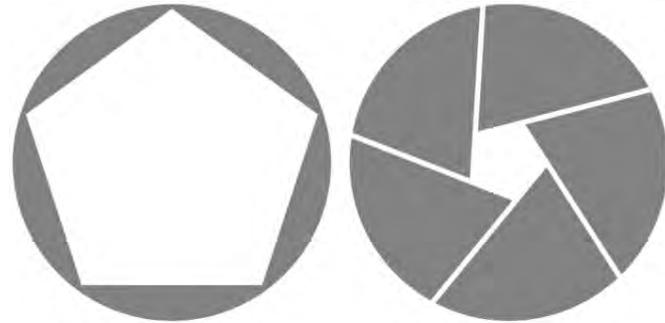
blurred out. Just the opposite with landscapes; you want a large depth of field so that everything in the photo is in sharp focus. In very simple terms, think of the aperture as a way to control the focus of the background: if you want blurry backgrounds, have a small f-stop (which is a large lens opening); if you want the background and the entire photo to be in focus, have a large f-stop (which is a small lens opening).

Aperture

Aperture is the size of the opening in your lens. It is commonly referred to as an "f-stop" and you'll see it written like this: f/2.8. It is generally true that camera lenses with lower f-stop capability are more expensive but I highly suggest you invest in at least one good lens with a low f-stop so that you can take decent pictures in lowlight situations. I'll give you some recommendations later on in the book.

The lower the f-stop value (such as 2.0), the larger the opening... the more light that enters the camera... and the more shallow depth of field. The higher the f-stop value, the smaller the lens opening and a less amount of light will enter the camera. A higher f-stop value also increases the depth of field.

There are two primary reasons to adjust the aperture. First is to help control exposure by increasing or decreasing the amount of light entering the camera. The second, and of primary importance, is to control the blur (or lack of it) that occurs in the background.



Bigger Aperture
Lower "f" Value

Smaller Aperture
Higher "f" Value

Exposure: the amount of light your camera sensor receives given the other settings.

Remember this point... it's very important. Use the aperture setting to control the amount of blur (or absence of it) in your photos.

Shutter Speed

Shutter speed is the setting that allows you to control how fast the camera snaps a picture. The faster the lens opens and closes, the more "frozen" your image is. A fast shutter speed is typically used in photographing sports or other action environments where you need to be able to freeze something that is moving at varying speeds. Typical shutter speeds you'll encounter:

- 1/640 to effectively freeze sports action.
- 1/100 or 1/250 are typical speeds for every day candid shots of people just sitting, talking, or walking by.
- 1/8 or 1/2 shutter speeds necessary in lowlight situations (the shutter stays open a longer to allow more light in and increases the need to use a tripod).

Exposure

Exposure is the overall amount of light present (or not present) in an image which causes it to appear lighter or



darker. Adjusting the exposure settings on your camera will help you adjust to lowlight or bright-light situations. Under-exposure causes dark images and over-exposure causes washed-out light images.

Automated Camera Modes

In the quick-start guide, we discussed the basic modes that come with most cameras: portrait, macro, night time, sports, and landscape.

By choosing one of these basic modes, your camera is automatically set to the most typical configuration for that type of shot, giving you a pretty decent opportunity for a good photo even if you do not understand technically what those settings are.

Going beyond basic modes, there are creative modes that allow you to manually control certain settings. Those are:

AV Mode

The AV mode allows you to manually control the aperture setting. Remember, the aperture allows you to control the background blur. So AV mode works really well for shooting portraits where a blurred background is preferable. AV mode is also great for shooting group shots when you need to make sure you have a large depth of field so that

everyone in the group remains in focus on the image.

TV Mode

"TV" stands for "time value" and allows you to manually control the shutter speed. I'm not sure why they just didn't call it a "shutter speed mode." TV mode is good for shooting action or sports, and manually making sure you are freezing the action or creating a motion blur on purpose (so that it will convey a sense of movement).

Program Mode

The simplest way to explain program mode is to think of it as "point and shoot with no flash." So when you are in those settings where flash is not allowed, program mode becomes your best friend.

Post-Processing Functions

Now let's talk about the basics of your image-editing software and the typical features you'll use to improve your photos. Post processing is simply opening your photos in an image-editing program so that you can improve them in various ways.

Sharpening - this is the process of making your photo appear to be more in focus. Most image-editing programs do a very good job at sharpening your photos automatically. However,

keep in mind that sharpening is not a replacement or a quick fix for taking poor blurry pictures. Good focus and shortness starts at the camera and can be improved by software sharpening.

Saturation - this is the ability to move the colors of your photo more towards gray (desaturation) or make them more intense and vibrant (saturation). Proper use of saturation can bring your photos to life but overuse can make them look unnatural and strangely colored.

Levels - the ability to control the shadows, mid tones, and highlights in your photo. This is not to be confused with simple controls of contrast or lightness and darkness which only give you a flat, linear adjustment of all three (shadows, mid tones, and highlights) simultaneously. Levels allow you to SEPARATELY control each. The mid-tone control will allow you to adjust an image to be lighter or darker overall. The shadows control will allow you to increase the depth and richness of shadows.

The highlight control allows you to increase highlights - causing the photo to have higher contrast and be more visually interesting. There are no set formulas or rules for using Levels, you just have to play around with it and learn what it does. In more basic software like Picasa, the closest you're going to get to levels is a tool called "Fill Light" and other basic software may call it "contrast adjust."

Hue Correction - Your images will often have what is known as a "color cast" which means they may appear overall to be too red, too yellow, or too blue. Or, the photo may appear to be bluish when you really want it to appear warmer and more yellow (generally speaking, the overall tone of your photo is not the color you want to be). The hue control will help you to correct this.

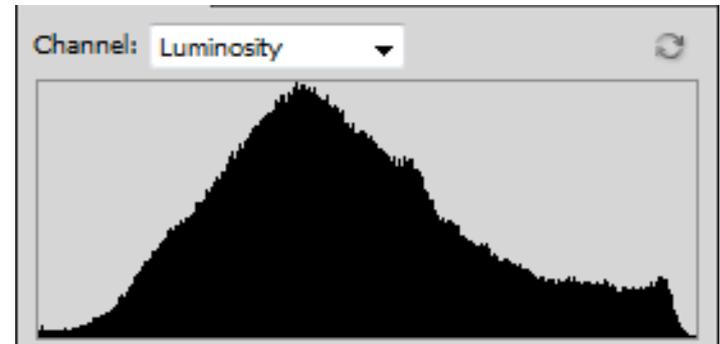
In the world of color, reds and yellows are warm, while greens, blues, and violets are cold. So if you take a photo of a group of people that has a blue cast because of the lighting, those people will not appear warm and inviting because blues are cold. In this case you would use the hue control to move the overall color of the photo towards red and yellow, which would warm the image.

Like saturation and levels, there are no set rules on how to apply hue correction. The human eye can perceive if the overall color of a photograph is incorrect and needs the hue adjusted. (Hint: learning to adjust the white balance of your camera will often correct these color problems on the spot.)

Histograms – do not let that strange-sounding word scare you off. It's not a technically correct definition but I tell people to think of it as a "history graph" that shows the light and color history of an image. On a histogram, the left side is a measurement of shadow, the middle is a measurement of mid tones, and the right is a measurement of highlights.

If the graph on a histogram is mostly on the right side, then you're going to have a very light and probably overexposed

photo. The reverse is true if the histogram graph is mostly to the left side, which means the photo will be dark and underexposed. What you really want to see is a nice bell curve for the average photograph, where the far right and left sides are low and the mid tones are at the top of the curve.



Shadows

Midtones

Highlights

Here are a couple of examples of **using those five post processing** techniques on typical photographs. Note the difference in color, contrast, detail, light, etc.

The first photo is "before" and the second is "after":



General Guidelines for Common Shot Types

A lot of people get tired of learning and just simply want some practical guidelines on how to shoot certain types of photos. That is certainly understandable because there is so much you can learn about photography.

I'm going to give you some of these general guidelines for different types of shots, but before I do, you need to understand this: these are just general guidelines. There are no hard and fast, ironclad rules that apply to photography. There is no one-size-fits-all and if you get stuck in a rut using the same techniques and settings for each type of shot, you'll never improve your photography skills.

Just like my guitar-playing friend showed me a few things to kick start me strumming some real songs, use these guidelines as nothing more than a starting point to get you going.

If you have any aspirations towards being an excellent photographer, then you have to invest some time in learning about photography and trying out new techniques.

These are the basics, and I mean the very *minimal* basics to have you moving in the right direction for these types of shots:

The Basics for Shooting Portraits

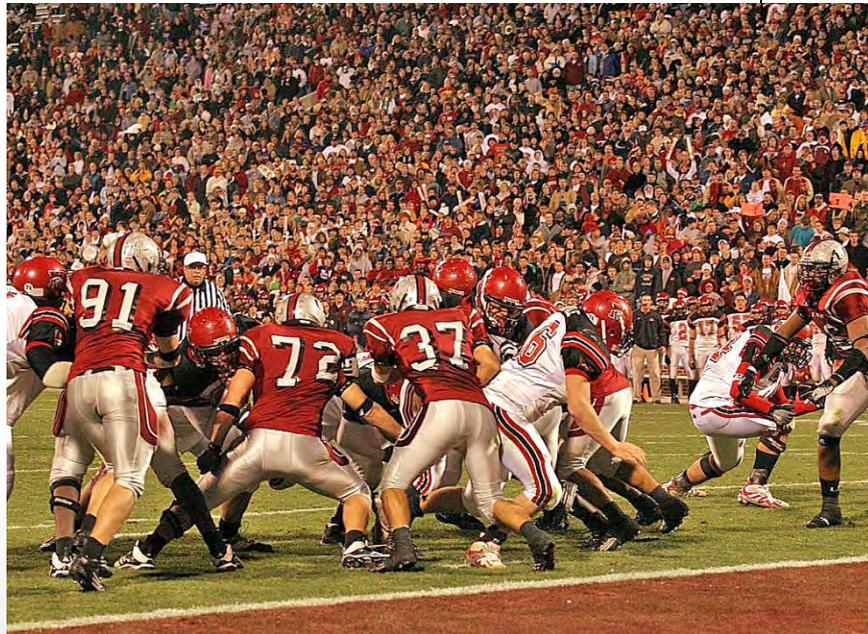
Lighting: look for naturally diffused light often through windows, overcast skies, or shade; avoid direct sunlight, when unavoidable have the sunlight shining from behind; when using artificial light, bounce the flash off the ceiling or wall and use soft boxes or reflectors to diffuse continuous lighting.

Camera settings: set your white balance for the appropriate



source of light (i.e. Florescent, sunlight, tungsten etc.); use the lowest possible ISO (start at 100); try the basic portrait mode to see if it works well which will save you time.

Lens: use the aperture setting to control background blur and to increase and decrease available light (lowest setting available for your lens; at about f/2.8, you'll starting getting nice blur); use a 70 mm or higher lens and shoot from a distance with the zoom if you are trying to get candid shots; try to focus on the eyes. f/11 seems to be the sweet spot for portraits.



Basics: use a tripod whenever possible; concentrate on good focus and natural lighting as well as the aperture setting or background blur. Work to get natural poses in natural settings for un-distracting backgrounds; for group shots use a large depth of field so that everyone is in focus.

The Basics for Shooting Sports and Action

Lighting: nighttime stadium shooting will always present lowlight situations; educate yourself on how to configure your camera to take advantage of the available light.

Camera settings: try out your sports basic mode; high shutter speeds (1/640 or higher) are necessary to freeze the action; high ISO settings (800 or higher) can help you compensate for lowlight nighttime stadium shooting;

Lens: use a zoom lens to capture action at a distance; use the smallest possible aperture to compensate for low light and to give you a large depth of field;

Basics: know your sport and be in the right spot at the right time; be prepared to understand and adjust for lowlight situations at nighttime sporting events; invest in a good zoom lens if you want to get serious about sports photography.

The Basics for Shooting Indoors

Lighting: windows provide a great source of natural light; when forced to use artificial light, try to diffuse it, or bounce off the ceiling or walls; use a diffuser on your flash.

Camera settings: a higher ISO setting will help compensate for low light (800 or higher); adjust your White Balance to match the lighting source ((i.e. Florescent, sunlight, tungsten etc.).

Lens: open up the aperture to compensate for low lighting; invest in a good lens that offers a large aperture (at least f/2.8 or more).

Basics: use a tripod for sharper images and longer exposures; use reflective material and windows to gather light; use your flash sparingly and bounce it off the ceiling as a general rule.

The Basics for Shooting Landscape

Lighting: try to use natural sunlight at dusk or dawn.

Camera settings: you might need a higher ISO setting (800+) to compensate for lower available light.

Lens: use a wide-angle lens set to a small aperture for the largest depth of field.

Basics: get to the location in time to set up; use a tripod; be creative.

My Recommended List of Basic Equipment and Software That Will Take You to the Next Level of Serious Photography

Disclaimer: when it comes to photography, I'm a Canon guy. So I'm not going to pretend to give you the equivalent advice concerning another brand like Nikon or Olympus.

Find someone who knows these brands and ask them for their recommendation for "serious amateur" level gear.

Keep in mind when people recommend things, they are making recommendations based on their personal experience. We don't know what we don't know. If you asked me a year or two from now what I would recommend, it may not look anything like the following list but this equipment has been serving me well for about 5 years now.

So to the best of my ability and experience, here is a list of what I use and what I would recommend to someone wanting to step up to the next level of serious amateur photography:

Camera: Canon 40D or better



Flash: Canon Speedlite 430EXII or better, WESTCOTT (2200) MICRO APOLLO Mounted Flash Softbox; Flash diffuser



Lenses: Canon EF-S 18-200mm f/3.5-5.6 IS Standard Zoom; Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM Telephoto Zoom; Canon EF-S 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM Lens; Canon EF 85mm f/1.8 USM Autofocus Telephoto Lens; Canon EF 50mm f1.4 USM Standard & Medium Telephoto Lens



Accessories: Adorama Wireless Radio Remote Release;
Digital Grey Kard Premium White Balance Card / Gray Card;

Tripod: Manfrotto 055XPROB Black Tripod Kit with
Manfrotto 488RC2 Head; Canon Monopod 100 for SLR
Cameras & Lenses



Camera Bag: M-ROCK McKinley 526 Digital SLR Camera

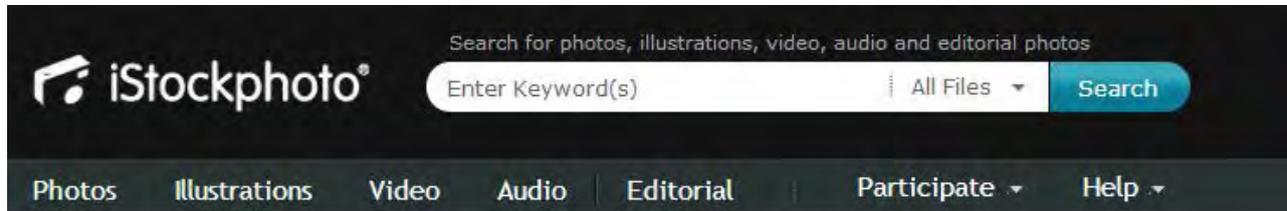


Software: Adobe Photoshop, JAlbum, Adobe Bridge, OnOne
PhotoTools

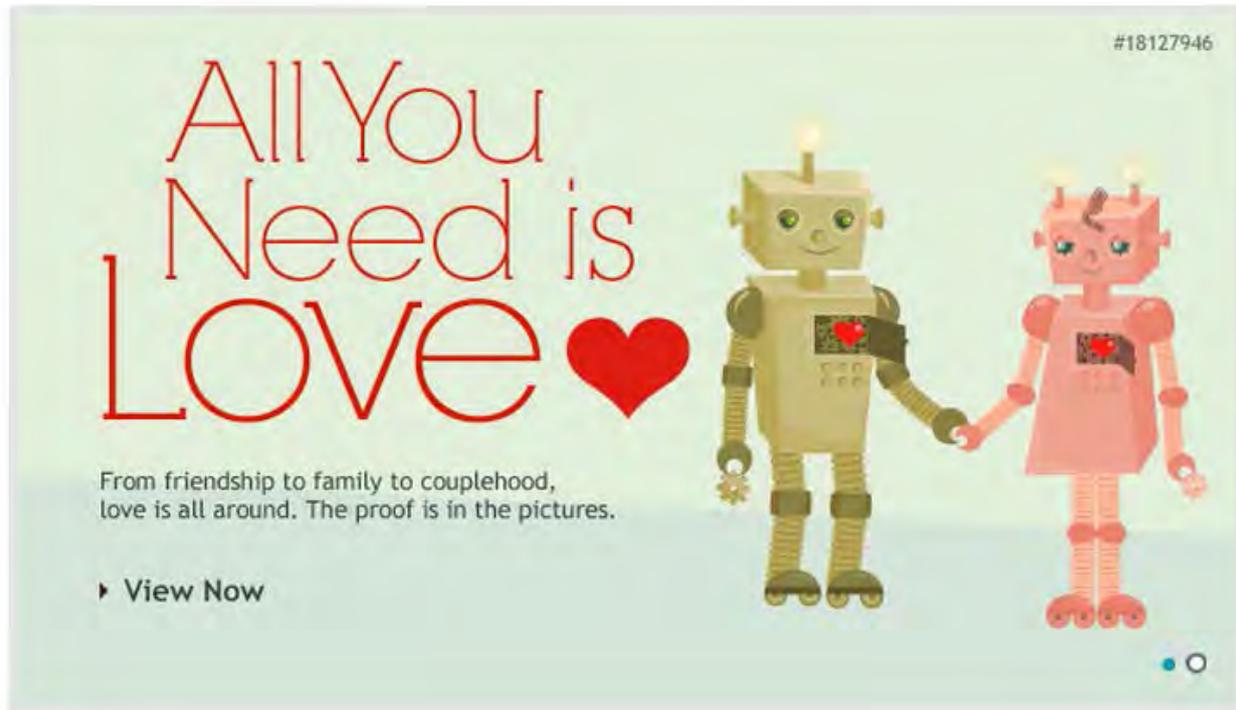
Studio: CowboyStudio 2000 Watt Digital Video Continuous
Lighting Kit with Carrying Case, 10' X 13' Black & White
Muslin Backdrops with Backdrop Support System

The following section of EPIC content is sponsored by:

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The image shows the top navigation bar of the iStockphoto website. On the left is the iStockphoto logo. To its right is a search bar with the placeholder text "Enter Keyword(s)". Above the search bar, it says "Search for photos, illustrations, video, audio and editorial photos". To the right of the search bar is a dropdown menu currently set to "All Files" and a blue "Search" button. Below the search bar is a dark navigation menu with the following items: "Photos", "Illustrations", "Video", "Audio", "Editorial", "Participate" (with a dropdown arrow), and "Help" (with a dropdown arrow).



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All You Need is Love

From friendship to family to couplehood, love is all around. The proof is in the pictures.

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The advertisement features a light green background. On the right side, there is a 3D illustration of two robots holding hands. The robot on the left is yellow with a red heart on its chest, and the robot on the right is pink with a red heart on its chest. In the bottom right corner, there are two small circular icons, one blue and one white.



A Visual Guide To Online Business

Setting up an online business or turning your blog into a business can seem daunting when you are all of a sudden confronted with so many new terms: hosting, e-commerce, marketing, landing pages, subscribers, advertising, pay per click, affiliates, etc. It is pretty easy to go and find the definition and some information about any single one of those terms . . . but how they all fit together?

I have taught and trained literally thousands of people in a variety of capacities: I was a drill sergeant in the Army, I worked for Lockheed and NASA, I taught network administration as a Microsoft certified engineer, I was a senior instructor in a large technology training company, and I have created countless demonstrations and e-learning modules. I tell you that only to give you confidence in my experience with regards to taking multifaceted complex topics and being able to present an overview and explanation that allows the learner to see how everything fits together as a cohesive whole.

My primary occupational life began as a graphic designer and continues to this day. This visual guide combines that graphic-design experience with my teaching and training experience to give you a visual overview and explanation of the entire online business model. I have taken the most common aspects and put them into this infographic for you. While there may be other services or elements that I have not mentioned here, I

am presenting you with the most common and proven - in my opinion.

"Online business" can take many forms and is only limited by the creativity of the business mind. What I'm showing you in this visual guide are the standard, common ways these well-known elements interact together; but, this guide is by no means comprehensive or constraining. It is meant to give you a general overview and understanding of how all the pieces work together so that you do not feel overwhelmed or undereducated about your online business.

Note: you'll often hear me either state "online business or blog" phrased together. The reason is this... It is very common to have a blog as the central focus of an online business. Many people start with a blog and after they build up some traffic (popularity) they begin to monetize it and turn it into a business.

A blog does not have to be an online business, but an online business does not have to be a blog either. An online business may consist of a simple brochure-type website or a storefront that may not have a blog. I often hear other writers assume that a blog is your online business and your online business is a blog, but this is inaccurate.

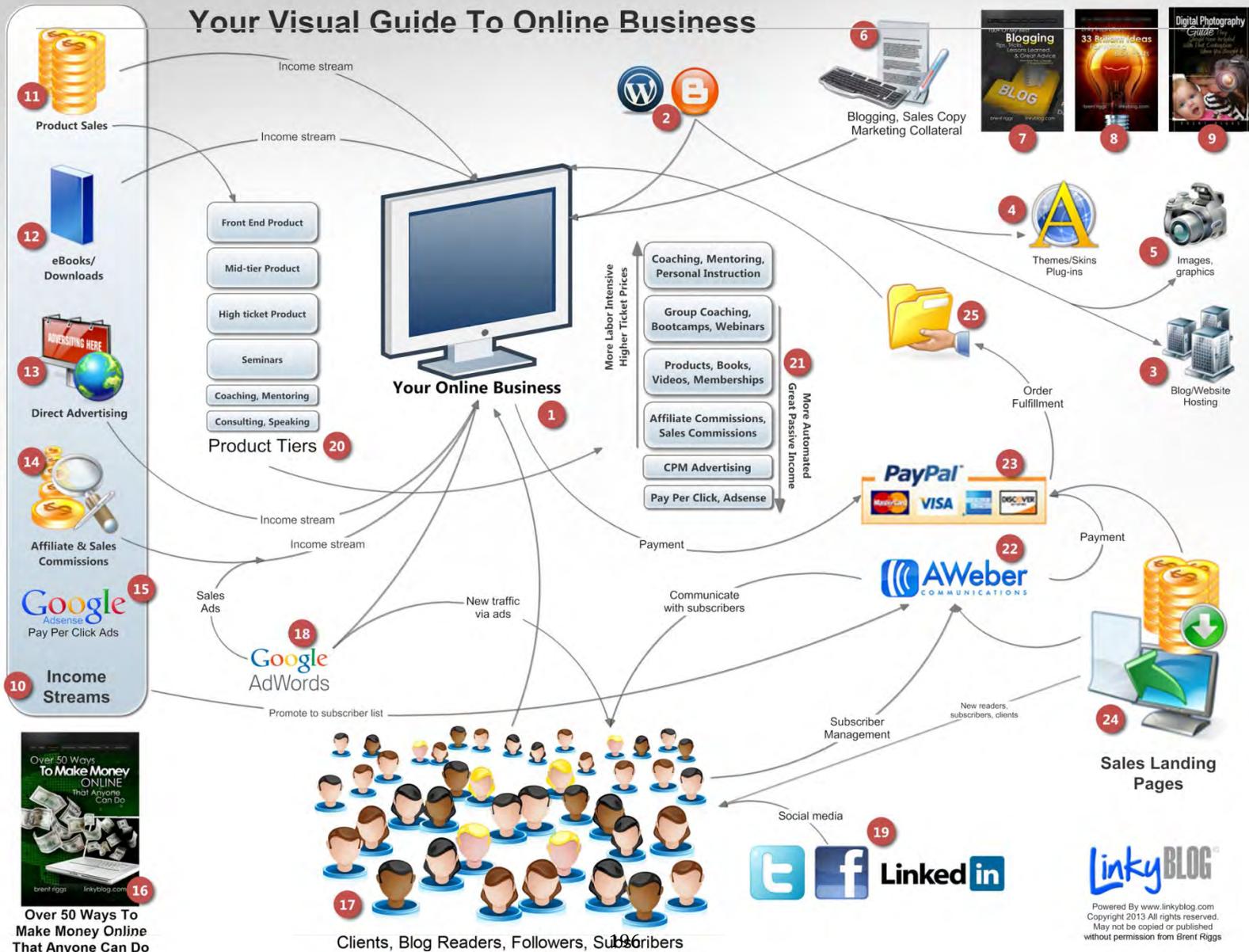
While I don't want to wear out readers by always having to state "online business or blog," I did want to explain this to you before we get going so that whether I say blog or online business (throughout this visual) you understand the context in which it is presented.

Also, you will find links to services and sites that I recommend throughout this section. Many of those are affiliate links that I make a few bucks from (one of the online business techniques I teach you). I never recommend a site that I do not use or put my 100% confidence behind. In other words, I do not just recommend them so I can make money. I recommend them because I believe in them.

Send Me Your Requests and Questions and I Will Continually Update This Guide

Email me (Brent@BrentRiggs.com) with your requests to add content to this guide or with your questions and I will continually update it. Of course you will get the newest version anytime you request it.

Your Visual Guide To Online Business



Your Online Business



The term "online business" means a lot of things to a lot of people. Most of the time, their definitions are wrapped around their own personal experience or the way they do things. For the purpose of this visual guide, what I mean by "online business" is any method or model used to generate income via the Internet.

For a lot of people that starts with a blog. They set up a blog, create content, generate traffic, and then figure out a way to monetize the whole thing. It might be through advertising, selling products, or providing a service to their blog readers. While a blog is often the central focus of an online business, it is not by any means the only way.

Other forms of online business include storefronts, business websites, "landing pages" (these are single-page websites that basically are an advertisement for a product or service), membership sites, and services and products sites ([Linky Tools](#) is a good example of a service site). There are really no constraints other than your imagination as to how you can do business online. Any repeatable way that you can create value for others (for which they will exchange money) is a legitimate online business.

The Internet provides a remarkable new opportunity that has never existed before. First of all, you have a worldwide market. You literally have every customer across the entire globe that can access the Internet. In the past, traditional businesses would start out usually building up local clientele, then regional, and then successfully moving to a national or international presence. All of this required vast amounts of money and time. The Internet has made the global market available to you instantly via keyboard. It's mind-boggling.

It used to require a large capital investment to get even a modest business off the ground. The Internet has removed the investment barrier. It is simply amazing that you can start up a real global business with such a very small amount of initial

financial risk. The amounts vary depending on the type of business you are considering; but, taken as a whole, the startup cost of an online business is a tiny fraction of what it used to be for traditional business.

Another amazing development that has come with the Internet is the idea of branding and image. The Internet is the great equalizer between the small guy and the big established companies.

The Internet allows you to create an established image and an appearance of being "big" regardless of how new your company is or if you run it from your kitchen table still dressed in your pajamas. It used to require truckloads of money, advertising, and public relations to build up this kind of credibility and image.

The sum total of all this is that you can now start an online business quickly, inexpensively, and have an entire global market at your fingertips. It is an unprecedented and jaw-dropping opportunity to create supplemental income or even a full-time career. Given the minuscule risk and the monumental potential, the only thing that surprises me is the number of people who still have not taken advantage of this first-time-in-history opportunity.

It is not a get-rich-quick scheme, and it is not for the lazy or unmotivated... The business arena never has been. But if you are willing to work hard, persevere, overcome obstacles, and

push through difficulties, an "online business" can most certainly be a very profitable and rewarding adventure.

WordPress & Blogger

If you're going to use a blog as the central part of your online business, there are many blog platforms available. The two most commonly used are Blogger.com and WordPress.com.



Generally speaking, Blogger.com is used by more people for personal blogs and casual blogging. That is not to say that Blogger.com is a bad choice for a business blog; but as a whole, most professional bloggers recommend WordPress. One reason is that Blogger.com does not have as many features and add-on extensions as WordPress.

WordPress is far and away the most popular choice for professional bloggers and online business. The WordPress platform is not just for blogging. Many complete business websites are built using the WordPress software, even if they do not include blogging on the site.

There is a huge amount of additional software and plug-ins available to extend the capability of WordPress. WordPress seamlessly integrates with most of the popular e-commerce software and payment systems as well as many affiliate and other income-producing techniques such as Google AdSense.

WordPress.com offers a free WordPress blog and hosting, but it comes with limitations that you do not want to be constrained by if you are going to start an online business.

If you are just getting started, watch the "[coffee video](#)".

Go ahead and get good WordPress hosting (I recommend [Arvixe.com](#), a great company, [get it here](#)) so that you will be in total control of your blog and have no limitations imposed on you such as those you will find on the free WordPress.com hosting.

While this visual guide is not intended as a step-by-step tutorial or instruction in WordPress, I will share with you the basic steps to setting up a WordPress blog and hosting so that you can get your online business off the ground if you have not started yet ([you should view my coffee cup video too](#)).

- Go to [Arvixe.com](#), sign up for a WordPress hosting account, and register your domain name. You can do both of these things in the same initial sign-up process.

A domain name should be something related to your online business or however you want to brand your business. My blog domain is [www.linkyblog.com](#) because it is the blog for all of my Linky sites.

Your domain name might be something like "fantastichomecrafts.com" or "myworldclassrecipes.com"... Whatever fits your business.

- Once you have signed up for your hosting, follow the instructions on how to install WordPress. It's very easy and you just follow a step-by-step wizard.
- After you have installed WordPress, choose a theme. You will have received instructions on how to log into your WordPress administration area. Inside your WordPress dashboard, you will find a place to choose themes.

(It is beyond this visual guide to teach you everything about using WordPress. There is a lot of great help and tutorials available inside of WordPress on your dashboard. To learn how to use WordPress, read through the help information and watch the basic tutorials.)

- Now that you have installed WordPress and chosen your domain name, go to the plug-ins page in your WordPress dashboard, and install some of the more common and useful plug-ins.

Here are a few of my favorites: WordPress jet pack, opt-in skin, SEO Smart Links, CodeGuard, Print Friendly and PDF, and Premise.

You don't need to run out and get all of those immediately, but I have found in my experience that those are some of the more useful plug-ins that you want to investigate to help you with managing your blog and expanding your online business.

Those are just the basics of how to get your WordPress blog set up. The other things you will do with your blog related to online business are discussed in other parts of the visual guide.

Blog & Website Hosting

Your business blog or website will need hosting. Yes, you can get a free blog at Blogger.com or WordPress.com but these come with limitations you don't want to mess with as you get your business off the ground. While you always want to save money wherever possible, being a cheapskate in some areas will come back to bite you. Hosting is not very expensive, usually only a few dollars a month, so don't cut corners on hosting.



I recommend Arvix.com to all my clients and readers. I have been using them for years and spend thousands of dollars a year on servers, hosting, and other services they offer. You will find great hosting at a great price; and even better, their customer service is responsive and always there to help. Their customer service is what won me over as a lifetime customer. When you need help, there are several ways to contact them and I have never had a problem they have not jumped on and solved very quickly.

Arvix.com is a high-quality, reliable, and great hosting company. I cannot give you a higher recommendation for hosting.

I also cannot urge you enough to make sure you avoid the temptation of free hosting because you will regret it.

Find a reliable hosting company and invest a few bucks a month. Arvix.com is a great choice.



Themes, Skins, & Plug-ins

There is no excuse for an ugly or amateur-looking website that does not work well visually. Blogging software has become very mature and feature-rich over the past decade. For very little investment, often free, you can get a world-class design, complete functionality, and a dizzying array of additional capability through the use of themes, skins, and plug-ins.

A "skin" is usually referring only to the visual aspect of the blogger website. Much like the human skin, it is what you see on the outside and does not refer to what is going on underneath it. So when you hear the word "skin" with regards to a blogger website, it is normally talking about graphics, templates, and visual elements. There are lots of "skins" available for any type of blog, along with an army of graphic designers who will inexpensively create a skin for you. As I

said, there is no excuse for an amateur or ugly blog or website these days. There are just too many products and designers available at very inexpensive prices.

When you are talking about WordPress.com or Blogger.com, the "skin" is wrapped up in the term "theme." A theme involves both the graphic design and the internal functionality of the blog. When you choose a theme or have a theme designed, it will take into account both the visual design and all of the features and functionality built into the blog (additional features and functionality can be added by using gadgets, widgets, or plug-ins, whichever term applies to your particular blog platform). So keep in mind that a theme is both functionality and design when you are choosing one.

There are many companies out there that develop themes. Two of my favorites are **WPZoom.com** and **ElegantThemes.com**. They offer a wide variety of feature-rich functionality and world-class design. Choosing one of these themes can give you an instant head start with your blog; themes like these used to take weeks or months to develop. You simply buy the theme, install it, and it is all set up and ready to go. Amazing.

Plug-ins are items that you install to add new functionality to your blog (Blogger.com calls these gadgets and other blogs



platforms might refer to them as widgets). WordPress.com by far has the most available plug-ins and there are thousands of them to choose from. Each plug-in adds a new feature or capability to your blog. Caution: because plug-ins are developed by individual programmers, you want to be sure and test each plug-in one at a time as you install them rather than installing several without testing. Make sure they are compatible with your existing plug-ins and do not cause any unforeseen effects or bugs. Of course you can always uninstall any plug-in that causes you problems. For the most part, plug-ins work really well and are a great feature for extending the capability of your blog. Some of my favorite WordPress plug-ins include: WordPress jet pack, opt-in skin, SEO Smart Links, CodeGuard, Print Friendly and PDF, and Premise.

Images & Graphics

Similar to themes, with the availability of inexpensive images, graphics, and easy-to-use photography equipment, there is no need to have an ugly or amateur-looking blog or website today. There is no faster way to destroy the visual appeal of your site than to use cheesy clipart (as opposed to great high-quality clipart) or crummy images. Crummy images can come from low resolutions, bad lighting, poor cropping, and many other photographic mistakes.

There are less expensive services like clipart.com that have decent images and graphics - but not world-class. A service like **istock.com** is more expensive but their images and clipart are nothing short of stunning.

We live in an age where visual design and imagery has reached a high level of quality. You may not be able to produce these images or artwork yourself, but that is no excuse to junk up your blog with visuals that send a clear message that either you are not serious about your business, or you refuse to invest in your own business by getting quality images. Either of those clear signals make a statement about your credibility and will absolutely influence people considering spending their money with you.

Make use of the many inexpensive and high-quality image and clipart services that are available so that you can present yourself in the most appealing and professional way possible on your blog or website.

Caution: be careful about copyright issues. Many new bloggers think that every image or piece of artwork they can find on Google is available for them to use. That is a myth that can cost you a lot of money and legal costs.

When you use an image and clipart service, you can feel safe that you are not in copyright violation. When you simply grab an image from someone else's site or Google, most likely you are violating copyrights. When in doubt, contact the owner of the image or artwork and get permission to use it.



Blogging, Sales Copy
Marketing Collateral

Blogging, Sales Copy, & Marketing Collateral

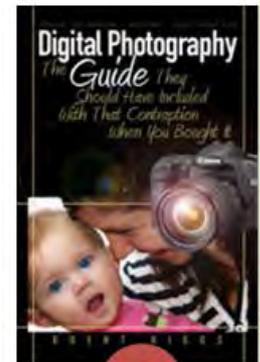
Whether you blog or not, having an online business requires a lot of writing. You will write sales copy, marketing material, customer service replies, as well as emails and other correspondence.

It is to your benefit to either hire a professional writer or continually work to educate yourself and improve your own writing skills. Writing is like lifting weights, the more you use your writing muscles the better you will get at it.

Don't try to reinvent the wheel every time you need to write something. If you need guidelines or creative motivation for writing sales material, then look around at other online businesses that are involved in the same market as you.

Find out what they are writing and how they write it. There is a lot to be learned from your competition.

Always have someone proofread your business material before it goes public. There is never quite so loud a message as the one sent by poor grammar, typos, and misspelled words.



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Digital Photography Guide

The Guide They Should Have Included with that Contraption When You Bought It

Whether you have got a pocket digital or a DSLR you still have not figured out... this is the digital photography guide you have been waiting for.

In this fun and extremely useful guide:

- I explain digital photography in a way you can actually remember and use.
- I give you JUST what you really need to know.
- I tell you the basics RIGHT NOW so you can start shooting better photos by lunch time... probably amazingly better.
- I help you save money by giving you the skills to do family portraits, senior pictures, baby photos, and event shooting.

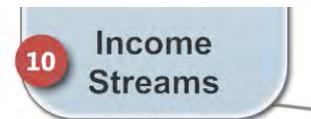
Here is a taste of what you get:

- A Quick-start Guide so you can try something besides Full Auto before lunchtime.
- Clearly communicated, simple definitions for all those fancy \$12 technical terms you want to understand.
- Tips, tricks, and plain instruction for taking GREAT photos.
- How software can make your photos even better.
- All sorts of stuff you wish someone would have told you when you bought your camera (but did not).

Lots of images, visuals, and graphics for you to learn from. You'll find this photography content included in EPIC Book as the Digital Photography 101 section.

Income Streams

An income stream is simply defined as any technique or method you are using to generate income. It is well beyond the scope of this



visual guide to cover the entire topic of income streams or the dozens of ways that you can generate income from an online business.

This is not attempt to simply tease you into buying something else and not giving you good information. It's just too big of a topic to cover in this guide. Here are some topics I cover in that book that will give you some general direction:

- A List of 50 Ways to Make Money Online
- CPC Ad Networks
- Affiliate-Product Sales
- Direct-Ad Sales
- Product Sales
- Donations
- Downloads
- Membership Packages
- Sell Your Services

- Reviews
- Consulting and Coaching

Those are all “income streams” that virtually anyone can set up and build into a business. In my opinion, the real secret is to have MANY income streams. That way you have more sources of profits coming in, and you are not relying on one single source that could dry up.

Product Sales

Product sales include any type of tangible goods or services that you sell online. It does not matter whether you create them, keep an inventory, drop-ship from a supplier, or are a distributor for another company; any tangible item or service that ends up in the buyer's hands is considered a product for your online business. In a sense, your electronic items such as e-books or videos would be considered products as well although I will touch on them separately. When you read about multi-tiered products or passive income, please keep in mind that when I mention "products" I am including your electronic items as well.

There is really no way to define specifically what a product is. It can be anything your client is willing to exchange money for; whether tangible, electronic, or something in the service arena. Sometimes your expertise or involvement is your



product. Whatever someone online is willing to send you money for is your "product."

eBooks & Electronic Downloads

Your electronic products are anything that can be delivered via download or email. It might be eBooks, audio, video, or other types of electronic information that the buyer can retrieve via a link, webpage, or email message you send them.



eBooks have become an extremely popular online business product because they do not involve the high costs of printing or carrying an inventory. eBooks can be informational, entertainment, business oriented, or for training purposes. There really are no limitations on what an eBook can contain. If you can write something or display something in electronic form that someone is willing to pay you for, then that becomes an electronic product.

More and more I am seeing audio and video products that are taking the place of eBooks. Someone buys access to the multimedia item and you send them a link to view it online. Electronic products are easy to create, inexpensive to store or deliver, and usually require virtually no upfront capital investment other than blood, sweat, and tears. If you have expertise or experience in a given area, an electronic product could be the start of your online business.

The EPIC Book is an example of an electronic product.

Direct Advertising

There are many forms of advertising in online business. Direct advertising is the display of advertising on your blog or website where you have directly secured the advertising and payment from the client (as opposed to dynamic advertising where you have no involvement with the advertisers - such as Google AdSense).



Direct advertising can take the form of text links, badges, banners, or even advertorials. It is your blog or website so the only rules that apply to displaying direct advertising are the rules you make up. You can decide on any arrangement or agreement with an advertiser who is willing to pay for real estate on your blog and for exposure to your audience.

The upside to direct advertising is that you get to control the pricing and keep all the profits. The downside to direct advertising is that you have to go out and sell the advertising yourself or pay someone to do it for you. You also have to deal with the formatting and displaying of the advertising material (whereas a dynamic advertising system like AdSense simply involves putting a line of code on your site and they control everything else).

Affiliate & Sales Commissions

Affiliate sales and sales commissions are when you sell someone else's product or service and they pay you for doing so. Sometimes they pay a flat fee, and sometimes they pay you a percentage. Sometimes they will pay a higher percentage if you are a higher volume seller. Each affiliate or sales-commission program has its own rules and payment structures, so be sure you are familiar with each different program you sign up for.



If you are unfamiliar with affiliate programs, here are some conceptual examples:

- Blog-hosting companies pay you a commission to recommend and link to their service.
- An author who has an eBook offers you an affiliate commission to display his book on your blog or for you to review it to your readers.
- A tax-preparation service pays you a flat fee each time someone clicks on their banner on your blog, and signs up for a service the tax preparer offers (typically they must get paid by the new client before you get paid).

For each site, service, or product that you buy (and that you are comfortable recommending), go to their blog or website

and look to see if they have an affiliate program. Most of the time this involves signing up for the affiliate program and then displaying some sort of advertisement, link, or marketing material in order to drive customers to their product via your affiliate link.

If you are not capable or motivated to create your own products, affiliate products and sales commissions are great ways to generate income online.

Google AdSense

If you are looking for a flexible, hassle-free way to show relevant and engaging ads alongside your online content and make money, Google AdSense makes perfect sense. You can easily show AdSense ads on your website, mobile sites, and site search results.



You will see the term "CPC" which stands for Cost Per Click. This is probably the most popular way to start monetizing on your blog. One of the most-used CPC ad networks is the Google AdSense Program.

It basically works this way: Google puts ads on your blog and whenever someone clicks on those ads, you get some money. Cool, right?

Let's take a look at the benefits of signing up with Google AdSense. The program only puts relevant and engaging ads on your website so you don't have to worry about them cluttering up your workspace. Also, since the ads have a lot to do with your content, you are actually helping out your readers by providing relevant resources for them in a convenient manner.

For example: your blog is about training and taking care of dogs. The ads that Google will place will be those that are in line with your blog entry for the day. Let's say your blog post is about giving dogs a bath. Google will put ads for dog shampoo or dog soaps on your page. This will be of great help to your customers who no longer need to search out where to find supplies for bathing their dogs. It's a win-win situation.

Google AdSense works with millions of advertisers. This means that they have the ability to hook up only the right kind of ads for your blog. There is a greater chance for revenue because you are already driving the right audience to your blog. There is a higher probability of them clicking on those ads. Here's another cool thing: you have a good amount of control over which ads go into your website. You are not helpless to an onslaught of irrelevant Google Ads. You get some ability to decide which types of ads can go on your site and which cannot (but it's not 100% control).

You also get detailed metrics and analytics reports in order to fully maximize your ads. When you get started, you may find that you are making only a few cents per week. By

incorporating a few tips and techniques, you will see that you can greatly increase your profits.

Caution: keep in mind that when you display ads on your blog, you are implying your approval or recommendation of those ads. The downside to Google AdSense is that you are not always in TOTAL control of what ads appear. If something is displayed in a Google AdSense block that offends your readers or contradicts the message of your online business or blog, then obviously that is a concern. Only you can decide whether not AdSense makes sense for your business.

Clients, Blog Readers, Followers, And Subscribers



Clients, Blog Readers, Followers, Subscribers

For most online businesses (especially those that center around a blog), each person who becomes involved with your

blog is usually one of these things: client, reader, follower, or subscriber.

Clients are those people who open their wallets to you and purchase a product or service. Readers are the folks who come to your blog to consume the content and information you create. Followers are typically those who also link up with you on social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Subscribers are the ones who give you their email address so that you can communicate with them with their permission; typically, this involves sending out an email notification when you have posted new content on your blog or an occasional email about a new product or service you are offering.

If you're creating an online business or monetizing your blog, obviously you understand the importance of having people not only find you but become loyal and repeat visitors. This is your market, your target.

You never want to take your readers/clients/followers/subscribers for granted, scam them, or in any way take advantage of or abuse their loyalty. There are 40,000 bazillion blogs and Internet sites screaming for their attention; if, at any moment they do not feel appreciated or taken care of they will rightfully move on and find someone else.

When growing your online business, avoid the temptation to make a few bucks by offering junk to your crowd. It is not worth it. Also avoid the temptation of constantly soliciting them. No matter how good your content is, if you are

bombarding your subscriber list with a constant flow of solicitations, you will wear them out and run them off.

Based on my personal experience and gut feeling (without any official supporting statistics), my advice is to have at least 10 communications of high-quality, valuable, useful, and free content for your readers for every one solicitation you put in front of them (a 10-to-1 ratio). When you do solicit, make sure that it is for an equally high-quality and useful product or service. The goal is to leave each person feeling like they are actually glad you made them aware of that product or service.

If you can build this kind of loyalty and trust with your audience, you will come to find them opening up their wallets as soon as they see any type of offer from you because they rightly have the expectation that everything you present to them will help them, profit them, or in some way be an advantage to them. They will know that if you recommend something, it is worth every penny they spend.

Google AdWords

Where Google AdSense involves advertisements you place on your blog and get paid for each time they are clicked, Google AdWords is just the opposite. You are creating ads for your own products and services to appear within Google AdSense. You pay Google each time your advertisement is clicked.



Your advertisements will be linked to your products, blog, or landing pages depending on how you set up your business model. Here is some information from the Google AdWords site:

Advertise your business on Google

No matter what your budget, you can display your ads on Google and our advertising network. Pay only if people click your ads.

Your ad appears beside relevant search results.

You create ads and choose keywords, which are words or phrases related to your business. Get keyword ideas.

Your ads appear on Google... when people search on Google using one of your keywords, your ad may appear next to the search results. Now you're advertising to an audience that's already interested in you.

You attract customers... People can simply click your ad to make a purchase or learn more about you.

Expand your reach through the Display Network

With hundreds of thousands of high-quality websites, news pages, and blogs that partner with Google to display AdWords ads, the Google Display Network can reach users all over the web to help you drive conversions. Choose

from text, image, and video formats to communicate your message.

Target the right user in the right context

Using your keywords, Google's contextual targeting technology can automatically match your ads to webpages in our Display Network that are most relevant to your business. For example, an ad for a digital camera may show up next to an article reviewing the latest digital cameras. If you want greater control, use placement targeting to hand-pick specific sites or sections of sites you want your ads to appear on.

Measure and optimize your results

With the Placement Performance Report, you have visibility into where all your ads appear. Review your ad's performance on a site-by-site basis to see impression, click, cost, and conversion data, and use this data to identify well-performing sites to target more aggressively and low-value placements that require content optimization or exclusion.

Social Media



If you have been on the Internet for more than 10 seconds, you are familiar with social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Social media allows you to connect with millions of people on the Internet in a variety of ways. It might be family or friend relationships. It could be hobbies, life experiences, or professional interests.

Social media brings a new aspect and great advantage to online business and blogging. You can promote your business and blog via your social media and in return those who find you with social media can end up following your blog and patronizing your online business.

I always warn people not to abuse or wear out their social-media contacts with constant solicitations. If your social-media content is a steady stream of "gimme gimme gimme," you will rightfully discover that multitudes of people will dump you, block you, and un-follow you. Just like you would not abuse a traditional face-to-face friendship by throwing

sales pitches at a friend every time you saw them, do not abuse your social-media online contacts with constant advertisements, sales pitches, and self-serving announcements. We have all probably had a friend who tried every multi-level marketing program out there and pitched us every single “join now” speech; do not be that friend with your social-media contacts.

LinkedIn is a social-media network more geared towards professional circles. Twitter is all the rage now, while Facebook seems to be losing steam every day. There is no magic to social media; do not make the mistake of neglecting your blog or business to concentrate on social media instead. If you have a great online business, people will find you whether or not you use social media. But if you drive people to a neglected or poor-quality online business via social media, you will lose them immediately and they will return to their social circles and destroy your reputation.

Product Tiers

Product tiers are simply a way of creating a logical succession of products for your client to purchase. Typically it starts with a smaller lower-priced (or free) item that allows you to build up trust and reputation with the new customer. Then you begin to



Product Tiers **20**

introduce them to your higher ticket or more involved products and services. That is one way to look at multi-tiered products.

The other view of multi-tiered products is not so much that you try to start a customer at one end, the lower-priced end, and lead them towards purchasing higher-priced items; but it is more of a way to categorize your products and services ranging from the lower-priced more impulsive purchases to the higher-priced more complex and involved products or services.

For example, people might be introduced to your online business through a simple and low-priced product such as an eBook. After they have seen the high quality and value of your products, you may then introduce them to something more extensive like an entire course or set of eBooks or informational products. Then you might invite them to a seminar or workshop which could progress into your most lucrative activity: coaching or consulting.

That is just an example. It may not fit your business model or topic so just keep in mind the concept: lower-priced introductory items make it easy for someone to buy something from you so that they will become familiar with your business; if your products are worth their time and money, you will gain their loyalty. After you have earned their trust, you can introduce them to your more long-term and higher priced items. Unless you are selling items that are mostly of equal value and have roughly the same amount of

customer involvement, you have product tiers whether you realize it or not. If you have them by accident, you can evaluate what you are doing and strategize your product tiers with purpose and a plan. This will maximize the loyalty and amount of investment each new client will make with your online business.

Product Architecture

It is important for you to understand how much time and effort is involved with each of your products and services:

- What does it cost?
- How much interaction is involved with the sale of each item?
- How much support should you expect to give each client?
- How likely are you to have refunds and returns?
- Can the sale and delivery of the product be automated?
- Can the product or service generate truly passive income (which means it sells itself with no interaction on your part other than watching the money going to your bank account)?



You have to analyze all these aspects and decide what works for you. Is it worth selling a six-dollar item that is going to cost you three dollars to fulfill, probably result in a fair amount of returns, and a lot of time dealing with the customer?

Do you want a product or service that keeps you tied to a computer 24 hours a day, seven days a week? I have subscriber sites with tens of thousands of members. Before I was able to afford some administrative help, I was literally tied to email and the Internet 24/7.

You cannot ask a person to subscribe to your membership site or service and then expect them to only need help from you on hours that are convenient. It is part of the price you pay for that type of site so you will have to evaluate your priorities and ask yourself if you are willing to make the necessary time commitment.

The ideal type of product or service, the “holy Grail” if you will, is something that is completely automated and involves no interaction on your part. This is truly passive income. It might be the sale of electronic items that are automatically delivered to the client, access to a membership site, or maybe a system where tangible products are purchased and then automatically fulfilled without any effort on your part.

The ultimate online business would be one that generates large amounts of 100% passive income - this is absolutely an achievable goal but it takes a lot of hard work and ingenuity.

For most people getting an online business started up, there will be a trade-off between generating the income and needing to spend some of your time supporting your business activity. Some general areas that are likely to consume your time include order fulfillment, customer service, blogging, and continually striving to improve the quality of your online business.

More labor-intensive but typically higher-priced products and services include consulting, coaching, workshops, webinars, video products, and certain types of subscription and membership sites. More passive-type income (typically in much smaller amounts) comes from products such as pay-per-click advertising, affiliate commissions, and electronically delivered products.

One of the great advantages of online business is the ability to do it in addition to your “day job” and create truly passive income. The more successful your business is, the more you will have the resources available to you to automate your business and create even more passive income.

AWeber

AWeber is an email-list subscriber service, and an email-campaign management system. It will automatically take care of people subscribing and unsubscribing to your email list, send out notifications of new blog posts, automate a campaign of emails to each new



subscriber, and allow you to send a broadcast email to one or more of your lists. Here is some helpful information from their website:

Email Marketing Software

Create profitable customer relationships for your business! **AWeber's** email marketing tools like professional email signup forms & autoresponder services make it easy for you to build your email list and stay in touch with prospects.

Find out why over 115,000+ businesses trust our email marketing software to deliver the best results for any size email marketing campaign.

Manage Subscribers

Collecting, managing, and segmenting your subscribers is a snap with **Aweber**.

Autoresponder

Use email autoresponders to deliver a sequence of messages automatically.

HTML Email Templates

Over 150 ready-to-use templates make it easy to create great-looking emails.

Email Newsletters

Create and send professional email marketing newsletters in minutes. Planning ahead? Schedule them for later!

RSS to Email

Our RSS to email tool turns your latest blog posts into an email newsletter.

I have used **Aweber** for over a decade and it remains the number one choice for serious bloggers and online businesses. **[Visit Aweber here...](#)**

PayPal

PayPal is the most popular payment system on the Internet, one of the easiest to set up, and can have you accepting credit cards and payments within days. You can find fees and rates a little lower, but it is hard to beat the convenience, acceptance, and features of PayPal. I think it is worth the fees you pay. Here is some helpful information from their website:



Seriously, who knows their credit card number by heart? You can link your bank account, debit and credit cards to your PayPal account so you never have to enter them again.

Pay however you want. You can link your bank account, debit and credit cards to PayPal. Then simply choose which one to use when you pay for something.

Pay anywhere. Choose PayPal at all the places you love to shop... online at millions of sites, on your phone or tablet, and now in-store at a growing number of retailers.

Pay simpler. Instead of taking out a card every time you pay, choose PayPal and be done in a few clicks.

Pay safer. Shop with confidence, knowing that PayPal keeps your financial information private and protected when you shop. You never have to give out your card details because they are secure inside PayPal.

PayPal is easy to use, trustworthy, and widely accepted. If you are new to online business, I would highly recommend that you work with PayPal.

PayPal alternative? [Try PowerPay.](#)

Landing pages

In the online business world, you will hear the term "landing pages" thrown about often. It is really just your sales page or your advertisement online. It is called a landing page because your potential customers "land" there, usually after they have clicked a link you have placed somewhere.



A landing page is simply an advertisement or a sales page for your product. Treat it like you would any advertisement meant to influence a customer into buying your service or product. Make sure there is a very clear method for them to complete a purchase. With the millions of choices people have on the Internet, if you make your landing page boring, hard to figure out, or difficult to use, you will lose your customers before you ever had a chance to get them.

Some online businesses consist of nothing but landing pages. They have no blog or website, they just have products and one or more landing page for each product. Typically these types of businesses will use search engines and other advertising methods to drive traffic to the landing pages.

A blog-centered online business may or may not use landing pages. You may sell your products within the scope of the posts that you write for your blog. Or you may sell them with links and advertising on your blog. If your product is not fairly self-explanatory or directly sold as part of your blogging effort, then a landing page may be necessary in order to get your sales pitch across to your potential customers.

However you decide to use or not use landing pages, just keep in mind that they are sales information and advertising for your products. When you hear the term used on the Internet, it typically means a single-page advertising and purchase website.

Order Fulfillment

Order fulfillment is simply the process of making sure your product (whether physical or electronic) gets to the customer who has paid for it, in the condition that they expect, within the timeframe you have promised.



With electronic products such as e-books, videos, and downloads, the order fulfillment is usually automated and immediate. As soon as the customer makes payment, they are redirected to a page where they can download or view their electronic items.

Physical items have to be prepared for shipping and then shipped out. Be sure you have clear-cut guidelines for product returns and refunds. When you are dealing with physical products, you may have to consider whether or not you want to deal with the hassle of international shipping and/or some of the scams and crime from certain countries.



Rates and Fees | Affiliate Program

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ATTENTION ALL BUSINESS OWNERS:

Claim Your Free Merchant Account Today!

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Easy Setup

Simple Application So You Can Get Started Fast



We take the hassle out of getting a Merchant Account. Our process is quick and easy so you can start processing immediately. Don't wait on this.

Increase Sales

Increase Your Bottom Line With More Customers



It's a fact, by accepting credit cards online or offline you will increase your potential sales. Why wait on this when you can get started right now TODAY.

Accept All Cards

Accept All Major Credit Cards From Day One



A business needs to accept not just one type of credit card, but all types. This is where PowerPay can help. You can accept all major credit cards immediately.

Get Started Today

There's No Need To Wait You Can Get Started Now!



Every minute you wait, your business is losing money. Click the button above and get the process rolling today. It only takes a few minutes and you'll be setup in days.

The following section of EPIC content is sponsored by:

(click the ad to visit the site)



using WordPress!

Add All This Do-It-Yourself Functionality to **ANY WordPress Site**, Using **ANY Theme** or **Design Framework!**

Action

Quickly and easily create 8 critical landing page types, control fonts, colors, and styles without code, included custom graphics, and copywriting advice from the WordPress interface.

Access

Build secure membership sites, sell ebooks, software, and other digital downloads, do advanced lead generation, take recurring payments with automated member

Acceleration

Perform split-testing from the WordPress interface, optimize your landing pages for search, discover new tactics and strategies with included copywriting and optimization seminars.



Genesis Week - First 7 Days of Your Online Business

It's always good to have some sort of start-up guide or series of tasks to get you moving. For most people, the hardest part of getting going (in any task you want to move forward on) can actually be just doing SOMETHING.

I have labeled this section for "seven days" just for organization, but you can do them as steps or hours or weeks if you want. Whatever fits your time and plans.

What I'm giving you here is not a detailed how-to, step-by-step manual. It's a roadmap, a guideline, something to give you a 1,000-foot-view of the common things you need to consider when you first get rockin'.

There's so much to learn, so much to build, so much to produce, that it can be overwhelming if you don't have some kind of "get things kicked off" check list. So this brief (but useful section) is that quick start that will give you a... quick start. As we forge ahead, I am assuming that you have already decided on your blog topic or what your business market is going to be.

Day 1: Organize, Plan, Task List for Launch, Cup of Coffee

- Start a task list of things you need to get done; don't trust your memory, you'll forget things. Write it down.

-
- Organize and plan. Don't just start "doing." If you don't have a plan, you'll end up doing exactly what you didn't plan for.
 - Commit to timelines and schedules. How much time a day or a week can you commit to your business?
 - Look at all the known tasks ahead. Write them down. Commit to dates of completion as best you can.
 - [Watch the "Coffee Cup" video](#) if you need some very basic set-up instruction for your blog.
 - [Get your website hosting](#), and set up your blog.
 - Set up your [email-subscriber list](#).
 - Choose some incentive for people to sign up for your email list.
 - Create your sign-up form.

Day 2: Write a Blog Post, Publish It, Socialize With Others

- Write your first blog post.
- Have it proofed by someone else so you don't have a bunch of mistakes.
- Publish your post.
- Announce it on your social-media accounts like Twitter and Facebook.

- Go read some related blogs; leave some great comments and add some value to other blogs.
- Leave a link (if possible) in your comments to help others find your blog.

Day 3: Bio, Flagship Content, Schedule

- Write your bio, your "About Me" page; tell your story to people about how and why you started blogging.
- Decide on some "flagship" content you want to create; flagship content is content you will keep a focus on and introduce to all your readers as they come on board. This is something you'll become "known for," stuff that identifies you uniquely as a blogger. For example, [my twin brother Bruce](#) has a series called "I Didn't Sign Up To Be..." (in Sales, in Marketing, Online). It's series of 6 books, ebooks, and workshops that he is known for. It's his flagship content.
- Write an editorial schedule. Create a list of blog ideas and schedule them to be written. By deciding ahead of time, your content will have a logical flow and continuity.

Day 4: Promote, Plan A Product

- Start the process of promoting your blog. Write out a plan and schedule to spend time routinely contacting other bloggers, advertising, leaving comments, attending events, etc. If you don't market your online business or blog

routinely and consistently, you won't grow nearly as fast as you could.

- Think about your first product. If you don't have obvious products based on your type of business, consider one of these: eBook, report, newsletter, video library, workshop, webinar, membership site. Products are important because they stay on sale 24/7/365 to the whole world regardless of what you are doing.

Day 5: Start a Series, Publish An Attention-Getting Post, Get Feedback

- Decide on a series of blog posts. Take a big topic related to your business or blog and write a 5- or 10-part blog post series. Series' can often be compiled later on into an eBook, report, or guide. Series' allow you to break up big topics in to segments that 1) you can explore more fully, or 2) have shorter posts that are easier to read.
- Publish an attention-getting post: controversy, rant, debate, etc. You can't do this routinely or you'll wear people out or alienate them. But an occasional controversial post will add some spice and energy to your blog.
- Ask your readers for some feedback. How am I doing? What would you like me to write about or create? Is the blog easy to navigate? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Make sure you reward and acknowledge people for their responses.

Day 6: Other Pages, Building Audience

- Build other pages for your blog: contact us, resources, archives, "first-time visitor," etc.
- Begin to brainstorm ways to engage your audience. How can you involve them? What can you do for them to help them feel invested in your mission?

Day 7: Establish Routine, Publishing Schedule, More to Learn, Have Fun

- Now that you've gotten a feel for the work involved, revisit your schedule. Adjust expectations, commitments, and daily tasks to fit reality. Set goals you can actually sustain over a long time and achieve. Establish a rhythm and consistency that will produce measurable results every day, even if they are small and incremental.
- Look over your editorial calendar and think long term. How often can you publish and do it consistently? Are you including social-media publishing too?
- Have some fun. Run a contest, give away some prizes, do some promotions your audience will enjoy.
- Learn, learn, learn. Embark on a daily, relentless effort to learn everything you can about your business and market.

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Speaker, coach and author
of *Escape from Cubicle Nation*

[Pam's Story](#)





Over 60 Profitable Online Business Ideas

So you have decided to start a blog - or an online business. Or maybe your blog IS your online business (that's very common). Good for you. You've picked a great time to get started.

Blogging is a great way to inform people and to exercise your expertise or knowledge on a certain topic. Many bloggers have reported fun and fulfillment through writing about their passions. The best part about it is that you can actually make money from blogging as well. That's income and interest in one activity. You don't have to blog though. There are MANY ways to make money online without blogging.

You may be surprised to know there is a whole new class of "business people" who have actually given up their day jobs as their online income replaced their paycheck. There is a potential for you to make a tremendous amount of money. The Internet puts a "world marketplace" at your fingertips. Of course, you should not rush out and quit your job. The best way to do it is to keep working as you build up your blog or online business.

It must be pointed out that blogging or online business is not for the impatient or lazy. It is not a get-rich-quick scheme. Like any other occupation that has real value, blogging takes time. For most online businesses, significant income takes a year or more to build up. It is a get-what-you-give kind of deal as with most things in life.

One of the great things about blogging and online business is that the financial risk of giving it a try is VERY low. It's microscopically low compared to starting a traditional brick and mortar business. Many aspects of it are free, and for anything from a few bucks a month to a high of several hundred dollars a month, there's not a whole lot to risk to try.

So let's see: a worldwide market instantly open to you in exchange for a small amount of startup cash, and your blood, sweat, and tears... my only question is: why isn't EVERYONE trying to create a business online?

I am going to start by going over a reference list of 51 ways you can make money online; then I will follow with a more detailed look at ten of the more popular options.

Over 50 Ways to Make Money Online

Here is a reference list of income-producing methods that you can investigate further. I will not explain or detail all of these (like I do for ten of the most common in the next section) but I want to toss them out there so you can have tons of opportunity to make money online or with your blog. **Visit the links provided or Google the term to find out more.** All of these have one thing in common: it is a way to make money using the Internet. *Note: I've*

taken much of this marketing and service information from the websites and blogs of each company or service. Any facts, claims, or information is from their site, so if you have questions, contact their sales and support departments.

1. [Adbrite](#) - The largest independent ad exchange, reaching 300 million global unique visitors every month, including more than 150 million in the U.S. With site-level transparency and an open platform for data providers and real-time bidders to plug into, we maximize selection and control for advertisers and publishers. Leveraging first- and third-party audience data for advanced targeting is dead simple, and results can be closely monitored through our superior real-time reporting and analysis.
2. [AdClickMedia](#) - With AdClickMedia, you can monetize from your websites, blogs, and Email Lists instantly. We can connect and serve relevant ads on your web pages that your visitors will find value in, and get paid for each click that you provide our advertisers. Join **31,075**



website owners who are currently earning two-tier commissions from their current web traffic by displaying quality Photo text ads, Banner ads, Interstitial ads, and Email PPC ads.

3. [Adify](#) – Maximize sell-through of your valuable site inventory. Direct Sales, Site Representation, Audience Network, Real-Time Bidding, Sponsored Links, Unsold. We think of publisher inventory as a pyramid. At the top is your direct sales channel which is the highest quality inventory reserved for your direct sales force. At the bottom is your unsold inventory. In between, you have additional layers of tiered quality inventory that you need to somehow monetize. This is where Cox Digital Solutions comes in – we have built our business on how to make your inventory profitable:
 - Work with us as your site representation partner.
 - Tap into our audience network for greater targeting and higher CPM's.
 - Use our real-time bidding platform and take your revenue to new heights.
 - Take advantage of our performance-based solution.

And no need to worry about channel conflict, we've got that covered, too. Our advanced technology gives you the control and freedom to block advertisers and set price minimums. We've got you covered.

4. [Adtegrity](#) – You've got the site, the content, and the traffic, now it's time to turn those eyeballs into revenue. You've come to the right place. At Adtegrity, we're always interested in adding high-quality family-friendly websites to our growing collection of publishers. Our philosophy is simple: serve an ad to every single visitor while maintaining top-notch performance for Advertisers.
5. [Amazon's Affiliate program](#) – Choose from over a million products to advertise to your customers. Whether you are a large network, content site, or blogger, we have simple linking tools to meet your advertising needs and help you monetize your web site. Earn advertising fees from Qualifying Purchases, not just the products you advertised. Plus, our competitive conversion rates help you maximize your earnings. Get up and running today. Just one approval to join—no third-party advertiser approvals.
6. [Aweber Communications](#)– Create profitable customer relationships for your business! AWeber's email marketing tools like professional email signup forms and autoresponder services make it easy for you to build your email list and stay in touch with prospects.
7. [BidVertiser](#) – Targeted pay-per-click advertising.
 - Maximize the effectiveness of your ads - target your ads by channels and keywords.
 - Pay only for the clicks you receive.

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- We use a pay-per-click advertising (PPC) model which means that you only pay for the clicks you receive. You choose how much you are willing to pay for each click in each of the categories you have chosen to display your ads on.
 - Set the max price you are willing to pay per click.
 - We automatically optimize your cost-per-click bids closest to your nearest competitor, so you get the best price available for your traffic.
 - Create your ads in minutes.
 - Easily create, upload, and edit your ads. Simply choose a title, two lines of a description, and you are set to go. You can also upload image ads (banners) in multiple ad formats.
 - Choose your geographic targeting. BidVertiser allows you to display your ads within a geographic range you determine. Simply choose your geographic targeting and we will show your ads only to users located anywhere in the country or countries you selected.
 - Monitor the performance of your ads. Use the Advertiser Center to monitor the performance of your ads by customizing dozens of online reports and integrate our performance counter in order to track your conversions on real-time.
8. [Burst Media](#) – Our in-market advertising sales team works with media agencies in the leading advertising markets around the country to promote the value of sites like yours to national brand advertisers. Burst gives you

high CPMs, quality campaigns, and full control of which ads run on your site.

Our sales teams also work with marketers that have compelling offers and aggressive online acquisition goals. These offer-based/acquisition-focused campaigns provide our publishers the opportunity to monetize their unsold ad impressions and maximize their fill rate with quality performance campaigns.

Burst offers a robust Publisher Account Center (the “BPAC”) that provides information and reports in an easy-to-use interface. Built on the feedback from our publishers, the BPAC offers:

- A sophisticated, user-friendly campaign and revenue management tools.
- Easy-to-generate campaign reports that show history by date, ad size, and ad location.
- Automatically manage the types of campaigns that run on your site based on campaign filters.
- View of proposed campaigns.

9. [Twelvefold Media](#) – Twelvefold Media is the only emotive-based media company that helps brands target, reach, and persuade engaged audiences by delivering the right ad, in the right place, at the right time to the most motivated customers in the right mindset. Twelvefold Media's proprietary technology creates customized digital media packages that achieve superior results and insights for brands and advertisers.

The company has also renamed its suite of products that comprise Spectrum:

- Twelvifold Touch (formerly BuzzRoll) delivers relevant, custom advertising experiences to brands and consumers and, for the first time, the ability to match creative to the emotional connection made between a piece of content and a reader.
 - Twelvifold Studies (formerly BuzzStudies) measures the impact of media within specific content, as it relates to individual brand objectives. Delivered in-unit and focused to 4-6 questions, Twelvifold Studies measure the lift in message recall, brand preference, purchase intent, or other key brand metrics.
 - Twelvifold Insights (formerly BuzzInsights) provides research and content target building aligned to brand objectives for campaign planning, campaign launch, and optimization.
10. [Casale Media](#) - Our platform brings together the world's most admired advertiser and publisher brands, connecting them through the optimization and research required to generate outstanding value on both sides. We look at the big picture: your audience, your brand, your sales strategy. Our focus is delivering long-term sustainable value that protects the content and audience you've worked so hard to build. Learn more about why you should partner with us.

- We are a channel and technology partner that complements (not competes against) your direct sales efforts.
- We provide publishers with 100% pre-emptive control over the advertisers and campaigns that run on their sites.
- We directly partner with the Web's top advertisers and leading global brands.
- Our innovative technologies power our ability to deliver long-term value and sustainable revenue.
- Our consultative service approach ensures that your needs are always being met.

11. [Check Appointments](#) - Online Scheduling Software

- Online Booking Software for individuals or groups.
- Phone Tag, Missed Calls, Lost Customers, and Forgotten Appointments. How much money has this cost your business?
- **checkAppointments is your solution.** Simply add checkAppointments to your website to instantly give your customers the ability to **conveniently schedule their own appointments online, 24/7** and provide you with simple appointment management system for your appointment scheduling.
- Send out automatic email reminders, have multiple schedules and locations, and easily manage and streamline your whole appointment scheduling process.

- Save time, money, and stand out from your competitors by being the first to provide customers the convenience of booking their appointments online!
12. [Chitika](#) – Chitika allows you to display ads on your **website, blog, app, or mobile site**, with content from our high-quality network of advertisers. Chitika offers search-targeted, mobile, and local ads to best target your users. Become a publisher today and bring your revenue to whole new level with Chitika.
13. [Christian Advertising Network](#) – Publishers:
- Are you looking for Christian advertising content for your website?
 - Are you tired of using generic ad networks that display ads that are not relevant for your website?
 - Would you like to like to generate more ad revenue from your visitors with relevant Christian ads?

Sign up today at the Christian Ad Network and start displaying a wide variety of relevant Christian advertising from a broad network of Christian companies that is sure to increase your website's revenue.

14. [Clickbank](#)
- Commissions of up to 75% - much higher than other affiliate networks.
 - Digital products mean instant delivery and faster commissions.

- More reward for your efforts.
 - Huge variety of product types not found on other networks.
 - Detailed sales statistics to guide your selection.
 - Promote any product immediately.
 - No individual contracts required – easy and fast to get started.
15. [Clicksor](#) - Offers webmasters the opportunity to earn additional income by simply underlining a selection of clickable text or displaying targeted contextual advertising banners on their websites or blogs. We offer you:
- Fast payments (every 15 days).
 - \$50 payout (Check or Paypal).
 - Excellent client support (live support).
 - Multiple Ad Formats (more than 10).
 - Amazing referral program (10% commission).
16. [Commission Junction](#) – Many of the world's most recognized and specialized marketers and publishers run their affiliate programs on CJ's platform. Whether you choose to manage your own affiliate relationships or have us manage them for you, we have everything you need to get started and get results. CJ's PayPerCall programs enable publishers and advertisers to develop and track offers beyond the online environment. Unique toll-free numbers allow tracking of leads and sales that tie back to a consumer's online and off-line behaviors. The result:

more responsive engagements, extended reach, and higher conversion rates.

17. **PulsePoint** – Our leading technology platform delivers more value with every transaction.

PulsePoint has invested over \$50M in developing the largest independent Ad Exchange in the industry. In December 2006, the exchange reached 1 billion transactions per month. Today, PulsePoint enables more than 200M real-time ad transactions a day on its high-quality, highly-selective direct publisher inventory. PulsePoint ranks among the top 12 ad-supported properties, according to comScore, and counts among its clients Fortune 500 companies in pharmaceuticals, automotive, finance and consumer goods, among others. Set the price: AskPrice is a unique PulsePoint solution that enables publisher partners to determine the value of their audience and set an AskPrice – the CPM they believe delivers the greatest return on inventory opportunities. Unlike other exchange partners that give no control over pricing options, PulsePoint makes it easy to maximize revenue opportunities – giving 100% of the AskPrice for each impression sold.

18. **CPA (Cost Per Action)** – An online advertising pricing model, where the advertiser pays for each specified action (a purchase, a form submission, and so on) linked to the advertisement.

19. **Creating a Directory of Professionals** – Are you familiar with a certain industry, type of employee, or group of hobbyists? Consider creating a directory of professionals or experts for this group. You can then charge the professionals to be included, or allow them a free listing and line up advertising sales from companies who want to market to that group.

20. **Creating an Email Subscriber List** – An email subscriber list with a service such as Aweber.com is an absolute necessity for any blog, website, or online business. An email subscriber list is simply a compilation of email addresses gathered by various techniques.

It may be customers who buy things from you, readers of your blog, or people who have given you their email address in exchange for something (like a helpful e-book). This email subscriber list is commonly known as an “opt-in list” which means that the email address owner has voluntarily given you permission to send them future emails.

You can make money from your subscriber list in many ways: sending them notices about new products, alerting them to new blog content (which results in income via direct advertising or whatever you sell on your blog), or by including links or affiliate-service recommendations. Those are just a few of the ways you can use an email subscriber list to generate online income. The email subscriber list is absolutely one of the most important

parts of your business and should be one of the very first things you set up when you begin.

Also, services like Aweber.com which is the one I recommend, offer you newsletter templates and list-campaign services which are one of the best ways to stay in contact with your subscribers.

21. **Direct Banner Advertising** – If you have been on the Internet for more than five minutes, you have seen banner ads. They are like little billboard advertisements that pepper most websites or blogs. There many ways to draw income from banner ads. You can be paid a flat fee for displaying the ad for a certain length of time. You can charge different amounts for the ads based on their size and where they appear on the screen. You can charge for a certain amount of “impressions” (each time the ad appears on the page is an impression). You can charge each time the banner ad is clicked.

Direct ads can be sold by you (the website or blog owner). You can also sign up for a service such as Google AdSense, which will supply ads for you and pay you a commission each time the ad is clicked.

There are a lot of ways to make money from banner advertising. The downside is that income via advertising is what everyone is after so there is a tremendous amount of competition for ad dollars. However, if you build a highly trafficked blog or website, the advertisers will be

knocking at YOUR door rather than you beating the sidewalk looking for them.

22. **Donations** – If you provide a great service or valuable content, you can appeal to readers and participants to give a donation. They could donate for certain items of information, on a regular basis, or just whenever they feel like donating. Some bloggers will say “buy me a cup of coffee” which is a way of asking for a small donation of \$2-\$3.
23. **Ebay** – Founded in 1995, eBay connects a diverse and passionate community of individual buyers and sellers, as well as small businesses. eBay is the world’s largest online marketplace with over 95 million active users worldwide. Their collective impact on e-commerce is staggering: In 2010, the total worth of goods sold on eBay was \$62 billion -- more than \$2,000 *every second*. All eBay programs payout their affiliates using the Quality Click Pricing (QCP) payout system. Affiliates will be paid for each click that is directed to an eBay site and the price paid per click will be dependent on the quality of the traffic delivered to eBay. The only exception to this will be publishers whose business model is loyalty or cash back who will be paid out on a Cost Per Action (CPA) model.
24. **Ebook Sales** – An eBook is an electronic publication usually in PDF format. It may be a publication you produce yourself and sell. Or it may be an eBook from

another author that you sell for a commission (sometimes called “affiliate sales”).

25. **E-Junkie** – E-junkie provides shopping cart and buy-now buttons to let you sell downloads and tangible goods on your website, eBay, MySpace, Google Base, Craigslist, and other websites using PayPal Payments Standard, PayPal Payments Advanced, PayPal Payments Pro, PayPal Payflow Pro, Google Checkout, Authorize.Net, TrialPay, ClickBank, and 2CheckOut.

For merchants selling downloads, we automate and secure the digital delivery of files and codes. If you are selling tangible goods, we automate the shipping calculation and inventory management. Our shopping cart has a built in sales tax, VAT, packaging and shipping cost calculators. You can sell ebooks, sell mp3 tracks and albums, sell software, icons, fonts, artwork, phone cards, event tickets, cds, posters, books, t-shirts, and almost everything else you want to sell. E-junkie has no transaction limit, no bandwidth limit, no setup fee, and no transaction fee.

26. **FlexOffers** –Make money from your website when you promote products and services through the FlexOffers.com affiliate marketing network. FlexOffers.com has the latest products, promotions, and online-only offers from well-known brands and niche advertisers alike. FlexOffers.com affiliate marketing content can be easily integrated into any site as banner ads or text links, or as product marketing content created by our editorial staff. FlexOffers.com also offers

customizable marketing templates designed to turn any website into an online store.

27. **Freelance Writing** – Guess what people need on blogs? Writing. So if you have any writing skills at all, it is not real hard to find freelance writing work. As well, many bloggers and online business people are writing e-books (like this one). I will pay a freelance writer to edit and proof this book for me. She is making a living writing for others on the Internet. Proofing, editing, ghost writing, or guest blogging are all great ways to make income online.

You can start freelance writing by contacting blog owners and offering your services, or sign up on a site like Elance.com where people like me post projects and freelance writers like you bid on them.

28. **Google AdSense** – Get more value from your online content. If you're looking for a flexible, hassle-free way to show relevant and engaging ads alongside your online content and make money, Google AdSense makes perfect sense. You can easily show AdSense ads on your website, mobile sites, and site search results.
29. **In-text Advertising** – Unlike banner ads, this type of advertising takes the form of hyperlinks in your content. For instance, let's say you write a blog post about your favorite college; and every time you mention that college, it is hyperlinked to the college website. The college then pays you for linking over to them.

Often, you will be approached by freelance writers who offer to write free blog content for you if you agree to allow them a certain number of in-text ads (also known as “inline ads”). If you write, you can combine freelance writing with in-text advertising as an online business model. The best of both worlds would be to offer a discounted price for the content (so you still get paid for writing too) while getting paid by the advertiser for inline ads.

30. [JobThread](#) – (a widget box of job openings)
 - Standalone widget.
 - For sites and blogs of all sizes.
 - Targeted content for your visitors.
 - Revenue generator.
 - Customizable content and design.
 - Works anywhere HTML/JavaScript is supported.
 - Used by leading publishers and bloggers.
31. [Kontera](#) – Kontera provides publishers with incremental advertising revenues from your mobile or PC web pages. Kontera specializes in bringing highly relevant content and information from brands, and as a result, our ads are often viewed as native ads that are least disruptive to the consumer experience. We provide content-powered display offerings, as well as our in-text and in-image product family, and our unique suite of mobile monetization products.
32. [LinkConnector](#) – Establish long-term relationships with globally recognized and trusted brands, Internet Retailer

Top 500 merchants, exclusive merchants and those with highest paying offers. Find out what others are talking about with our dedicated Affiliate Relations Team that provides our affiliates with in-depth support and representation. Maximize your performance with our innovative technologies, exclusive to LinkConnector. Affiliate Connections provides a quick and dynamic system to help affiliates find optimal promotions for their sites. Using this technology, an affiliate can sample multiple promotions from one or more merchants. The Affiliate Connections system then optimizes the display to the better performing links on the affiliate's site thereby increasing earnings for both the affiliate and merchant.

Currently, an affiliate grabs code from an Affiliate Network to promote a merchant's product or services. This code is placed on an affiliate's site in the form of a link (text, banner, or otherwise). The code is specific to a merchant and its promotion. LinkConnector's Affiliate Connections™ technology allows an affiliate to break free of this paradigm by allowing an affiliate to create a connection to LinkConnector. This client-side code requests a promotion from LinkConnector on every page view of an affiliate's site. With LinkConnector dynamically populating the content on an affiliate's site, the possibilities for optimization are almost limitless.

33. [LinkShare](#) – Also called an Affiliate, a Publisher displays ads, text links, or product links from an Advertiser in return for a commission when a sale is made or when a

lead is acquired. The sale can also be tied to a specific action such as filling out a form or downloading a trial. Rakuten LinkShare facilitates relationships between Publishers and Advertisers by providing the underlying technology that manages links, tracks results and commissions, and sends payments.

34. **Media.net** – We provide you easy access to high-quality display ads by connecting with all the major buyer networks. We have a seat on all the major ad exchanges and manage strong relationships with hundreds of relevant companies around the world - all the major DSPs, Agency Trading Desks, Horizontal Networks, Vertical Networks, Performance Networks, AMPs, DMPs etc. We manage all the operational overhead so that you don't have to.
- Dynamic optimization- Our system boosts your revenue by automatically optimizing between text and display ads for each impression, without the need to run separate ad tags. Leading media buyers drive up bid prices as they compete for each impression through our real-time auction.

35. **Membership Sites** – Membership sites involve private-content areas, or exclusive services available only to subscribing members. You make income either with subscriptions or advertising inside the member area (usually a highly focused target group). You can also charge different prices for varying degrees of access (for example, you see membership sites with “Gold,” “Silver,” and “Bronze” memberships).

Membership sites are particularly valuable because not only can you get paid for the membership, it gives you a highly focused target group to continually market to as well. Here are a couple of examples of membership sites I have that make money in two different ways:

Linky Tools – This site allows members to sign up for a free 30-day trial to test out the service. Then it becomes a yearly paid subscription. This model will obviously result in just a fraction of the amount of members but each member represents income.

Linky Followers – This is a totally free membership site and the goal is to get as many members as possible to drive up traffic and exposure. The income available with this model comes from contextual advertising or direct marketing to members.

36. **Merchandising** (t-shirts, mugs, CDs, DVDs) – The Internet opens up a worldwide market for an unlimited “storefront.” You can sell virtually anything that can be shipped or delivered electronically. Literally, in one day, you can set up a “store” online and be selling your merchandise to the entire world. It is an opportunity truly unique to the creation of the “the worldwide web.”

Another interesting development (that is fairly new) is the availability of “on demand” merchandise, meaning the item is not created until it is ordered and paid for. Gone are the days of having to purchase an upfront inventory of 100,000 items with the hope that you can sell them. You

can sell books, DVD's, t-shirts, promotional items, etc., one at a time, with each being produced only after the order is processed.

The per-piece price is usually higher than buying in bulk but that is offset by the absence of risking large amounts of up-front capital by having mass-produced items.

37. **Offering Consulting and Related Services** – Are you an expert at something? Probably, even if you do not realize it. The Internet allows you to market yourself as a consultant, advisor, or expert to the entire world. With the invention of online video meetings (WebEx, GoToMeeting), eLearning, and any number of communication methods, you can consult all over the world via computer.

So you are not an expert? Are you sure? Keep in mind the true definition of an “expert”: you know more about a certain topic than the person you are talking to. So if 60% of the people in the world know more about _____ than you do, you simply need to market your consulting services to the 40% who do not. Many people shy from consulting or offering “expertise” because they are not “elite” (in the top 10%). That’s a shame.

Become an “expert” in something you have knowledge and experience with. Offer consulting, training, or advice to those who know less than you (you’re the “expert” to them) while simultaneously seeking out those who know

more than you so you can continue to learn and increase your consulting potential.

38. **Premium Content** – This is any type of content that you simply charge money for. The only trick is this: have content that someone else is willing to pay for.

It might be tricks, tips, or lessons learned... it might be unique information that you have developed from your own experiences.

The two keys are: 1) scarcity – the information needs to be unique or really hard to find elsewhere, especially for free; and 2) the information has to be truly useful to the buyer (solve a problem, make them money, and improve their life).

One interesting difficulty with premium content is convincing buyers the content is worth buying without revealing what it is before they buy. You can do this with excerpts, testimonials, and guarantees of satisfaction.

Sometime websites (especially news or entertainment sites) will offer some content for free, and the rest paid (premium content).

39. **RSS Feed Ads** – an RSS feed is a content structure that allows a blog to deliver their content to other blogs or to “feed readers.” Websites will use feeds to populate their own sites with content, or readers will use feed readers

for convenience (they do not have to visit each blog or site).

You can add advertisements to these feeds to generate income with services such as Google AdSense for Feeds.

40. **Run a Webinar** - Wikipedia: Web conferencing refers to a service that allows conferencing events to be shared with remote locations. These are sometimes referred to as webinars or, for interactive conferences, online workshops. In general the service is made possible by Internet technologies, particularly on TCP/IP connections. The service allows real-time point-to-point communications as well as multicast communications from one sender to many receivers. It offers information like text-based messages, voice and video chat to be shared simultaneously, across geographically dispersed locations. Applications for web conferencing include meetings, training events, lectures, or short presentations from any computer.

41. **Shareasale** - There are currently over 2,500 Merchants plugged in to the ShareASale Network. Each of these merchants has a different type of product that they are selling - and each is ready to commission you on that sale if you bring a customer to them.

The idea - and the implementation - are simple. You decide which merchants to promote and how to promote them, and when commissions are generated, you can see your stats in real-time. All payments are consolidated

from the programs you participate in, and are paid with one check or direct deposit by ShareASale. ShareASale has a strict "No Software" policy which means you will not have to deal with affiliates utilizing Adware, Toolbars, or other desktop software.

42. **ShopSense** - Readers click, you get money. ShopSense is a free service from ShopStyle.com that pays you for sending quality traffic to online retailers.

With our ShopSense tools, you can add banner ads, beautiful product layouts, interactive shopping widgets, and individual product photography to your site, all "ShopSense-enabled," and get paid when your visitors click through to online retailers. Clicks are automatically tracked from your site to the retailer.

- Get paid for each click you send to a retailer
- Choose products from more than 300 of the best online retailers
- Access our API for custom integration
- Track your revenue daily and get paid monthly

43. **SimplyHired Job-o-matic** - Hosted Job Board Software. Job-a-matic lets publishers and bloggers instantly create a job board. We've made it easy to customize the colors, domain name, job categories, and prices to fit your needs.

You also have access to Simply Hired's sponsored job listings, and you'll get paid every time a visitor clicks on a

job. Job-a-matic is like free job board software, with no installation and free customer service.

We also offer publishers a job widget and other tools to help them promote their job board in other areas of their site.

44. **Skimlinks** - Earn through affiliate marketing without the effort - install in minutes and start collecting the money you've been missing. Instant access to 18,000+ affiliate programs. Skimlinks receives top commission rates so that you earn more. Offering practical and invaluable insight on what your visitors click on and what they buy online. Choose how Skimlinks works for your site and your community - virtually invisible monetized links.
45. **Software, Plugins, Themes, Apps** - This suggestion is for those who are a little more into high-tech stuff like programming, application development, or graphic design.

With regards to blogs, there is good income to be made with designing "skins"(themes) for blogs or websites; creating plug-ins for blogs which end users install to give them increased blog functionality; or creating online applications.

My site [Linky Tools](#) is a good example of an online application. A few years ago, I discovered a need for a much easier and better way to create lists of links within

a blog post. So I designed and created a service for it which is basically an online application. An online application is any function or service that happens "online" (whereas most applications in the past before the Internet got big were downloaded and installed on the local computer). The online application is delivered by and used inside the web browser.



46. **Technorati** - What is Technorati Authority? Technorati Authority measures a site's standing & influence in the blogosphere. With the October 2009 redesign of technorati.com, we've changed the Technorati Authority calculations to better reflect the continually changing attention of the blogosphere.

We have also added a new measure of Technorati Authority, which is topical by content category, i.e., technology, movies, automotive, etc.

How is Technorati Authority calculated? Authority is calculated based on a site's linking behavior, categorization, and other associated data over a short, finite period of time. A site's authority may rapidly rise and fall depending on what the blogosphere is discussing at the moment, and how often a site produces content being referenced by other sites.

The new Authority calculation differs from the past version, which measured linking behavior over a longer 6-month timeframe. Please note that links in blogrolls don't count towards Authority, as they are not indicative of interest in relevant content; we stopped including blogroll links in August 2008.

Authority is on a scale of 0-1000. 1000 is the highest possible authority.

47. [Tribal Fusion](#) – Unlike other networks that purchase ad inventory at a fixed CPM, thereby concealing their margins, Tribal Fusion collaborates with our publisher partners on a completely transparent revenue share model. This translates to a true partnership such that only when our publishers succeed, do we succeed. This commitment to publisher success means we work that much harder to secure the highest eCPMs, the biggest advertising budgets, and the most appropriate advertisers for our partner sites' users. Tribal Fusion's® CPM rates are among the highest in the industry and we work with only the most reputable advertisers. We also offer reliable payments, free ad-serving technology, a dedicated account manager, and up-to-date, real-time reporting.
48. [ValueClick](#) – One key differentiator for our company is our cross-platform story. In other words, advertisers come to us because we deliver results on display, mobile, and video platforms simultaneously.

We are a sophisticated and experienced data and

technology company with expertise that can be carried across multiple devices.

As a ValueClick Media publisher, you possess the right to approve or decline any advertiser at any time. Our Publisher User Interface is intuitive, providing real-time campaign performance, activity, fill rate, and revenue earning data in real time. As the largest and most reputable audience targeting platform of its kind since 1998, ValueClick Media's deep advertiser relationships and strong financial position make us a reliable partner you can count on.

49. [Viglink](#) – VigLink can deliver an important additional revenue source from where your readers spend the majority of their time and attention: your content. Automatically affiliates the links in your content so you get paid when your readers click or make a purchase. Optionally insert new links when VigLink's LinkWeaver technology detects a merchant, brand, or product reference. Understand which threads and posts are driving the most revenue and what products your members care about.
50. [Web Scribe Job Board](#) – Start A Job Site That's Fully Automated. Just like Monster.com, you can let employers post jobs and candidates apply.
 - Maximize Free Google Traffic With SEO - Every page is search engine optimized to get the best possible rank in Google.

- Send Resume & Job Alerts by Email - Keep candidates and employers coming back with automatic email matches.
 - Charge People and Keep All Revenues - You set the prices and keep all the revenues. We never take a commission.
51. **Bonus: A Newsletter** – Create a newsletter for a hobby, business niche, or general interest topic. Have people subscribe to it. In each issue you can sell advertising, product endorsements, editorial space, and all sorts of marketing opportunities to other people who want to reach your audience.

A Closer Look At Ten Of The Most Common

CPC Ad Networks

CPC stands for Cost Per Click. This is probably the most popular way to start monetizing on your blog. One of the most used CPC ad networks is the Google AdSense Program. It basically works this way: Google puts ads on your blog and whenever someone clicks on those ads, you get some money. Cool, right?



Let's take a look at the benefits of signing up with Google AdSense. The program only puts relevant and engaging ads on your website so you don't have to worry about them cluttering up your workspace. Also, since the ads have a lot to do with your content, you are actually helping out your readers by providing relevant resources for them in a convenient manner.

For example: your blog is about training and taking care of dogs. The ads that Google will place will be those that are in line with your blog entry for the day. Let's say you are talking about giving dogs a bath. Google will put ads for dog shampoo or dog soaps on your page. This will be of great help to your customers who no longer need to search out where to find supplies for bathing their dogs. It's a win-win situation.

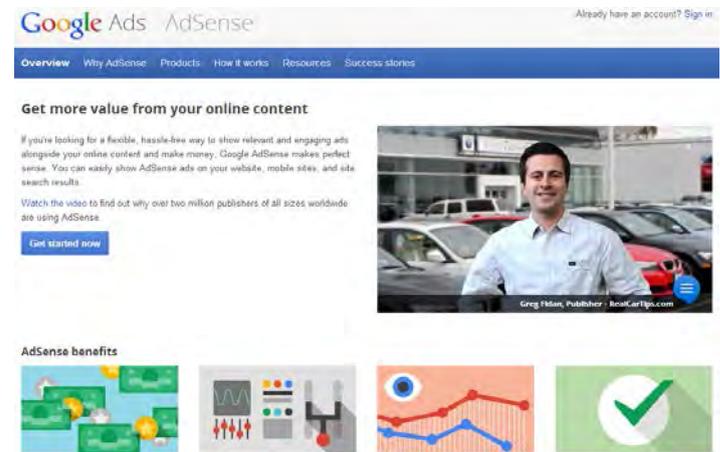
Google AdSense works with millions of advertisers. This means that they have the ability to hook up only the right kind of ads for your blog. There is a greater chance for revenue because you are already driving the right audience to your blog. There is a higher probability of them clicking on those ads. Here's another cool thing: you have full control over which ads go into your website. You are not helpless to an onslaught of irrelevant Google Ads. Just like any proper business owner, you get to decide which ads can go on your site and which cannot.

You also get detailed metrics and analytics reports in order to fully maximize your ads. When you get started, you may find that you are making only a few cents per week. By

incorporating a few tips and techniques, you will see that you can greatly increase your profits.

One thing you can do to improve the success of Google AdSense is to make the colors of your ads blend better with your blog theme. While there are reports indicating that loud and contrasting colors will draw more people to the ad, this may yield the opposite effect. Take some time to experiment with colors and decide for yourself what the best option for your blog is.

Another great tip is to carefully consider the placement location of ads. There are plenty of resources that will show you which areas on your blog are the best places to put your ads. Do not just stick them wherever there is open space. Location matters.



The image is a screenshot of the Google AdSense website. At the top, it says "Google Ads AdSense" and "Already have an account? Sign in". Below that is a navigation bar with links: "Overview", "Why AdSense", "Products", "How it works", "Resources", and "Success stories". The main content area is titled "Get more value from your online content". It features a video player with a man in a light blue shirt standing in a car dealership. The video description says: "If you're looking for a flexible, hassle-free way to show relevant and engaging ads alongside your online content and make money, Google AdSense makes perfect sense. You can easily show AdSense ads on your website, mobile sites, and ads search results. Watch the video to find out why over two million publishers of all sizes worldwide are using AdSense." Below the video is a "Get started now" button. Underneath the video, there is a section titled "AdSense benefits" with four icons: a green map with yellow location pins, a grey dashboard with a line graph and a bar chart, a red line graph with a blue line graph, and a green square with a white checkmark.

Finally, try incorporating Google AdSense with an ad network that does CPM, which means Cost Per Impressions. You will find that these two methods work well together.

Affiliate-Product Sales

When using the Internet, people tend to rely heavily on recommendations. Why do you think this is so? Well, first of all, most people hesitate to try out a product from the Internet relying solely on the product's own marketing campaign. It's like putting your trust in something that has no guarantee. The online market can be a dangerous place after all. There are as many scammers as there are legitimate businesses. No one wants to be put in a place where they end up buying something that does not live up to its advertising hype.

What business owners have found out is that if someone actually referred their product to someone else, the owners have a higher chance of making a sale. It's the same thing as with the physical world. If your friend or someone you trust came up to you and told you that this restaurant she tried the other night had killer tacos, you would most likely believe her. Because it is coming from someone whose opinion you value, you are likely to take her up on her recommendation.

The same goes with affiliate-product sales. You mention a product on your website and offer a link that goes to the product owner's website, and you get something out of that recommendation if a sale goes through. You would be surprised at how the numbers add up, especially if you are recommending a really good product.



There are about a million options for affiliate-product sales on the Internet right now. In order to find the affiliate program that is best for you, it is necessary to do your research and find affiliate-program features that will integrate well into your blog. You may want to check out Amazon's affiliate program. As you know, Amazon is a giant when it comes to selling products online. They are well known and offer millions of products that you can recommend on your blog. Amazon also makes it easy on the blogger by offering linking tools so that you will not need a programmer just to participate in their affiliate program.

Another good affiliate program is FlexOffers.com. They have a wide variety of available affiliate products from automotive to clothing accessories, media to insurance, and many more. It is highly likely you will find a product that you would like to recommend.

When considering product affiliation, you should be careful about the sort of products that you recommend. While it can be very tempting to provide links to products that are highly sellable, ask yourself first: is this something that you would really recommend to other people? Integrity comes first even in the virtual world. Maybe your blog will become famous for recommending the right kind of brands, which will pull up your credibility and authority. Wouldn't you prefer this to a blog that is known for linking up to sites which sell bad products? Make sure you put a lot of thought into your recommendations. Your blog-reading public counts on you to only make honest recommendations.

Direct-Ad Sales

In a direct-ad sale, advertisers pay for space on your blog in order to feature their advertisements. This works well for blogs with a high readership in a particular niche. For example, your blog might be one of the most well-known sites when it comes to food and eating out. Naturally, restaurant and other related businesses would like a spot on your blog given its' incredibly high level of traffic.



The way to attract advertisers to your site is, of course, to be the go-to site when it comes to your chosen niche. Once advertisers see the number of your daily page views, they will want to purchase advertising space on your blog. Another way to attract advertisers to your blog space is to create a good system that they cannot refuse. In addition to offering them ad space, why not offer to write up an (honest) monthly review of their restaurant for the next six months?

You can get really creative with your blog space because it is yours. The more options you can offer the advertiser, so much the better. It might take some time before you can start selling space; but in the meantime, continue working towards making your blog into one of the best in its categories. Once you are

winning awards for your blog, you are on the right track and will be a likely candidate for direct-ad sales.

There are a couple of options when it comes to the actual advertisements you would like to sell. Banner ads are likely to cost more since the advertiser can basically put the image that they want on their purchased space. Banner placement may take some technical know-how. Of course, you can always subscribe to an easy program that will allow you to manually add the banners to your site. If this sounds like something that you would rather not do, there are plenty of services that will take care of this for you.

Another option for advertisements is to sell text links. A text link is easier to generate because it only consists of creating a link that leads back to your sponsor. There are many tutorials that can show you how to create a link. One good thing about text links is that aside from it leading your readers to your sponsor's website, it also improves your advertiser's searchability online. Once you combine these two factors, it will naturally lead to more users and possibly more sales.

Product Sales

A good way to make money from your blog is to directly sell products. This way, you do not merely act as a bridge between the product and the buyer. You get the complete selling price if you own the product. What kind of products can you sell? Well,

this largely depends on the kind of blog you have and vice versa. For example: if you make clothing, you can sell it online.

Because your clothes are unique and one of a kind, you may have a small following that would grow as your business grows. You can even get into the buy-and-sell business if you have the knack for that kind of thing. The secret to a good buy-and-sell website is good pictures. Remember, the main way to advertise your products is through pictures.

When photographing your items, get more than one shot of whatever it is you are selling. Your potential customer would like to see the product from different angles. Get a close-up shot and concentrate on details. Your picture should be done in the correct lighting. If your shots come out blurry, forget it.



No one will want to take their chance on something they cannot see clearly from your photos.

The great thing about selling products online is that you virtually have no advertising or marketing expenses to think about. Your blog is your own marketing tool. If you consistently churn out awesome articles, you most likely have a trusted following. This will be your sales market as well. Treat this market well because it will grow.

Make sure that the products that you are selling on your blog are quality items that you really do recommend people spend their hard-earned money for. If they are not of the highest standard, do not sell them. It is not worth it to lose your customers for the sake of selling one faulty item. How do you know if the products are great? Test them out for yourself. Then write an honest review. Your readers will appreciate your candor.

What if you do not have products to sell? Here is where you can get the help of someone in your community. Have a friend who bakes delicious cupcakes? Offer to start an online business with her. She bakes the cupcakes and you feature them on your blog. Because you already have a loyal army of followers, you should not have a problem getting orders right away.

Another important consideration when selling products is how to collect payments. PayPal is one of the most trusted payment-delivery systems. You will also need to investigate the method of delivery that best suits your product. Are you

going to have the items delivered to your buyer's home address? If you are, make sure you add a surcharge for delivery and postage fees. You can also offer a pick-up option if your buyers are within your local area.

Donations

Yes, some blog owners actually make a decent income from donations. This is not usually a primary method for earning money but it might make a very good secondary stream. Donations are not regular or consistent so you should never depend on them. The success of donation income will vary largely depend on the kind of blog you are running. Service-related blogs generate the most donations.

For example: you might be running a blog about caring for the homeless. You have a shelter that feeds homeless people every weekend and you have a bunch of volunteers that come in to help out. Your blog can document the goings-on of your shelter. You can post stories of the people you have helped and the activities of your volunteers. This sort of service-oriented organization is one that people tend to favor with donations.

Of course, you do not have to go that route (service-oriented organization) to receive donations. You will find that there are a lot of people who will appreciate your blog if you leave useful tips regularly on a particular topic. For example: you are a skilled gardener and you have a knack for growing things. You may want to start a blog on gardening. If you are

consistent with your valuable advice, you may find yourself getting donations from appreciative people.



The reason that some people like giving donations is that blogs are generally free and they feel that they should repay the blog owner somehow. Donations work well because the amount is to be determined by the giver. You are not compelling them to pay a fixed price but rather they give you what they think your blog is worth, or a small amount (or large amount) as encouragement for you to keep up the good work. Yes, some people will even send you a check.

Another way you can make some money with donations is if you display promise in a certain area. For example: you are gifted with the ability to create beautiful paintings or artwork and are trying to make enough to go to an art school. Have a little button that says so on your blog. This may appeal to art-loving readers who may want to donate to your cause. Just make sure you update your blog regularly with pictures of your artwork. Your donors will enjoy seeing your progress.

Remember, donations are not meant to be your only source of income. Think of it as an aid and as a sign that your blog is providing value to your readers. If you depend too much on donations, you may be disappointed when none come in during lean months. Worse, you may starve if donations are really your only source of income. Be grateful for what you get in donations, but do not expect that they will pay for all your expenses.

Downloads

Another way to make some money with your blog is to have downloadable products available. A few of the popular downloadable products available on the Internet include books, music, and videos. Do you have expertise to provide something of value for your readers to download? If you can set up a link for people to pay and then download your product, you will have a great source of passive income.

Let us explore the possibilities further. For example: you are a musician and you have been playing around with a couple of tracks. Let's say you were able to come up with a collection of really great songs and you want the world to hear them. You can actually set up your blog in a way that you have one or two tracks that can be downloaded for free. This will give your listeners a chance to peruse your music before making any financial commitment.

Then you can offer the rest of the album at a price. If they like your music, they will pay the download price - no questions asked. This is a great way to promote your music (because you have one or two free tracks that will find its way into many people's music players). At the same time, you have the opportunity to make money from it since people who enjoyed your free tracks will definitely want to hear more.

The same principle works with any other product. For example: you happen to be a Photoshop guru. You start off with very helpful articles that will give beginners an idea of how much you know about the topic. Give away some really good tips but make sure you hold back your best ones for the complete tutorial that will be available for paid download. As with the music, once people get a taste of your expertise, they will want to know more. That is when you offer your e-book or tutorial at a price.



There are plenty of digital download programs that can help you out with the process. A good one to check out is e-junkie. With e-junkie, you can set up a nice system wherein your user will simply click a button to get their payment through to your PayPal account. This is a very passive way of making money; again, the product must be very good.

Other things you may want to look into, especially if you are tech savvy, are theme downloads. You can offer skins or themes for Word Press, Twitter, or Blogger. All you have to do is create designs and people who want to dress up their social media accounts will pay to download your designs. Another thing you can offer as a downloadable product would be eBooks. You can have either fiction or non-fiction books available for purchase and download.

Membership Packages

Membership packages work well with blogs that have high-quality content. If you are able to offer great and exclusive stuff not available anywhere else, then you can use that opportunity to actually charge for your content. So how do you do that? Simple. For a certain fee, users can become members of your site and gain access to exclusive content. You can bump up the membership to “premium” and offer more freebies for your higher paying members.

This works well because of the exclusivity that comes with being a member. Everyone likes the idea of being part of a “club.” So, use this to your advantage and offer membership packages to your readers. The secret here is to have amazing and valuable content that you churn out regularly. These articles, tips, videos, and whatnot should be first available for free to the public.

Once a healthy readership has been amassed, you can then start offering membership packages at a reasonable rate. Here, the members simply choose a package deal that best suits them. You can offer bronze, silver, and gold packages wherein the user gets content based on the package that he chose. The higher paying member gets more benefits and so on.

This is one of higher revenue-generating streams since you can price your membership fee according



to your content. It is also a good idea to have a membership renewal fee every year, although some blog owners prefer to make their offer last for a lifetime. It cannot be stressed enough about how content is key when it comes to this sort of service.

In order for your membership site to gain more credibility, it helps greatly if you are already an established expert in your particular field. Also, do not worry about running out of ideas. There is a ton of stuff that you can offer to your members that you will not offer to your regular readers. For example: you run a cooking blog and you share recipes with your readers every day. While all of your readers have access to these



recipes, only the members who have paid a certain subscription fee will get more.

What is this more? It can come in the form of a free booklet on 10 of the healthiest desserts. It can be a video tutorial on the 10 best ways to turn leftovers into a feast. It can even be a bunch of coupons that will get them a discount or free items from an online shopping store. Be creative. Look for ways to enhance the lives of your readers.

If you are blogging solely for the money, people will quickly see past your income-generating schemes. If they do not get anything worth their membership fees, you will quickly say goodbye to a long future in blogging. To avoid this catastrophe, make sure you write about something that you truly care about and honestly desire to share with the world. Your readers should be able to see your excitement and sincerity each time you post.

Sell Your Services

Bloggers should strive to establish their expertise on a certain topic. By blogging regularly about a topic like making money online, breeding dogs, or creating the perfect web design, you are building an audience who is coming to know you as the authority on your chosen niche. That is what blogging is, ideally; and it is this concept that helps you generate money from your expertise.

We have learned that selling products related to your blog topic is one of the ways that you can make some revenue. Because your readers trust you, they will most likely buy the products that you have to sell. Following “the association theory,” products that are associated with someone trustworthy will do well in the market. That is why celebrity endorsements work so well.

If you do not have a product that you can sell online, you can still find a way to sell something through your website by offering services. Blogging might be a huge component of your life, but it probably does not encompass your entire skill set. What skills can you offer to your readers? For example: your blog topic is web design. In order to succeed as a web-design blogger, it is a given that you are an excellent web designer.

Instead of just running a series of articles on web design, why not offer to do web design for your readers? Remember, you have already established your reputation and credibility through the content of your blog so you do not need any further marketing. Your readers will also likely be your clients. After all, why would they need to look anywhere else for their web-design needs if you offer the service?

Other services you can offer are SEO (Search Engine Optimization) services. If you have already established yourself as an expert on the subject, then you have already built your fan base that will translate into your customer base. A good way to demonstrate your credentials (apart from your regular blogging) is to post testimonials from satisfied clients.

Marketing online is a lot different from marketing offline. For one, you do not need to spend money on advertising or public relations. All the tools you need to market your service are already in your hands. All you need is a bit of SEO skills and a lot of patience. Selling your services online is a great way to generate income. You are in the best position to sell what you know because you already have a loyal readership that will most likely support you in your efforts.

After you have established yourself as an authority in your niche topic, you might be asked to speak at events related to your expertise. This is another good source of income and an opportunity to further strengthen your credentials.

Reviews

People often use the Internet to find information that is not as easily available anywhere else. Users like going to the Internet to get the latest news and views on a variety of topics. The Internet is a lot quicker than finding the same information in newspapers or magazines. People have become used to getting what they want when they want it.

The Internet is also a great place to scout out information on whether a product is a good buy, whether you are researching a new lipstick, a new game, a new app, or a new movie. Because information is ready and available at any time, the Internet has become a great source for reviews. If you are able to write reviews that people want to read, you can earn some extra cash in the process.



Your blog might concentrate on churning out reviews for a certain industry. Whether it is beauty, gaming, entertainment, or technology, people always appreciate a good review from someone with credibility in the specific product/service market.

Unlike advertising, reviews can usually be counted upon to present both sides of the story. Nowadays, people are more aware of where their money goes. No one would like to end up wasting his or her savings on a defective product.

That is why reviews work very well. Advertisers and business owners know this too. They are willing to pay a good amount of money to review writers who can positively feature their products on their blogs. So if you are a well-trusted and credible blog owner, you can venture into writing paid reviews for clients. You can get your start by doing reviews for

free. For example: you had lunch in a new Mexican restaurant. Why not post a review of your experience?

All you need to do is to be completely honest. Show your personality in your writing in order to engage your readers. Also, have some great pictures on hand. Your readers would like to know what they are getting.

Combine these factors, throw in your rating, and you have published your very own review. Keep running your unpaid reviews until you get a pretty good readership on your site. Once you are hitting impressive numbers, it is time to let business

owners know that your reviews are worth their paid consideration.

You may need to write a business email to potential clients showcasing your site along with your site statistics. If they want to be featured on your blog, they have to pay you a fee. Reviews are one of the most-searched-for items when people are checking out an unknown product or a service. If you run an excellent review site, you should have a steady flow of clients wanting to have you review their products.

Sometimes, your integrity may be tested. Do not ever give in and write a good review on a product that you think is otherwise, just because you were paid for writing the review. Remember, your reputation always comes first. Protect it well.



Consulting and Coaching

Once you have built up the trust of your blog readership, coaching and consulting is the next step to consider. You will notice that more people will be coming to you for advice regarding your expertise. Because you have consistently given out great advice on your blog, it only follows that people who want to learn more from you will want more of your time.

This is called consulting and coaching. When you are asked for hours of your time in exchange for compensation, you are basically offering your services as an expert in your field. Here, you are selling your time and your expertise. Consulting

and coaching depends on what your blog topic is. If, for example, you have proven yourself worthy in the field of SEO, then you will undoubtedly be asked by interested clients to review their existing SEO techniques.

More likely though, you will be contacted by start-up online businesses that have no clue to where to begin. The reason why they will contact you to ask for a few hours of your time is because they know your knowledge is worth compensation. That is why they will be willing to pay an hourly consultation fee. When you are an expert on a given topic, many users who would like to learn more will seek to hire you.

Consulting and coaching can happen online through Skype, or through other forms of Internet communication. There might be instances where you will be asked to speak to a certain group in a conference or a training seminar. With a well-developed blog and authority on a given topic, doors will be opened to you for speaking engagements and training workshops.

In order to succeed at becoming a valuable consultant, you must have a willingness to teach. You would make a good consultant if you are patient with your clients and are genuinely willing to help improve their current systems. As an online teacher/consultant, you are tasked with the job of

helping your students/clients grasp and eventually master new concepts.

Being a consultant and coach is very beneficial to your reputation. When you are regarded as an expert in a given topic, you can branch out into other money-making ventures. You can write eBooks, create video tutorials, and offer seminars of your own. Blogging is all about building your credibility and authority on a given subject. You must remember that there are millions of other blogs out there and you need to stand out.

Concentrate on giving the best advice you have to your readers. Do not be lazy with your work. Have a high set of standards for yourself. It may take time and practice, but becoming an expert consultant for your chosen field will greatly enhance your reputation and readership in the blog world.

If you are going to start an online business or blog and would like to make a living from it, you are going to have to put in some significant time and effort.

There is a myth floating around that anyone can make money with a blog. That is not true. Anyone can put up a blog - yes. To make money from blogging, you have to be willing to work hard, persevere, and build a business. If it was truly easy, quick, or

you could just pay some service to do it for you, everyone would be rich from blogging.

Work hard, continually learn, persevere, and always treat people right. Do those things, and soon you'll be making money online.



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Ten Secrets About Achievable Goals

Making Sure Dreams Don't Keep Slipping Away and Ending in Failure Time After Time

If you are like most people, you can look back down the road of your life and find a long trail of goals and dreams scattered along the roadside and laying in the ditches.

With the very best of intentions, we go through cycle after cycle of coming up with plans, goals, and waves of willpower that will finally have us achieving all of our dreams (like all those New Year's

Resolutions that never make it to February).

Then, after a few weeks, months, and for some people only days, we realize that we are right back to doing what we were doing before and another set of hopeful wishes has joined the junk pile.

We don't mean for it to be that way. We are 100% sure the day we write down our goals that we will stick to them; but, alas, here we are again. The last resolution, the last set of unrealized goals are behind you - and here you are reading about how to keep that from happening next time.

The good news is that YOU CAN achieve your goals! How do I know that? How can I promise you this? How can I guarantee it? Because I have been down that road.

Like you, I have been through the goal-setting and goal-breaking pattern over and over and over. Not anymore though... well, not nearly as often. I cannot say that I honestly keep every goal and every resolution; but I can tell you that (for the most part) I have learned to set goals, take massive action, and do what it takes to make sure they come to fruition.

In this section, I am going to share 10 secrets about how you can set goals - whether financial, personal, or spiritual - and keep them from crumbling into failure yet again.

Secret One: Set Goals You Can Actually Achieve

Have you ever seen those people who put great big disks in their lip and stretch them out? How about the ones who stretch their necks out by putting ring after ring, one on top of each other? How about those dudes who stick swords down their throats?

Do you think they just wake up one day and decide to take the biggest disk, the most rings, or the longest sword, and get down to business?

No. They start with the smallest first and work their way up.

One of the major reasons people fail at keeping their goals is because they come up with grandiose, earthshattering, mountain moving, life-changing epiphanies instead of devising realistic and achievable goals. Because of all of the self-esteem nonsense encouraged today, we are predisposed to not think realistically about either our abilities or our current level of discipline.

If you have spent 10 years putting on 150 pounds, don't think you're going to lose it all in six months and keep it all off.

If you have never developed good eating habits, don't make a goal that you will never eat sugar again - starting today. It will take about three days to blow that goal.

If you've never kept a rigid schedule or developed any kind of habits concerning goals, then do not think you're going to change your entire life in one day. You will not. You have to work up to big change by setting achievable small-change goals.

Let's say your ultimate goal is to earn and save \$200,000 in one year and do 200 push-ups in one sitting. If you've never worked hard, educated yourself about business, and been disciplined, you aren't going to have the ability to just go out and make \$200,000. In the same way, you are not going to plop down on the ground tomorrow and whip out 200 push-ups.



If you've never made or saved \$200,000, start with \$20. Then make \$100 and save \$100. Get out of debt, quit spending, stop playing the lottery, and stop eating out five times a week. Set an achievable goal of saving \$500. Then, shoot for \$1,000, and then \$5,000.

If you want to get to 200 push-ups in one sitting, start with a goal of being able to do two. Once you can do a couple of push-ups, increase your goal to five. After you proven to yourself you can do five, shoot for 10, then 20, then 50.

Be sure to plan achievable goals that will motivate you and keep you enthusiastic about reaching the finish line. Set goals that you know you can reach (and that you know you'll keep) rather than trying to impress everyone with grandiose goals far beyond your abilities.

Baby steps, my friend – that is the secret. Under-promising and overachieving, that is what will keep you motivated and feeling successful - rather than constantly failing to reach unrealistic expectations. Do you know how you walk from New York City to Los Angeles? One step at a time. You may have to start with one step A DAY. Have the same mentality about your goals.

Secret Two: They Aren't Real Goals If They Aren't Real Goals.

People set goals for many different reasons, but far too often it is to impress other people, get recognition, or to do something you've been convinced to do that you aren't really convinced you should do.

In other words, make sure the goals that you choose are really the goals that matter to you. Do your financial goals reflect the income you want to make to fulfill the purpose that you truly believe you have in life? Or are your financial goals simply to obtain a lifestyle that other people and Madison Avenue say you must have?

A lot of times, we choose goals to appease other people: parents, co-workers, friends and family, and sometimes even our spouse (not always a bad thing, but often it's not good). If we do not believe wholeheartedly in the goals that we set, it does not matter what we do - even if we do achieve them, it won't matter.

Be honest with yourself. Do you want to make more money to help other people and have more time with your family? Or, have you set a goal for more income because you think it will result in a life of being lazy and indulging your every fantasy?

Is your goal to pray and read the Bible so that other people will think you're more spiritual? Is your goal to lose weight made for reasons other than health and discipline?

Lip service, fake goals, goals for show, or any other type of image-over-substance reason will never result in any sort of achievement or fulfillment. Self-evaluation and complete honesty is a prerequisite for setting goals that are actually meaningful and achievable.

Secret Three: Ridiculous Control Over Your Schedule Is Necessary.

Extreme control over your day via scheduling, goal setting, and scripting has just the opposite effect that most people think. It is liberating and freedom-producing - not restrictive and tedious.

Most people think that maintaining control over every minute of your day constrains you, robs you of fun and spontaneity, and turns you into a rigid clock-watching freak.

They could not be more wrong. By controlling your time, your schedule, and your actions, you gain total freedom by accomplishing what YOU need to accomplish, doing what YOU need to do, and spending your time the way YOU need to spend it. All those "you" statements may sound selfish, but they are not when you are doing what YOU know are the right things to do (given the right priorities).

What's the alternative? Waking up and just "letting life happen"; which typically includes other people and circumstances interrupting you constantly, allowing what other people declare as "urgent" to keep you from doing what is important... and finally allowing haphazard laziness and time-wasting habits (like TV or Facebook) to steal away your most precious commodity: TIME.

What did you do with your time yesterday? How about last week at this time? If you can't tell me what you did, I can tell you: you wasted it. Threw it away. Gave it away. Blew it. Lost it.

Rigid control over your day gives you the freedom to do what YOU know is truly important, instead of what other people or "life" throws at you with total disregard for your priorities. We aren't just talking business... I'm talking about everything that is important to you.

I feel the GREATEST FREEDOM in knowing that I have planned my day to meet the needs, goals, and desires dictated by my priorities: God, marriage, kids, and business.

The biggest result of not controlling your schedule is stress. Stress will be the leading factor causing you to get off track with your goals and to weaken the resolve to keep them. Control your schedule, control your stress, and keep your goals.

Secret Four: Don't Set Goals You Don't Make Time For.

Closely related to controlling your schedule is the very simple fact that you must have time to achieve your goals. If your schedule currently does not have the margin of time needed to achieve a goal, it does not matter how much resolve or willpower you have, you simply will not have an opportunity to pursue it.

I have all sorts of goals I would like to set that I simply know I do not have time for. I would love to set goals to practice guitar 30 minutes a day, to work out in tennis one hour a day, to practice learning Spanish one hour a day, to write three hours a day, to study two hours a day, to work out one hour a day, to practice piano one hour a day, to play with my kids several hours a day, and spend 20 hours a day with my wife.

It does not matter how sincere or resolved I am about all those goals, I simply cannot allocate time to achieve them all. Of course, I'm exaggerating to make a point that many people

are unrealistic when it comes to allocating time to reach their goals.

Every January 1, we are bound and determined that we are going to work out two hours a day and run 10 miles, knowing that we realistically can only carve out 30- 45 minutes for exercise each day.

Whatever goals you make, be realistic about how much time you have to achieve them. Drop less important things from your schedule and learn to prioritize. Learn to ward off, block out, guard against, and fend off people, circumstances, and interruptions that will inevitably do their best to ruin your schedule and your ability to meet your goals.

Secret Five: Priorities - Not Interruptions; Important - Not Urgent.

If you ever want to consistently achieve your goals (whether financial or personal), you must learn that your priorities take precedence over interruptions. You must structure your day around the important while guarding against letting the urgent take over.

This may seem redundant because we've talked about your schedule already, but it goes much deeper than that. If your goals are not truly high priorities, then they do not deserve to have your day built around them. If your goals are not truly important, then they will not withstand the onslaught of all the urgent circumstances that will arise.

You must have the mentality of a leader and owner, not a worker and employee. A worker or employee responds to what others tell him to do. The instructions and priorities of someone else dictate his day. A leader or owner should be the person setting priorities and everyone else conforms their schedule and activities to him. Whether this is personal or business, have a leader mentality that recognizes what is high-priority/important and build your day around those things. When other people or circumstances threaten to derail your schedule or goals, you must take decisive action to prevent that from happening.

I'm not talking about being one of those people who cannot respond to other people in true need or cannot drop their entire plans for the day when the circumstances genuinely call for it. Those situations are rare - unimportant urgent interruptions are not.

You must learn to selfishly guard your time against those who would selfishly waste it and keep you from achieving your goals.

You must learn to recognize what is truly important and valuable enough to cause you to change your schedule versus those things that other people simply impose on you because they do not respect their time or yours.

Secret Six: Quantify And Measure Daily Progress.

Are you doing something every day to reach your goals? Do you know specifically what you would do each day to take one step toward your goals? Are you able to measure whether or not you took that one step? Here's how I do it and teach others to do it:

The Top Three

Each day, list three action items that you will complete to take you closer to your goals (i.e. get out of debt, create a passive



income, spend more time with family, etc.).

The first item is your MUST DO. The other two are "bonus" items if you can make time. At the end of the day, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done at least one thing, one tangible action item, to get you to your dreams. You will not have the guilt or frustration that accompanies the "didn't have time" syndrome. You will be amazed at how satisfying and motivating it is to know that you are ACTUALLY DOING SOMETHING about your life.

The number-one reason very few people live the life they WISH they were living (financially peaceful, well balanced, spiritually fulfilling) is because they never actually DO ANYTHING to make it happen.

Folks, listen up: I'm not known for sugar-coating things, so I will not start now. Whatever you do NOT discipline yourself to do routinely, and daily, will never get done, and you will never improve or be good at it. PERIOD.

There are no shortcuts, no tricks, and no gimmicks. You must practice the daily discipline of being a DO-ER of those things that will help you take one step towards your goals. You must be able to identify, measure, and explain what those things are in order to discipline yourself to do them.

You can't just "wake up" every day... you have to choose to "live" every day. If you cannot tell me how your time was spent, specifically, then I can tell you: it was wasted.

A life of disciplined action is a life well spent. A life lived with no plan, no purpose, is a life filled with wasted opportunity. Use the TOP THREE technique every day, and see how fast you start moving towards a life of no regret and achieving your goals on a consistent basis.

Secret Seven: Make Sure You Have The Resources To Achieve Your Goals.

If you set a goal that requires a certain amount of time to achieve and you do not have the time, guess what? You set yourself up for failure.

If you set a goal that requires a certain amount of money and you don't make sure you have that money, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that you will never reach that goal. If you set a goal for yourself that requires the help of other people and yet you know those people are not within your ability to solicit help from, then it is a goal you cannot attain.

The Bible says that a wise man evaluates his plans to build a house and counts the cost before setting the goal to build it. Why? Because if he does not have the money, time, resources, and information lined up and available when he starts to build, the house will be in ruins before it ever gets started. The same is true about our goals.

You cannot be truly serious and realistic about any goal (whether financial or personal) if you do not count the cost

and make sure the resources, situation, and environment are going to be truly available for you to achieve it.

Secret Eight: Quit Being Normal.

Quit being normal. Normal means you'll keep procrastinating and making excuses instead of TAKING ACTION and CHANGING YOUR LIFE. Normal means you will run comfortably with the herd, always thinking in "When.. Then" terms ("When I know enough, I'll take action;" "When I'm confident enough, I'll start my business;" or "When I make enough money, I'll help others.")

Normal means you will read this, and think "Wow, that's good stuff"... and then you will do absolutely NOTHING in response. Normal means you will have all the excuses you will ever need to explain why you "can't," why you "won't," and why you "didn't" - and you'll get lots of empathy from all the other "normal" people.

Normal means you will set goals, make no real plans to achieve them, and then whine about your failure.

Folks, listen... this is not about me trying to convince you to buy my products or join my VIP Group. My joy in life comes from motivating, coaching, teaching, and mentoring. The rewards (financially and emotionally) take care of themselves.

JUST DO SOMETHING! Take ACTION! Join a business group, attend a seminar, buy a book... just don't do any of those things if they are simply another reason to avoid real action.

Do one of those things, THEN TAKE THAT KNOWLEDGE AND CONVERT IT TO ACTION. ACTION WILL LEAD YOU TO ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS.

About 99% of people never do anything but talk about achieving a goal and improving their life. Instead, they spend their days complaining about how unhappy they are. Are you a 99%-er, or a 1%-er? If a 99%-er, WHY?

If a 1%-er, then what specific ACTION are you taking today to reach your goals? SPECIFIC ACTION? Not some nebulous concept that you cannot act upon.

What tangible, measurable, quantifiable action are you taking today to reach your financial, life, or spiritual goals?

Don't say you are a 1%-er and then not be a person of ACTION.

That would make you a simply a hypocrite, deceived, or both. If you are a 99%-er, you can change that TODAY. Write down one ACTION you will accomplish today that will take you one step toward your goals. It might be simply determining what real goals are for the first time in your life.

Quit procrastinating. Quit talking, wishing, and whining, and start DOING SOMETHING.

Quit being normal.

Secret Nine: Accountability And Peer Pressure

If you are truly a part of the 1% of the people who actually take action, you'll often find yourself to be the motivator and will rarely find those who will motivate you. However, it is still important that we all have accountability and a motivating peer pressure.

You are not Superman or Wonder Woman. Having accountability and the positive peer pressure of knowing that others are going to hold your feet to the fire helps you to make and achieve realistic goals.

Every person should have these three types of people in their life:

1. A student or someone you mentor.
2. A professional equal or peer.
3. A mentor or parent figure.

Each of these three types of persons will give you a difference aspect of accountability and positive peer pressure. Having a student or other people that you mentor means that there are other people looking up to you and what you do. By teaching other people, you reinforce what you already know. By instructing them on how to live their lives, it helps you not to be hypocritical about your own.

When you're teaching others to set goals and keep them, it forces you to be accountable to keep your own goals.

You should also have several professional equals or peers who hold you accountable to the goals that you have set. You should give them permission to evaluate your efforts and give you honest feedback about what you are doing well, where you're missing the mark; and at times, if you are simply being lazy and undisciplined. Having accountability from your equals, and knowing that you are being watched by those you respect, provides a great deal of positive peer pressure which is very helpful in staying on track.

If you have no accountability of any type, do not claim you are the strong "go-it-alone" type of person. It most likely means that you do not want other people seeing how you really live your life.

You should also have a mentor or a parent-type figure in your life that you look up to and share your goals with. There is a lot of healthy pressure in knowing that you are accountable to those you hold in high esteem and do not want to disappoint.

Make sure you have each of these three types of people in your life and make use of the accountability and positive peer pressure that comes with each relationship.

Secret Ten: Never Quit Starting Over.

No matter how many times you've set goals and failed miserably, do not ever give up doing it one more time. It is tempting to become discouraged and think you can never break the cycle, but you can.

The only real failure is when you quit risking failure. Just because you fail at a goal does not mean that goal is foolish or unattainable.

Be honest with yourself and evaluate why you failed. Identify those things that caused the failure. Implement the secrets that I am telling you in these lessons.

Above all, never quit trying. Even if you failed again after studying the lessons, study them again and try again.

I have lost track of the number of goals and promises I've made myself that quickly went by the wayside. It would be easy to wallow in the difficulty and disappointments, but all that does is delay ever making real changes in my life.

If you fail today, wake up tomorrow and start over. Every single day is a new chance to start over and get it right. It's only when we quit starting over that we truly are failures.

Remember, under promise and overachieve. If you find yourself still consistently failing and your goals crumbling, then choose a fewer number of goals of lesser difficulty. Set a goal that you know you can achieve quickly; riding the success of that achievement, set a goal that is a bit more aggressive (but still a sure thing) and use that motivation as a launch pad to get a bigger goal.

Summary:

1. Set goals you know you can achieve and achieve quickly.
2. Make sure the goals really matter to you and are made for the right reasons.
3. Control your schedule and you will control your goals.
4. Don't set goals that you do not actually have time to achieve.
5. Build your day around priorities and limit interruptions; learn the difference between urgent and important.
6. Be able to quantify and measure at least one step each day toward your goals; use the Top Three Method.
7. Make sure you have the available resources needed to achieve the goal.
8. Quit being normal because normal people procrastinate and whine.
9. Line up people for accountability and use positive peer pressure to keep you on track.

Never give up and never quit starting over.

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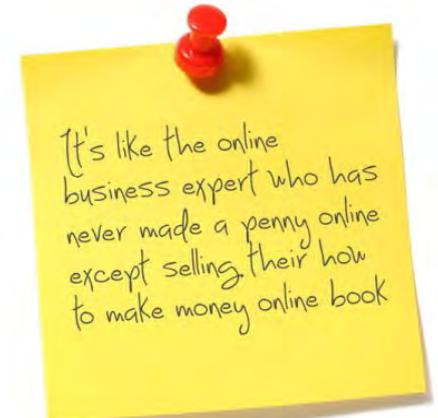
Writing, Designing, Publishing, Marketing & Automating a World-Class eBook

eBook: the common term for a publication usually created as Word document, saved as a PDF document, and then electronically delivered.

You can find any number of books and blogs that address the topic of writing and publishing an eBook. What you'll find out there are a bunch of eBooks about writing eBooks from folks who have published only one eBook about how to publish an eBook! Whew...

The Xerox effect is in full force: copies of copies of copies. Same old, same old... yawn. And most of them have one eBook: the one they published on how to publish an eBook. Not exactly a wealth of experience.

This duplication of material by dozens of bloggers exposes a lot of inexperience and a lack of knowledge about what is possible when you self-publish your great content in electronic or print



form. There's a lot more to an "eBook" than just a PDF download. I'd like to see the term "eBook" evolve into something more accurate.

Write Once, Publish Multiple

That phrase is the simplest way I can describe a more full-featured and useful approach to self-publishing. You write the content one time but you publish it in a variety of formats.

While there are other formats, I believe the three most popular and productive are

- 1) electronic/PDF, what we now call an "eBook";
- 2) actual printed hardcopies or paperback versions using on-demand print services; and
- 3) publishing to Kindle which is the reading device promoted and used by Amazon (you can also take the Kindle concepts that are discussed in this guide and apply them to Barnes & Noble and the Nook device - which is similar to the Kindle but not nearly as popular).

Vocabulary constantly evolves - especially when it comes to technology. Very few people have the influence to catch the perfect wave that enables them to coin a new term, but at least for rest of this book, I am going try for the sake of clarity. "eBook" just doesn't cut it anymore.

We need a more descriptive term for what an eBook has become:

- **m**ulti-format
- **m**ulti-purpose
- **m**ulti-publish
- **m**ulti-use
- **m**ulti-deliver
- **m**ulti-revenue

mBook

When you see the new word "mBook," I am referring to your written electronic content being published in multiple formats:

- 1) a PDF
- 2) an on-demand-print hard copy, and
- 3) submitted to Amazon's Kindle service (or Nook).

It is delivered in multiple forms: electronic and print. "Multiple" is the keyword because it describes what the eBook has evolved into.

**To make it simple throughout
the rest of this book, I'm going to
write it like this: "mBook."**



eBook

Traditionally, an eBook was the electronic digital version of your written content in a format known as PDF (Portable Document Format) and read with free software called “Adobe Acrobat Reader” or “Adobe Reader” for short. This is an almost universal file format that pretty much anyone with a computer can open and read.

The PDF file format allows you to embed media, hyperlinks, and other forms of interactivity. PDF's have security features and are best known for their ability to retain all your formatting and style accurately.



On-Demand Print

The final product of a print version (whether it's on-demand or traditional) is simply the traditional printed hardback or paperback book. It is a physical printing of your book. The "on-demand" aspect is a fairly new and remarkable service that could have been hardly imagined 10-15 years ago.

In the past, creating a printed version of a book was a very long, drawn out, and terribly expensive ordeal. In the end, you

had several thousands of copies of your book (or more) with the hope that you could sell them all and not lose your investment.

With on-demand print services, you upload your book online to a publisher (they typically have easy-to-use step-by-step wizards) and the book is only printed when it is ordered - even if it is just one copy. The price per copy is usually higher than if you buy printing in bulk, but the fact that you do not have to keep an inventory or ever handle the physical books yourself makes on-demand printing very popular.



On-demand printing is a remarkable and fantastic development, especially to those of us who have been in the publishing industry for a long time and realize how ridiculously expensive and tedious it used to be to have a book printed.

Kindle (or Nook)

Kindle is Amazon's publishing format and these books are read on Kindle devices or using the Kindle Reader software. Barnes &



Noble has a similar device called a Nook; the Kindle format, however, is far more widespread and popular so that is the device and format I will discuss in this guide. You can apply the concepts to a Nook format as well.

Kindle use has exploded and it seems destined to become as popular as any other reading platform. As an additional incentive to create a Kindle format, your Kindle book is immediately available to the vast Amazon market.

Yes, You Need Your Own Book

When I talk to people about books, I commonly hear responses like "I'm not an author" or "I have no idea how to write a book." That does not matter. You can hire people to help you write, design, and lay out your book, as well as proof and edit it. It is the finished product that matters, not whether or not you did all the work yourself.

There is a healthy selection of good software, services, and contractors that can help you produce a high-quality mBook. We'll get more into the details later but for now I want to tell you why every blogger and online business person should have an mBook.

Credibility

Without trying to explain the obvious, there's just something about having a published book that gives you credibility. It

implies you are knowledgeable about your industry or topic. It sends a message that you are an expert or an authority regarding the subject matter.

It sends a message of confidence to your audience. Publishing makes most people think "wow, you've got a book. You must be somebody."

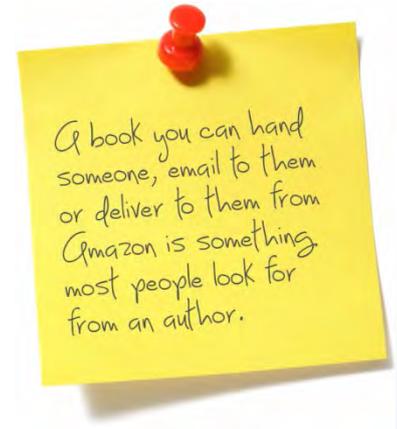
Having a book sends a message of confidence, authority, and credibility.

You can quickly ruin that impression by publishing a crummy book, but the fact that you have a book gives you a head start and leg-up within your niche or online community that others do not have.

Expectation

It is becoming the norm that if you promote yourself as an expert or authority, you will have some sort of published proof of it.

An mBook meets the expectation that you have quantified and defined your expertise in written



form - proving you know your stuff. In the online business and blogging world, an mBook is something people automatically look for and expect from “guru” or “expert.” Do not disappoint them.

Marketing

An mBook is a perfect thing to give away, sell, or promote. It is an excellent way to market your online business, blog, expertise, and knowledge. What is really cool is that inside your mBook you get to continue to market yourself, your blogs, and your other products.

The mBook itself is an advertisement for you and your online business. Within your mBook, you have the opportunity to further market other parts of your business. It's like having your own little mini-advertising agency.

Incentives

An mBook is a perfect incentive to offer to new subscribers to your blog, or as an enticement to open the doors of opportunity with your audience.

A well-done mBook (given as an incentive) provides value to your readers and can be traded with potential audience members for things you want from them such as an email subscription, survey participation, or some other kind of audience engagement.

Since mBooks have a low capital investment (often virtually zero once you know what you are doing), they are even more appropriate to use as incentives because it's not costing you hard cash every time you give one away (I am referring to the electronic versions of course; the print versions can be an expensive promotional item).

Tip: mBooks make great incentives, gifts, and giveaways because they have low to no cost.

Standing Out in a Crowd



While most online business gurus (and a lot of bloggers) have an eBook, there are very few that stand out as high quality in both content and design.

Your goal should be to stand out from the mass of mediocrity that exists in the eBook market today.

You need to stand out. Invest the time, resources, and effort into creating an mBook that rises above the humdrum, yawn-invoking, “been there done that” mass of eBooks out there.

- If you are not a great designer, hire one.
- If you are not a great writer, contract an experienced editor and proofreader.
- Use high-quality images and graphics. Do not settle for anything less than a book that screams “WOW” when people get their copy.

Should You Publish Multiple Formats?

Should you publish multiple formats? The short answer is “yes” because you need to offer different formats for people who like to read content in various



ways. Readers are fickle and spoiled today. If you do not have the format they prefer, that is often enough reason for them to not inconvenience themselves by purchasing your mBook.

None of these formats require a high capital investment, they are easy to create from a single version of the original content, and it does not cost you any additional money to have all three versions available for purchase or delivery. Also, publishing in all three formats looks more professional and gives the impression that you know what you are doing.

PDF

The PDF version has always been the preferred format for email delivery, downloading, reading on a multitude of devices, and printing eBooks on personal computers.

Print

There is no compelling reason to avoid offering an on-demand print version, and there is a long list of benefits.

The on-demand feature means you do not have to purchase an inventory, it



costs you nothing to make it available, and it gives many readers the choice they prefer (a hard copy).

If your PDF is formatted to a standard print size, you can actually use the same PDF to upload to your on-demand print service. At worst, you have to create a second PDF with the page size and layout that is appropriate to print but that's a small time investment with big benefits.

I typically choose a PDF layout that works for both the electronic version and the on-demand print version to save time and work (this book is a great example). Then I will purchase 10 or 20 printed copies to give away or display when appropriate.

There is nothing like holding a high-quality print version of your book. Feels good!

It is a great feeling of achievement and satisfaction to hold your very own book. I've been doing print publishing since before the Internet came along and I understand the credibility, branding, and effect it has on your overall business and marketing to have print version of your books.

Do a print version! Don't let someone convince you it's not worth it and that no one cares about print anymore.

Kindle

Kindle is relatively new on the timeline of world history but has become outrageously popular at a record pace. The Kindle devices, software, and the ability to read Kindle in a web browser have made the format widely used. It is not a format that you want to ignore.



Almost everyone I know who has begun to read books on a Kindle swears by it and routinely purchase books in Kindle format. If your book is not available in Kindle, not only are you losing potential readers and customers, you are also sending a signal that you're not up to speed with the latest publishing formats.

Kindle is not hard to publish; once you have done it a couple of times, you will find it is just another easy step in the process.

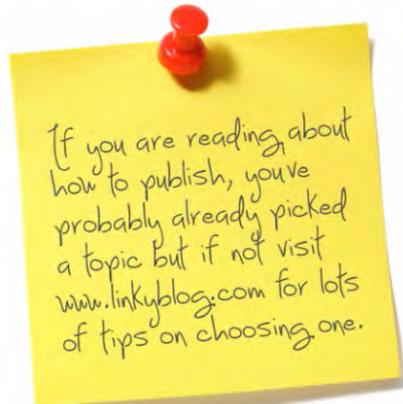
Having all three popular formats gives your readers options, presents you as serious and up-to-speed technologically, and opens up the widest possible reading audience.

So yes, you should do multiple formats every time you publish an mBook.

Creating Content

Up to this point, we have gone over conceptually what an mBook is and why you should publish multiple formats. Now let's get down to business and discuss how to actually make all this happen.

Of course, the first thing you have to do is write something. From my own experience, I am going to share with you a great way to go about creating your content.



Decide on a Topic

What are you going to write about? That is the 64-million-dollar question, isn't it?

If you have a blog, most likely you have identified your expertise, area of knowledge and experience, or a subject you are passionate about.

If you are going to write about something, in a sense you become an "expert." Remember: what makes someone an expert is that you know more than the audience you are addressing.

**You are an expert if:
you know more than your audience
and they want to know what you know.**

You do not have to be an elite-level guru or the "world's most knowledgeable." You just have to know something that someone else wishes they knew – that makes you an expert. An "intermediate" is an "expert" to a "beginner."

Keep that in mind as you think about what to write. Many people get bogged down and never start writing because they are afraid that someone who knows more is going to tell them how stupid they are.

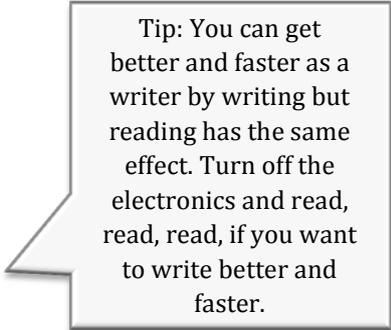
Identify your target audience and their knowledge level. You become an expert for them when you publish something they don't currently know but want to learn.

- What are you good at?
- What do you have experience in?
- What have you learned lessons about?
- What do you have inside knowledge of because you are in a specific industry?
- What hobbies are you really good at?
- What are you passionate about?

“What would you **like** to write about?” Sometimes that is a better question than “what am I qualified to write about?” Even if you do not have a lot of current knowledge or experience on a topic, if you are passionate about it you could do research and gain the necessary knowledge.

What life experiences have you had that would benefit others? Who have you known or what have you seen that other would want to read about?

All these ideas so far are geared towards the person who is still



Tip: You can get better and faster as a writer by writing but reading has the same effect. Turn off the electronics and read, read, read, if you want to write better and faster.

unsure what their book is going to be about.

Let's move on with the assumption that you've decided on your topic.

I am a prolific writer, which means I put out a lot of written content on a daily basis. Some of that comes from a natural gift for writing but much of it comes from simply exercising my writing muscles. Good old-fashioned hard work and practice. The more you write, the better you get, and the more you can produce in shorter times.

From my experience writing literally millions of words, thousands of blog posts, and publishing more than a dozen books, I want to tell you the process I use for writing my book content... the same process I used for writing this book.

It may not exactly fit your style and personality (and that's okay), but this is the method I have developed that works very well for me. I am happy to share it with you.

Start With an Outline or Mind Map

The first thing I do is to create an outline or mind map of my content. I prefer to use an outline format but a lot of people like to use mind-map software.

Mind mapping is a way to visually outline your book using symbols, whereas outlining is just good old-fashioned text in an outline format.

Here's what a modern mind map looks like if you are unfamiliar with them (in reality it can be any diagram or flow-chart map that lays out an idea in a way YOU can understand):



I will just refer to traditional outlining for the rest of this section but keep in mind that you might want to check out mind mapping to see if that works better for you.

Write Down Your Title

I do not always decide on a title up front and it often changes, but I do write something down that conveys the overall intent and message of the book.

Then I write a subtitle which may also change before I am done, but it keeps me focused on the secondary message and direction of the book.

Create the Chapter Titles

Again, the specific wording of the title or chapter headings may change as you actually write the content, but they serve as a roadmap for you to follow as you get going. Don't think you are stuck with whatever you write in the outline, you can always change it as needed as you develop the content. Next I develop chapter titles for the entire book (which gives me a step-by-step outline of exactly what I want to cover in the book).

Create a Sales Page or Back Cover

What is the best way to come up with chapter titles and subheads? I thought you would never ask. The simple answer is this: I create the sales page or back cover.

The common reaction to my method is that both the back cover and sales page should come AFTER writing the book so it will reflect what is in the book. However, in my experience, creating those first makes perfect sense.

Creating your sales page or back cover first is THE best way to organize your book and make sure it delivers what you promise to the buyer.

The sales page or back cover says: "read my book and in it I'm going to teach you this, and that, and the other thing, and finally I'm going to show you how to..."

I typically write a bullet-point list that tells the reader exactly what to expect inside. For the book you're reading now, I created a list of things that you will find inside this book. That list became my chapter headings:

- Why You Should Have a Book
- Should You Do Other Formats?
- Creating Content
- Mistakes to Avoid - Lessons Learned from My First Dozen eBooks
- Standard Organization and Parts of an eBook
- Designing, Formatting, Layout, Cover
- Get Ready for the World
- Automating Sales
- Your eBook Sales Page
- Marketing Your eBook
- Affiliate Sales of Your eBook

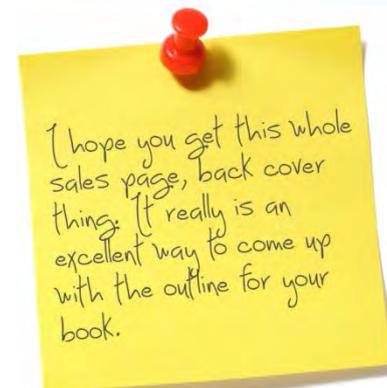
You may look through this finished book and realize I eventually decided to change some chapter titles from my original list. That's okay, it usually happens that way; but by writing the bullet list for my sales page and the back cover of the book first, I developed the outline quickly and easily.

It also means that you end up getting what I promise you in the marketing of this book. I trust you can see what a great technique it is to write your sales page (or back cover) first.

Another benefit is this... if you look at your sales material (or have others look at it) and think: "that sure is boring, I don't think I'd buy that book" then you know other people are not going to buy it either. Once you get your sales page or back cover to the point where it is engaging and persuasive, then you know you have a good outline for your book.

Next, **create subchapters and/or subheadings**. Take each chapter individually and think about them as a "standalone" document, as if they are a blog post or book by themselves.

Think about what a sales page or back cover would have just for that chapter. Using an advertising format, how could you convince someone to buy or read just that chapter? Create a bullet list for each chapter.



Tip: don't think you'll remember important points later... write them down!

For example, the following is my chapter heading and subhead list that I *originally* had for this chapter (I say originally because I might have changed the content as I progressed; remember, the outline is important and should keep you focused but it is not set in concrete). You will notice that I even have some bullet points in the subheads for further reminder and clarification about what I wanted in this chapter. This does not have to be well written; it's just to remind you:

- *Decide on topic*
 - *What are you an expert at*
 - *Get your readers input...*
- *Outline or Mindmap*
 - *Topic*
 - *Chapters*
 - *Subheads*
 - *Content*
- *Software*
 - *Simple template and styles will save you a lot of grief later*
 - *Show a sample of Word file with Styles set up first*
 - *They can be changed later but need to be setup right to begin with*
 - *Voice dictation or Keyboard*
- *Write It*
 - *Treat each chapter like a blog post*
 - *Use them later on your blog to promote your book*
 - *Easier to write in chunks*

- *Proofing*
- *Editing*
- *A Trick*
 - *Look up similar books on Amazon or Google and see how they are being written, what content they have, what's included*

You may not understand everything that I wrote in that outline but it was intended to just make sense to me. Your own outline will serve as an overview and a roadmap to keep you just as efficient as you write.

Once you have your title, chapters, subheads, and some bullet points for reminders, all you have to do now is write the content. If you are pretty knowledgeable about your topic, you will find the actual content writing is the easy part because you already know what you want to write. The hard part is getting your thoughts organized in a logical and interesting structure.

I have found this outlining method (based on creating your sales page or back cover first) is easily the most efficient and productive way to write an eBook.

Software

There are lots of software programs you can use to write and format your book. I have been using both Apple and Windows software for a couple of decades and I have access to pretty much every piece of major page layout, design, and publishing software that industry professionals use. However, I realize

that most of you reading this do not. My recommendation is Microsoft Word.

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is available on both platforms (Mac & PC) and is synonymous with word processing. If you do not have Microsoft Office and can't afford it, OpenOffice is a free suite that is similar enough to Microsoft Office that what I tell you here can be applied pretty seamlessly.

If you go searching for debates or reviews about Microsoft Word, you are going to find more arguments/debates than you care to read. The fact is, 99% of typical folks will use about 10% of the capabilities of any word processor so arguing about which one is better is a waste of time when either of them will do a great job.

Microsoft Word is widely supported, easy to learn, and popular – popularity is important so that you can get help from other people.



Microsoft Word converts into PDF formats and allows you to format for Kindle. It is easy to create the right page sizes, columns, margins, insert images, do headers and footers properly, apply styles, and set up sections and reference items such as a table of contents and indexes. For creating eBooks, Microsoft Word is an ideal choice.

If you think you might like to do some of your own image work, artwork, or cover design, some of the other software options include a drawing or paint program.

Since this book is geared towards beginners who just want to write, I will not be teaching you how to use graphic-design software. If you have no clue about how to produce images or art, your best bet is to hire a designer or get some training on basic graphics. You can get designers on sites like eLance.com.

Another option would be to simply put the word out on your blog that you need help – you will probably get a lot of responses. For the most part, bloggers are quick to help other bloggers.



You can also hire an on-demand print service like [CreateSpace](#) to do your layout and cover design; then you can take that file and use it for your PDFs and Kindle formats as well (they provide you a PDF download after they create it your content/cover).

Common Functions You Will Want to Use

You don't have to be an expert at Microsoft Word to use it effectively. The basic things you want to know how to do are:

- Set up a page size & margins
- Set the columns (if necessary)
- Set up headers and footers
- Properly use sections
- How to apply styles
- Inserting a table of contents
- Including an index (if your book needs one)
- Endnotes and footnotes if needed

When you are writing the actual content, you will need to know how to:

- Insert images, shape, or text boxes.
- Basic formatting tasks like bold, italics, underline, and text alignment.

That may look like a long list but it's only about 10% of the functionality of Microsoft Word and all of these items are fairly easy to learn. It probably will not take you more than a few minutes to learn the necessary skills for any of the above functions or features.

Styles

The most important feature in word processing, that will save you the greatest amount of time and grief, is the use of "styles." Do this little exercise to quickly grasp what styles are:

1. Type some sample content out in plain text: a title, a chapter heading; subhead and some sample body content (a couple of paragraphs of text).
2. Highlight the title; now look at the Style Menu at the top of your document screen.
3. Click on the "title" style from the toolbar to apply it to your title.
4. Select your chapter headings and apply "heading 1" to those.
5. Go to your chapter subheadings and highlight those. Apply the "heading 2" style.
6. Select the body content and apply the "normal" style.

Now you know the basic concept of applying styles. All chapter headings within your book will look the same as will your subheads and body content. If you change the style setting for a specific item like "Heading 1" then everywhere that style is used in the document will be changed. See how powerful and efficient that is?

Styles are so integral you should learn them first thing as you start.

The power of styles is this: you can go in at any time and change the formatting and appearance of the styles and your entire document will be updated because you have given each part of your document a specific style. If you choose not to use styles, then you will be forced to go through and make formatting changes from cover to cover, page to page, every time you want to change how the content looks.

Here is some instruction straight from the help file inside of Microsoft Word:

Style basics in Word

Microsoft Word 2010 makes it easy to use styles without having to know much about them.

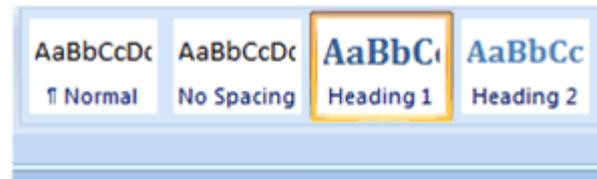
Tip: don't worry about the formatting initially, just apply the styles. You can easily change the design later by changing the styles!

Using styles

Instead of using direct formatting, use styles to format your document so you can quickly and easily apply a set of formatting choices consistently throughout your document.

A style is a set of formatting characteristics, such as font name, size, color, paragraph alignment and spacing. Some styles even include borders and shading.

For example, instead of taking three separate steps to format your heading as 16-point, bold, Cambria, you can achieve the same result in one step by applying the built-in Heading 1 style. You do not need to remember the characteristics of the Heading 1 style. For each heading in your document, you just click in the heading (you don't even need to select all the text), and then click **Heading 1** in the gallery of styles.



Galleries of coordinated items

On the Insert tab, the galleries include items that you can use with your current document look. You can use these galleries to insert other document building blocks. When you create a new document, you can choose a gallery that matches your current document look.

If you decide that you want subheadings, you can use the built-in Heading 2 style, which was designed to look good with the Heading 1 style.



1 The Quick Styles that you see in the gallery of styles are designed to work together. For example, the Heading 2 Quick Style is designed to look subordinate to the Heading 1 Quick Style.

2 The body text of your document is automatically formatted with the Normal Quick Style.

3 Quick Styles can be applied to paragraphs, but you can also apply them to individual words and characters. For example, you can emphasize a phrase by applying the Emphasis Quick Style.

4 When you format text as part of a list, each item in the list is automatically formatted with the List Paragraph Quick Style.

If you later decide that you want headings to have a different look, you can change the Heading 1 and Heading 2 styles, and Word automatically updates all instances of them in the document. You can also apply a different Quick Style set or a different theme to change the look of the headings without making changes to the styles.

Built-in styles turn on timesaving features

The built-in styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) provide other benefits, too. If you use the built-in heading styles, Word can generate a table of contents automatically. Word also uses the built-in heading styles to make the Document Map, which is a convenient feature for moving through long documents.

Character and paragraph styles

Word provides several style types:

- **Character** and **paragraph** styles determine the look of most of the text in a document. Some styles work as both character and paragraph types, and these styles are known as **linked** styles.
- **List** styles determine the look of lists, including characteristics such as bullet style or number scheme, indentation, and any label text.
- **Table** styles determine the look of tables, including characteristics such as the text formatting of the header row, gridlines, and accent colors for rows and columns.

Character, paragraph, and linked styles

Character, paragraph, and linked styles appear in the **Styles** group on the **Home** tab. You can quickly apply a style from the gallery of styles. To see more information about each style, click the **Styles** Dialog Box Launcher.



The **Styles** task pane opens.

1 Paragraph styles are marked with a paragraph symbol: ¶. You can see the paragraph symbol in the Quick Style gallery as well as in the Styles task pane. Click anywhere in a paragraph to apply the style to the entire paragraph.

2 Character styles are marked with a character symbol: ¶. Click anywhere in a word to apply the style to the entire word. Or you can select more than one word to apply the style to more than one word.

3 Linked styles are marked with both a paragraph symbol and a character symbol: ¶¶. Click anywhere in a paragraph to apply the style to the entire paragraph. Or you can select one or more words to apply the style to the words that you selected.

Character styles

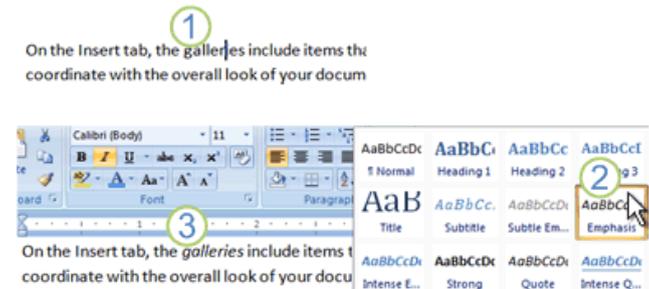
Character styles contain formatting characteristics that can be applied to text, such as font name, size, color, bold, italic, underline, borders, and shading.

Character styles do not include formatting that affects paragraph characteristics, such as line spacing, text alignment, indentation, and tab stops.

Word includes several built-in character styles, such as Emphasis, Subtle Emphasis, and Intense Emphasis. Each of these built-in styles combines formatting, such as bold, italic, and accent color, to provide a coordinated set of typographic designs. For example, applying the Emphasis character style formats text as bold, italic, in an accent color.



To apply a character style, you select the text that you want to format, and then you click the character style that you want.



1 Click in the word you want to format.

2 Move your cursor over the Quick Styles to see a preview of the formatting in your document. When you point to a character style, only the word where you clicked is formatted. When you point to a paragraph style or a linked style, the entire paragraph is formatted. Click the character style that you want to use.

3 The word that you selected is formatted with the characteristics of the style that you chose.

Paragraph styles

A paragraph style includes everything that a character style contains, but it also controls all aspects of a paragraph's

appearance, such as text alignment, tab stops, line spacing, and borders.

For example, you can have a character style called Alert that formats text as bold and red. Additionally, you can have a paragraph style called Headline that formats text as bold and red. But the Headline paragraph style also centers the text horizontally and adds 24 points of space above the text.

In this scenario, if you select a paragraph and then apply the Alert style, all the text in the paragraph is formatted as bold and red, but nothing else about the paragraph changes. However, if you select the paragraph and then apply the Headline style, the text become bold and red, extra space is inserted before the paragraph, and the paragraph is centered between the left and right margins.

Word includes two built-in paragraph styles: Normal and List Paragraph. By default, Word automatically applies the Normal paragraph style to all text in a blank, new document. Similarly, Word automatically applies the List Paragraph paragraph style to items in a list — for example, when you use the **Bullets** command to create a bulleted list.

To apply a paragraph style, you select the paragraphs that you want to format, and then you click the paragraph style you want.

Tip: I voice dictate the first draft with no concern for editing. This “brain dump” gets content on the page. I then can go back and edit carefully.

Note To select a single paragraph for applying a paragraph style, you can click anywhere in the paragraph. To select more than one paragraph, click anywhere in the first paragraph and drag to anywhere in the last paragraph that you want to select. You do not need to select the entire paragraph.

Voice or Keyboard

One other thing you might consider is the use of voice-dictation software like Dragon Naturally Speaking.

The use of voice dictation has become more and more popular. I have been using voice dictation for almost a decade. Originally, it took a good amount of effort to get it to work accurately but after years of improvement, it is very accurate. The programs come with helpful tutorials and advice to get you writing via voice dictation within minutes of opening the box (or downloading the software).

Some people find the speed of voice dictation is too fast to allow them time to organize their thoughts as they speak them. The time that it takes to type something on a keyboard gives your mind additional time to formulate sentences - many people prefer that. I find being able to dictate something off the top of my head is a more productive way of writing.



The typical process I use is to go into my outline and voice-dictate each section off the top of my head. Then I go back and read it, cleaning up the content.

Voice dictation is pretty accurate but you will end up with some phrases that were not what you intended. Some of the interpretations by the software can be pretty humorous. I have to constantly check to make sure “[Linky Blog](#)” is not published as “Kinky Blog”! Or my Christian site where I post the sermons I preach... it’s “[seriousfaith.com](#)” and often the voice dictation types that as “serious fake .com” – not exactly the reputation I’m after.

When I use voice dictation, I usually read through my documents a couple of times before I send them off to my editor. I will share more advice on using an editor and proofer a little later.

If you've never used voice-dictation software, you should give it a try. Depending on your writing style and how you organize content, voice-dictation could be a huge time saver and help you produce much more content than if you rely solely on your typing fingers.

Writing the Body Copy

Okay, you've got your outline done, your Word file set up, you're ready to apply your styles... now you've got to do the hard work of writing the body of content. You will find endless advice out there from authors and bloggers on the best way to

write body copy which only proves one point: there is no best way.

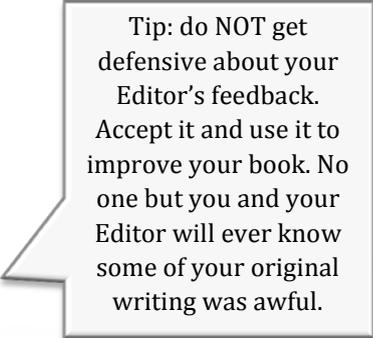
What I call “the best way” is simply what works best for me based on my experience and given my personality and skills. It may or may not be the best way for you. Give it a try and see if it works for you.

Treat each chapter like a blog post (or a series of posts). There is a secondary benefit to approaching your chapters this way. Each chapter (or excerpts of it) can actually become a blog post later that you publish as a teaser to promote the entire book. Each chapter could also become its own blog posts series in a spinoff of the book.

Continue to go from chapter to chapter, and subhead to subhead, simply filling out and explaining that chapter title or subhead, while methodically and systematically progressing through your book. Completing the body copy this way allows you to easily measure your progress and know how much is left to write.

Using an Editor

Editing your book is a little different than proofing (which we will discuss next). Having your book edited by a professional is the process of allowing someone to



Tip: do NOT get defensive about your Editor’s feedback. Accept it and use it to improve your book. No one but you and your Editor will ever know some of your original writing was awful.

read it and make suggestions on how to improve it.

It might be suggestions to delete or add content, rewrite passages, or organize things differently. It might be suggestions or helpful criticism of your style, choices of phrasing, or just giving you a general, objective, and honest opinion about whether the book is any good. It really depends on the style and experience of the editor and the relationship you have with them.

One thing you want to be sure that you do not do when it comes to editing and proofing: do not take it personally. Carefully read their suggestions and consider them without emotion. Either reject or accept the recommendations based solely on only one consideration: **does it improve the book?**

It's not personal. You want your Editor to be objective, hard-hitting, and unafraid to offer opinions and advice (if they are, get someone else!). If you have an editor who simply doesn't understand your style; and the vast majority of their recommendations don't help you, find a new editor. Whatever you do - don't take it personally. Editors are there to help you put out the very best content you can.

Remember, your readers never see the original sloppy mess that spills out of your head. They only see what you decide to publish, so there should be



no bruising of your ego or perceived diminishing of your reputation if your editor has to present you with a lot of suggested improvements. It's actually good news to hear "this stinks" from your Editor and not your audience. Embrace the editing process and enjoy the higher quality of writing you end up with.

I appreciate my editor so much and the editing process is so helpful for me, I don't even want to mention her in the credits because someone will steal her away!

Is an editor totally necessary? Only you can decide. If you are a new author or not a really gifted writer, then an editor is invaluable. Use one. If you are both experienced and gifted, the book itself might determine the need (certain topics need editing more than others).

I have been writing for almost 15 years and I still use an editor because I want objective opinions from someone I trust. I want to know if what I'm writing is interesting and engaging. I produce so much content that I want my editor to make sure I don't get in a rut or simply fool myself about the quality.

Tip: put the word out on your blog that you are looking for an editor or proofreader. I have found there are lots of bloggers who do proofreading and could use the work.

You Absolutely Should Use a Proofer

You cannot proof your own work - that's a fact. Proofing is the process of correcting typos, fixing punctuation, and making sure the grammar is right.

I've never known anyone who can proof their own work effectively. That is because your mind simply wants to see it as correct, even if it's not. There's nothing like reading over your own stuff ten times and then publishing it only to find mistakes. It happens, trust me.

Proofing is a technical inspection of your writing. It can also involve fact-checking and making sure there are no layout or formatting glitches.

There is hardly a greater killer of your credibility or authority than publishing a poorly written book full of typos and punctuation errors that sounds like it was written by a third-grader (due to bad grammar). There's only one way to tell if your grammar is good: have your writing proofread.

Even if you decide not to use an Editor, you should spend the money and have a professional proofreader clean up your content.

Tip: You can get away with an amateur layout and design easier than you can get away with a poorly proofed book.

Tip: your editor and proofreader are often the same person.

A Trick I've Learned

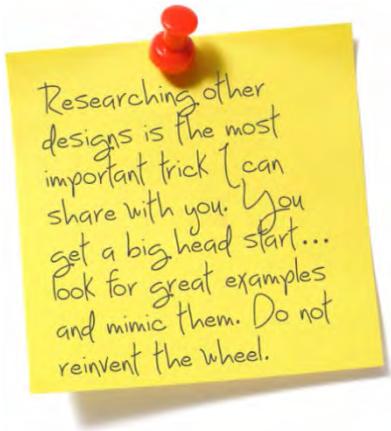
I've learned a few tricks to make all this easier, more efficient, of higher quality, and more productive. The idea is basically this: don't reinvent the wheel.

There are design companies, publishers, and authors out there spending lots of time and money on art, layouts, covers, formatting, and book ideas. Research them. Find the stuff you like. Figure out what has been successful. Then mimic that success.

Don't reinvent the wheel.

Mimic what is successful.

Find an eBook that's really well done and looks great. It does not have to be the same topic as yours. If it is laid out well, has a nice cover design, and is the quality that you want to present to your audience, mimic it. Use the same styling and format. Don't reinvent the wheel.



Researching other designs is the most important trick I can share with you. You get a big head start... look for great examples and mimic them. Do not reinvent the wheel.

I do not mean RIP OFF what they did. I mean copy the style, the structure, and the general design. You will use your own images/art and colors, maybe different fonts, but overall you are getting a head start because you have identified a great design. Use that as a general guideline.

There's nothing wrong with mimicking success. Designers have always built off the great design of others. There is nothing new under the sun, only interpretations, improvements, and the expression of your style based on what has already been done.

Go to Amazon.com or search the Internet to find sample designs that you like. I enjoy visiting Barnes & Noble's (or other bookstores) to look through books for styles and designs that appeal to me.

Mistakes to Avoid – Lessons Learned from My First Dozen eBooks

Tip: your designer will often charge you less if you've already picked out a design you like and they don't have to dream one up.

I've published a bunch of eBooks, have a long list of future titles in various stages of production, and I have helped many people through the process of publishing their own books.

Along the way, I have learned a lot of lessons and made a whole lot of mistakes. By communicating those to you, maybe you can avoid some of the pitfalls that cost me both time and sales. In no particular order of importance, here they are:

Mistake: Ugly Design or Format

Never settle for anything less than a great layout or design. In my younger days, I was a lot more impulsive and in a hurry. Even though I had the skills as a graphic designer to produce a professional layout, I would sometimes be so anxious to get a book done and published that I would settle for something mediocre. For many people, it is not impatience that causes them to put out a visually questionable book, it is a lack of graphics skills or an artistic eye.

If you are not a bona fide professional graphic designer, do not trust your own emotions. People fall in love with their own personally created graphics and formatting very easily.



Regardless of objective criticism, they can't be convinced what they produced is amateurish and/or just plain awful. Don't let your emotions drive you.

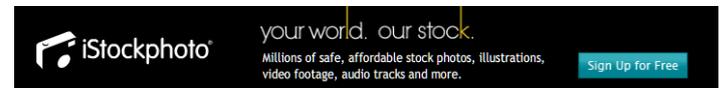
If you want to do your own designs, be smart about it. Run them by a lot of people and get their objective and honest opinion. If you can, get a professional graphic designer to look over your work and give you an honest opinion. I can't emphasize enough that you must keep your emotions out of this process. It does not matter what you think of the design. It matters what your potential viewers and buyers think.

Here are a couple more tips that will help you avoid an atrocious design: start with a pre-done MS Word book **template** and use the many available sources for good-quality **stock images and clipart**.

There are lots of companies that produce Microsoft Word templates for various book formats. They will already have built-in styles and page formatting, leaving you with a mostly ready-to-go file that just needs your content. You may have to change the size of the pages or the margins but the important work of setting up styles and sections will already be done.



Combine a predesigned template with high-quality images and clipart from a site like [iStock](https://www.istock.com). Many of my graphics are from istock.com. Even though I could draw them myself, it is not worth the time it takes when you consider the relatively low price of services like istock.com.



You will get another tremendous head start on your book and be assured of a nice layout by starting with a template and utilizing stock art and images.

Mistake: Forgetting to Market Inside Your Book

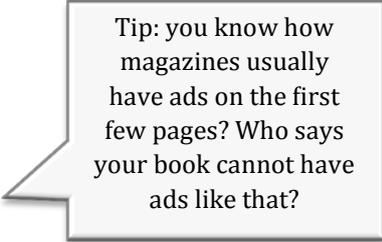
When I published my first couple of books, I was so used to the traditional layout and contents of print books that it never really dawned on me to consider the opportunity we have within an mBook to effectively market our online business, blogs, products, and other books. It's like a hybrid of a magazine and a book. A "magook" or "boogazine." Nah, let's stick with mBook.

The first few pages of magazines are usually full-page ads. I do not put full-page ads in my own mBooks (yet) but there is no reason you can't.

If you have advertisers appropriate for your content, go for it. Who says you can't fund an entire book with advertisers and then give it away for free? Magazines do it constantly.

As for other marketing in your mBook, make sure people know about your blogs, your sign-up offers, your other mBooks, your bio, any regular events you participate in, etc.

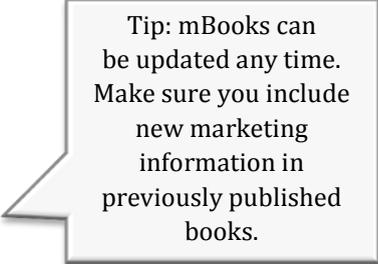
mBooks can be updated at any time; and since the print version is on-demand only, it is important that you realize you can go in and revise your mBook any time you have reason to update the material or include new marketing information.



Tip: you know how magazines usually have ads on the first few pages? Who says your book cannot have ads like that?

Got a new product? Got a new service or a big event coming up? Go back to your previous mBooks and put in a big advertisement for it on one of the opening pages. Once the event is past, go

take it out of your publications. If you have a lot of published items, it could be a considerable amount of work so only you can decide if it is worth the effort. I just want you to be aware that you can make changes to your mBook at any time - sometimes the tendency is for writers to think that "once published, it's done." That's no longer true.



Tip: mBooks can be updated any time. Make sure you include new marketing information in previously published books.

Mistake: Not Utilizing the Technology

Electronically published books can contain a lot more than text and images. While you can't put active links or video into the print version, you can still host them on web pages and type out the links to the items.

In your digital versions, you can have active hyperlinks ([like this](#)) to anything on the Internet. You can even have forms and video in your PDF; but I would recommend you create separate webpages for those and link to them ([like this](#)) so that people can get to them from any version of your mBook (if the external media changes, the links in your mBooks are still good - you do not have to update them).



The point is this: we live in a new era where a "book" is much more than printed words and images. It is a hybrid of technology that brings together everything the Internet has to offer. Make sure you take advantage of that.

Mistake: Not Repurposing the Content in Various Formats

I wrote my first book after I had been blogging for several years, mostly because books were too expensive to print. Keep in mind this was just a few short years after the Internet really became known by the general public. On-demand printing, PDFs, and Kindle, etc., were still a few years away. The first book I ever wrote was delivered electronically to my readers

as a word-processing file and then I published it on a web page. Cutting edge!

The next book I wrote was delivered as a traditional eBook in PDF format - but they were not being called "eBooks" at that point. I just called it a "digital book" or something but I still only had one format available. I wrote several eBooks after the term "eBook" became popular and delivered those in PDF format. Then I got a wild hair to record them and make audio versions.

Having multiple formats for your book is standard fare now, so you don't have any reason to not consider it. Many new authors just write the book, publish it one time in one format, and consider it done.

There's more to repurposing your content than just different formats. Repurposing can also mean breaking it down into blog posts, creating e-learning modules, courses, workshops, and other training material. There are really no rules about how many different ways you can use the same content.

Strive to be creative and fresh when you repurpose your content so you that can attract different segments of readers who prefer a variety of presentation methods. I now use the same content (or portions of it) from an mBook in many different ways both online and off. You should too.



Mistake: It's Not about You, It's about the Reader

Writing a book can be an ego trip, especially if it is successful; you will always have to fight the urge to make the book about your needs and your satisfaction instead of the readers' needs and satisfaction.

Whether the book is free or someone is purchasing it, if it doesn't satisfy their needs, engage their interests, or even stroke their ego, they are not going to read it or buy it.

Too many authors write something they are emotionally satisfied with, but without regard to whether it will do the same for the reader.



From the beginning of your mBook project, you should be asking yourself objectively (and asking others to give you their opinion): "is this book interesting, engaging, and worth the investment of time from a reader's point of view?"

**If I were the reader,
would I be glad I read this?**

If you are just looking for a pat on the back from those whose opinion you seek, you will learn the hard way when no one buys the book... or from the reviews out on the Internet (from people who don't care about you personally) that are relentlessly brutal and honest.

That's the "random" feedback. The planned feedback is a different animal. You can actively seek feedback by the use of surveys, encouraging comments, and enthusiastically answering (and soliciting) questions. Don't be afraid to simply ask your readers what they think of your book or blog or product... good or bad. Ask them for feedback. It makes them feel important to get to offer you their advice and opinion.

A final word about criticism...

When you get criticism, treat it as a form of useful feedback. I'm not talking about when people are just being jerks. Delete that nonsense and forget it. But, if it's respectful and honest criticism, you had better pay attention.

Turn your emotions off and read through it with an open mind, while considering which parts of it are true and useful. Be thankful you can use it to improve what you do.



If you feel like the criticism is genuinely wrong, disregard it and be thankful people take the time to send you feedback. Don't take helpful criticism as an emotional personal attack (you'll get good at recognizing personal attacks from the "negative but useful" comments).

Feedback in all forms - whether unsolicited or not, negative or positive, written, verbal, or whatever form it takes - is a valuable tool for improving your writing and products, and for brainstorming new material. Allowing (and responding to) feedback helps engage your audience and makes them feel like they are part of what you're doing. Make it a public and purposeful part of your process.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. It will eat you up if you allow criticism to get to you.

Standard Organization and Parts of an mBook

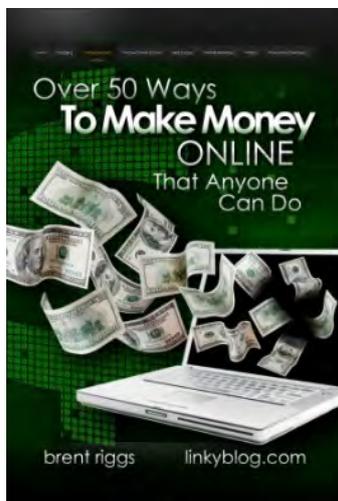
The publishing industry has been turned on its head in the last decade. All the rules are now broken. Anyone who says you must do things in the "traditional book publishing way" is simply trying to guard their territory and protect a dying industry.

The digital age and on-demand-print services have totally and forever changed the content-publishing world.

However, that doesn't mean you should throw out what traditionally works nor does it mean you should ignore the expectations of your readers. People have come to expect certain elements inside a book, no matter what format it is delivered in. Let's define the basic elements of any typical mBook:

The Cover

Whether it's the actual printed cover of a physical book or the first page of your PDF file, the expectation is to see a well-designed cover showing the title, subtitle, author's name, and graphics that support the overall message of the book.



Do not skimp on the cover design. It is the only first impression you will get.

Do not skimp on the cover - either in time or investment. If you need to hire a graphic designer, do it. Or find an artist wanting to get some exposure and offer them a big credit just inside the cover for their contribution.

Your cover can scream: "I'm an amateur, I don't care how my book looks and my content is probably as bad as this cover" or it can assure the viewer: "The content inside this book is just as interesting, well done, and high quality as this cover."

Front and Back

Don't forget that you have a front and a back cover. Most eBooks I have seen only have a front cover but neglect to include a back cover. I think that is a mistake.



The back cover on a print book makes sense because it becomes the advertisement for someone considering buying it. The back cover of a PDF or Kindle version confirms to the reader that they made a good investment and that they got what they paid for (the final thing they see is what you promised would be in the book). It also leaves them with a last look at the author, a website address, or short biography. You might think of something to offer them as a reward for reading your book like bonus report or a heavy discount on another product you offer.

Fine Print, Legal Stuff, Disclaimer, Copyright Language

Because of our lawsuit-happy culture and regulatory obsessed government, you have got to have a typical “fine print” page that contains copyright information and all the legal mumbo-jumbo that nobody ever reads. You have to cover your butt; and even if it seems like a waste of space, inclusion of all this language makes it look like you know what you're doing.

To me, it's like that absurd teeny tiny print you see on the TV commercial that's 5000 words long and appears for all of three seconds. Nobody cares and nobody reads it - but you have got to include it.

The best way to figure out what you need for fine print is simply to look at other books. Go to your bookstore and look at the standard stuff that most of the books have and simply do your own version of it. Some of the standard blah-blah-blah is:

- Copyright information
- Permission or restrictions about use
- Disclaimers about advice or claims
- Any copyright violations are unintentional
- Income potential varies by person

About the Author

Most books have traditionally contained information about the author. With the emergence of eBooks, websites, and blogs, it is expected that you will find a pretty healthy biography of the author. This not only represents the qualifications and credibility of the author, but it also gives the author a chance for further marketing.



Writing an effective biography allows you to list some of your major accomplishments, and should include your blogs and your flagship products. It serves the dual purpose of establishing credibility as well as advertising those items to the reader. Make sure your biography includes major online achievements, with a general description of them and links to them.

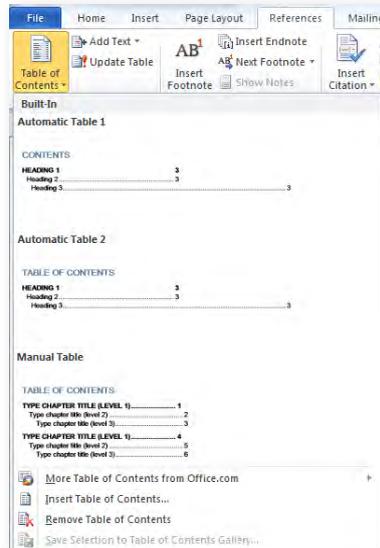
In my opinion, your biography should not read like a job resume. Write it the same way you write the rest of your book: using an engaging, interesting, and comfortable style to tell people who you are, what you've done, and why your personal experience and credibility should give them confidence that reading your book is a good investment of their time.

Table of Contents

With only a very few exceptions, every book should have a table of contents for the convenience of the reader. How detailed you make it is up to you.

Inserting a table of contents is easy in Microsoft Word because you designate which styles are going to be included in your table of contents.

Depending on my content, sometimes I will choose only "heading 1" and maybe "heading 2"



Tip: make sure the last thing you do is update your table of contents so the page numbers and links are correct.

as the two styles Word will automatically compile into the table of contents. You have to find a balance. You do not want the table of contents to be so detailed that it is a pain to find anything - but you don't want to be so sparse that it is not really useful.

Make sure the last thing you do is update your table of contents so that the page numbers are accurate. Nothing is more frustrating than finally finishing the book, producing it in all three formats, even ordering a couple of dozen print copies... only to find out you did not update the table of contents and it is inaccurate (I only know this because I have made this mistake... more than once).

Body Content

This is the bulk of the book that contains the content. I am pretty sure you would notice if you forget to include this part.

Index

Only you can decide if an index is useful given your content. Microsoft Word makes it pretty easy to create an index. You simply go through your book designating keywords to be included in the index. When you insert the index, it automatically generates a list with all those keywords and the pages they are found on.

For each book I write, I try to look at it from a readers



viewpoint and ask myself honestly: would an index be useful and add value to this book? If the answer is yes, then I spend the time and effort to put one in (if your book is long, it can take some time designating which words you want to be indexed).

Links

The PDF and Kindle formats allow active links that can be clicked on directly inside the electronic document. Of course you can't do that in print, but you can type out the link. To accommodate print AND keep from doing multiple versions of the original content, I typically create an active link in the content but then follow it with the actual URL in the text.

There are different types of links you might want to include in your eBooks: links back to your other products and services, to your blog, and to other online items that relate to your business. Link to any resources you reference in your book for the convenience of the reader.

In other words, if you mention your [twin brother's awesome sales- and management-training blog](http://bruceriggs.com) (bruceriggs.com), go ahead and [link to it](#) for the added convenience of your readers.



Affiliate Links

Another type of link is an “affiliate link.” When you discuss certain products or services that you have an affiliate relationship with, be sure you link to them using your affiliate address.

If someone is immediately interested in pursuing that product or site, instead of opening a browser and typing in an address to that site (losing your affiliate referral in the process), they will use the active link in your document; then you will get credit for the affiliate referral.

**Affiliate links are a great way to make
some extra income and offer your
audience some fantastic.**

One caution about affiliate links: if you are simply writing a book (or blog post) for the excuse of overhyping and

aggressively recommending products and services you have an affiliate commission relationship with, it's going to turn people off.

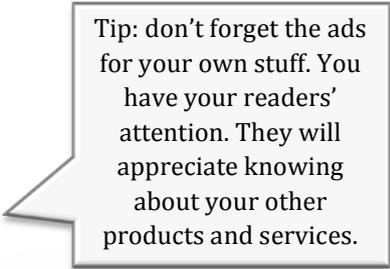
People appreciate honest recommendations of products you've used and are proud to refer, but if your intent is to simply pimp affiliates while hoping for some clicks and dollars, your reputation and integrity will suffer over the long haul.

Be sure that all your affiliate recommendations can be backed up by your honest testimonial and integrity. At least that's my opinion. You'll find a lot of "online business experts" who will coach you to write content filled with affiliate links for the sole purpose of making money regardless of whether you truly find them valuable to your readers. You have to decide which viewpoint you're going to embrace.

There are affiliate links in this book. There's no need to hide that fact or trick people. If you are giving them a heads up about good stuff, they will appreciate you and be glad if you make a few bucks from links.

Advertising

We mentioned this earlier but your mBook needs to contain appropriate advertising. You should have ads for your own online



Tip: don't forget the ads for your own stuff. You have your readers' attention. They will appreciate knowing about your other products and services.

business. Do not be afraid to sell advertising to other related businesses as well.

Think "magazine" when it comes to advertising. There are no rules.

Think of your mBook more like a magazine than a traditional book. People have come to expect that a magazine starts out with two, three, or more pages of advertising. I am not sure I would put half a dozen pages of advertising in the front of my book, but I certainly would do two or three full-page ads for appropriate related products and services (you can even advertise affiliates). Advertising sales are another source of revenue. If you have an established audience, approach an advertiser and tell them with certainty that your book will go into the hands of a hundred thousand people (or whatever size your audience is).

Of course you do not have to have 100,000 readers... whatever size your audience is will dictate the amount of money you can charge for an advertisement. Remember, there are no rules anymore about what you can or can't do when you self-publish.

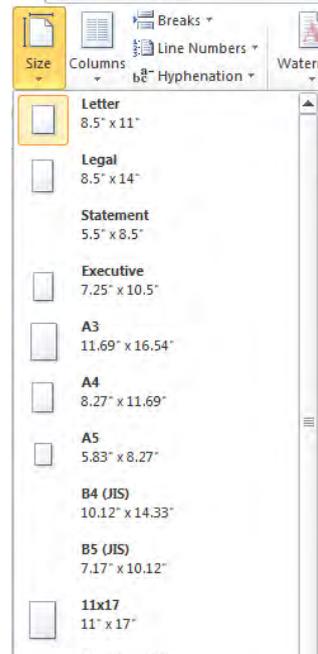
I see a hybrid version of magazine/books becoming very common. I am certainly going to do my part to make sure it becomes common!

Don't forget to include advertising for your own products, services, and blogs.

How you do that is up to you. You might have one page that lists all of your stuff or you might dedicate a single page to major parts of your online business. It's up to you to decide what is appropriate for your book and what brings the most value to your readers and your business.

Design, Format, Layout, Cover

Sometimes I can't decide which is more fun: writing the content or designing the layout of the book. Doing the format and artwork is really fun because you finally get to see how your book is actually going to look. It is like putting carpet or flooring samples over a bare floor in a newly built home – you can



Tip: the printed version has the least flexibility; start with a size that works for print if you don't want to deal with multiple copies of your book.

really start to see the end result of your hard work and choices.

Based on my experience, I am going to tell you what I think about, plan, and consider as I begin to transform the content into an actual layout and design.

Page Size

I take a different approach to page size than most of the eBook authors I know. The majority of eBooks I run across are formatted for a computer screen and purely electronic delivery. There is nothing wrong with that if you don't mind doing another version of the layout for the print version (which you should do). To save time, I typically choose a page size that not only works on a computer screen but is also a common print size as well.

I realize there is no size that will perfectly accommodate both electronic and print versions, and I do get some occasional criticism that my PDF format does not fit the typical computer screen perfectly.

In my experience, for the extra work and duplicate copies you have to keep to do one format for PDF, another format for printing hardcopies, and still another format for Kindle or Nook, it is much more efficient and less likely to cause errors or inconsistencies if you choose one format that views reasonably well in any environment. This book you're reading right now is a compromise between all the different viewing formats.

Since the printed version has the least flexibility and the most constraints on the page size that you can use, I start there. A typical letter-page size (8.5 x 11) is a common book format for printing; and, of course, it works well on your own personal printer too if you want to print out the PDF.

If your book is not very long, the letter-sized format can make for pretty thin book with very few pages. It's kind of large for a printed book and also not the most attractive size - except for workbooks.

The common book size of "6 x 9" prints out well on personal computers if you designate your PDF printing dialog to scale the page up to fit the 8.5 x 11 page. This is the format I use most often because it makes a comfortable-sized book for

printing. It's also a reasonable proportion and reading size for your computer screens, although it does not fill up all of the horizontal space when you view an entire page on the screen. The 6 x 9 format is what I most commonly use because my books fall into the category of guides and "quick reads." The typical length of my content usually produces a printed book of around 80 to 100 pages.

I also like the "9 x 7 landscape" format. It is close to the 4:3 or 16:9 proportions of most computer screens; so not only does it print well as a paperback and on your personal printer, it also utilizes the entire area of your computer screen.

For printing a paperback, "9 x 7" is not a very common page size, so it will make your book stand out. It works great for training materials, courses, or workbooks, as well as photography-related books or art instruction.

I have purposely chosen the 9 x 7 landscape format for this mBook you are reading because the last three or four I have published used the 6 x 9 format and I wanted to do something different to show you a variety.

I like the way it turned out for this book because of the amount of graphics and screenshots included. It's a good balance of utilizing space while allowing good-size images and graphics.

[Let me know](#) what you think about this layout.



Microsoft Word Styles

I've already discussed "styles" but I want to touch on it again here and re-emphasize the importance of it. A lot of people dismiss styles because they think "I'll just manually format the book as I go" but I'm telling you from experience **that is a huge mistake.**



It is a major-league pain to go through dozens (if not hundreds) of pages trying to make sure that formatting is consistent when you have not set styles.

You will find yourself going through the book over and over and over and over again correcting formatting on individual items - and trust me, you will not get them all. You will end up with an inconsistent format and mistakes, I promise.

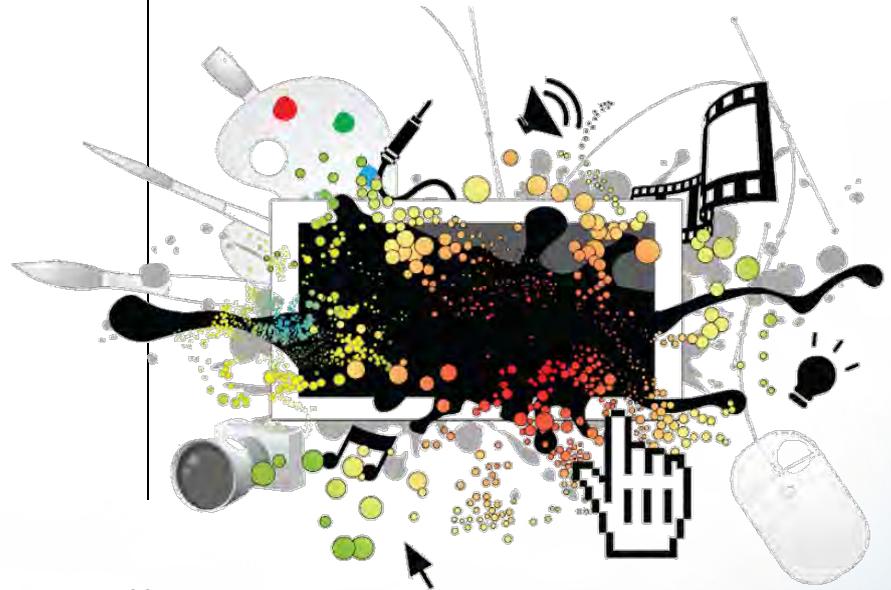
It's not really critical that you decide on the formatting of the styles early in the process because you can always easily change the styles later. You can easily and quickly experiment with different formatting until you get what you want.

The important thing is to APPLY THE STYLES TO YOUR CONTENT as you create the content. Consistently apply the correct style to the correct elements.

Hiring a Designer

Let's face it, God did not bless everyone with creative ability or even with an eye for decent design. If you're one of those people, spend a few bucks and hire a graphic designer to help you with the layout and cover.

If you are totally devoid of any creative or artistic DNA but you are still bound and determined to do all the design work, there is still some hope for you.



By using the styles in Microsoft Word, you will have an already predetermined selection of style themes that will automatically format your book in a reasonably decent design. By choosing a style theme and consistently applying it, you can at least expect a somewhat well-formatted interior of your mBook. The better choice would be to contract a designer and let them help you create a format.

The cover of your book is a different consideration though because it truly needs some excellent graphic design. You can't just slap an image with a title on the first page if you want a cover that looks like more than the first page of a report. Here are some different approaches to doing your cover design:

- Hire graphic designer.
- Find another book with a cover design that you like and mimic it.
- Use the cover-design wizards that the major on-demand print companies offer you.

Hiring a graphic designer means you have to invest some money but it also means that you can get a high-quality professionally designed book cover (assuming you want to spend more than five dollars on a designer).

Finding an existing book cover that has a style you want to mimic is a great way to get a head start on your design - whether you are using a hired graphic designer or trying to do it yourself.

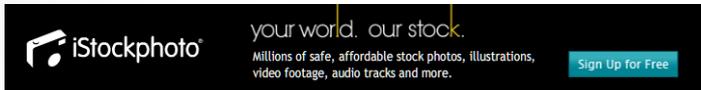
If you are doing your own cover art, you have to know how to use the software to produce the style you like; but if you are using a graphic designer, they will typically charge you less if you show them the design that you like.

The creative part of designing is usually what takes the most time so if you have done the creative work for the graphic designer by giving them a sample of what you want, you can typically ask them to charge you less.

Most of the major on-demand print companies like [CreateSpace](#) include a do-it-yourself book-cover wizard during the process of uploading your title. Once you produce a cover using their wizard, they allow you to download the finished cover in PDF format which you can then use in your electronic versions of your book.



Typically, wizard-produced covers are pretty generic but they will keep you from making any really atrocious design choices. Being a professional graphic designer, I think the wizard-produced covers are boring and slightly amateurish but if your budget doesn't allow you a graphic designer and you are artistically challenged, then a cover wizard may be the right choice for you.



Images and Clipart

We've become "visuals" obsessed. If you publish a book with no images or art/graphics, your book will only appeal to small specific group of readers. For the most part (because of the "People Magazine Syndrome") your readers have come to expect images, graphics, and artwork to dress up anything they read. As a graphic designer, I think books are more enjoyable when you mix up the text with great images and art that set the mood and reinforce the message you're communicating.

There is no excuse for using sorry images and cheesy unprofessional clipart. There are any number of services like [iStock](#) that provide world-class stock photography, illustrations, and 3-D images. Be careful of the low-cost or free clipart and photo services. Most of the time the quality is "junk" for lack of a better word and often they come with limitations on their use.

Caution: many people writing their first mBook go out on Google, grab whatever images they find, and slap them into their book. Big mistake.



Every image is owned by somebody. Depending on the level of their passion about that ownership, you could find yourself

being sued for copyright infringement or being badmouthed on the Internet for stealing photographic property. Neither of those are good for your reputation and might cause ulcers.

If you are ever tempted to use an image or piece of artwork owned by one of the major stock photography websites without paying for it, you are going to quickly find out why that's a REALLY bad idea. They have lots of ways of monitoring and tracking down the illegal unauthorized use of their copyrighted files. Once they do, you will receive a nice letter from their attorneys demanding a rather large payment for copyright violation or you will face a lawsuit.

Some conspiracy-minded people might think they do that on purpose to make some quick cash; but the point is, it is their property and you should not be using it without paying for the right to use it. So you get what you deserve if you steal somebody's images or artwork to put in your book.

My Best Trick for Creating a World-Class Design and Layout

I have already touched on this technique previously but it needs to be stated in this section too. Do not reinvent the wheel.

Go online to Amazon or Barnes & Noble and find books that have great designs that appeal to you. They don't have to be about your topic, but obviously you don't want a design that is at odds with your content.

In other words, if your eBook is about "How to Sell Vintage Guns and Knives" then you don't want a book design full of butterflies and daisies - no matter how good the design may be.

I enjoy going down to Barnes & Noble's or Borders, getting a cup of coffee, and looking through the store for books with great design. Again, it doesn't matter the topic - I'm looking for an appealing design.

I have been doing professional graphic design since I was 20 years old and I still go through this process for almost every project I do, whether it is a book design, a new website, or anything else that requires creativity. Just the exercise of looking at a bunch of other designs will fuel your artistic juices.

Get Ready for the World

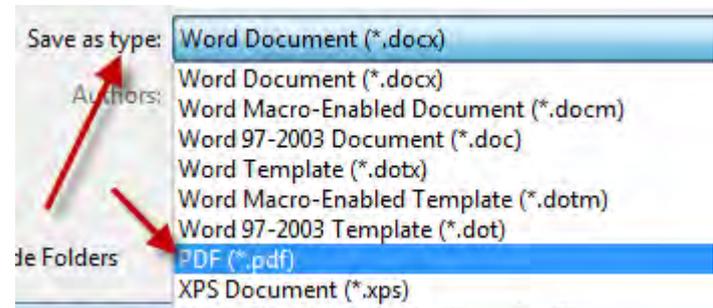
Your content is written. You've got a great page design and a world-class cover. Now you have to output (or publish) the Word file to the various formats and get them ready for the world to buy and read.

I'm taking more of a "teach a man to fish" approach in this section. If I simply babysit you step-by-step through the process, 1) you won't really learn it, and 2) if they change a step or update some software, it will be confusing for you.

Things are always changing on the Internet so it's better to understand the process rather than memorize a few steps.

PDF

This is the easiest format to produce. In Microsoft Word, you can simply use the FILE tab and "Save As":



Choose Standard for a PDF that will do well for on-demand printing and printing on personal printers. The Minimum choice gives you a smaller (but lower resolution) PDF good for emailing and downloading online:



If you plan on publishing several eBooks, consider getting Adobe Acrobat. Acrobat gives you the ability to really optimize

your PDF's - giving you the perfect file size and resolution for your various needs:

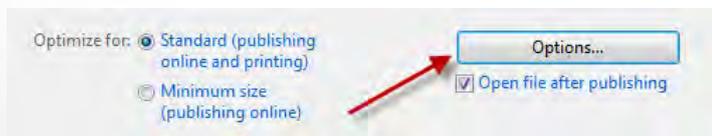
- A PDF to download online (with broadband connections, this version can be higher resolution which will make the file a little bigger).
- A medium resolution PDF for personal printing.
- A PDF to email (small file size).
- A PDF with high resolution for on-demand printing.

That's the ideal scenario but don't worry... the Standard and Minimum formats output from Word will work just fine.

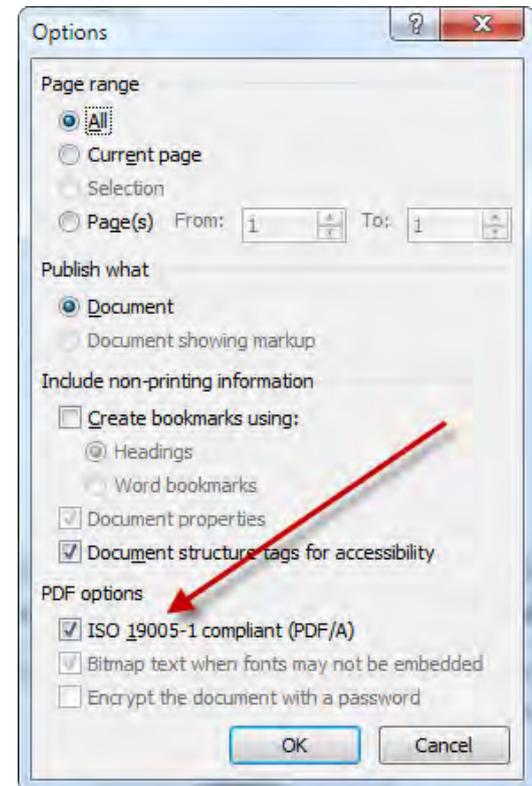
On-Demand Printing

The on-demand print services use a PDF of your content. You do not have to do anything different with your content (if you start with a book-printing page size; if not, you have to create a version with page size and margins that work for physical printing).

Output a PDF using the Standard optimization choice and then click Options:



On the Options dialog, check the "PDF/A" option. This will solve a lot of potential problems with formatting and structure that can mess up the PDF conversion process for the on-demand service.



Once you have your PDF ready for the book contents, what about the cover? You either need to create your own, or use the on-demand print service cover wizard.

If you do NOT use the cover wizard, you need to go to the on-demand service site, and look up what the dimensions of your cover should be. Based on the number of pages you have, the book spine width will vary.

If you cannot find this information, then wait until you get to that portion of the publishing process. They will get to point where they say something like “okay, let’s do your cover. Do you want to use a wizard or upload your own?”

If you choose “do my own” then they will give you the exact specifications and measurements of your cover on that screen. You can save the publishing process up to that point, go do your cover, and then go back and finish publishing later.

If you do your own cover, it has to be the EXACT right size, the right margins, in the right format, at the right resolution. That sounds like a lot, and it’s certainly something you have to put some effort into learning. Or, you can hire a designer, give them the page specifications, and they should be able to

deliver a file ready for you to upload to the on-demand service.

The on-demand print publishing process looks like this in general steps:

- Create your PDF for the interior contents
- Create your cover
- Sign up at an on-demand print service
- Follow their instructions on starting a new book
- Upload your PDF
- Upload or create your cover
- Fill in the marketing and pricing details
- Publish

And just like that, you’ve self-published your first print book. You don’t have to buy a thousand copies to

Tip: resist the temptation to order a box of your books at this point. **ORDER ONE ONLY.** Proof the printed version and make sure the results are what you expected before ordering a case.



get it printed. They print them one-by-one as they are purchased.

You may have had to come from the “old school” of publishing to appreciate it, but it is REMARKABLE that you can order one book at a time and it’s the same quality as ordering 10,000.

Kindle (or Nook)

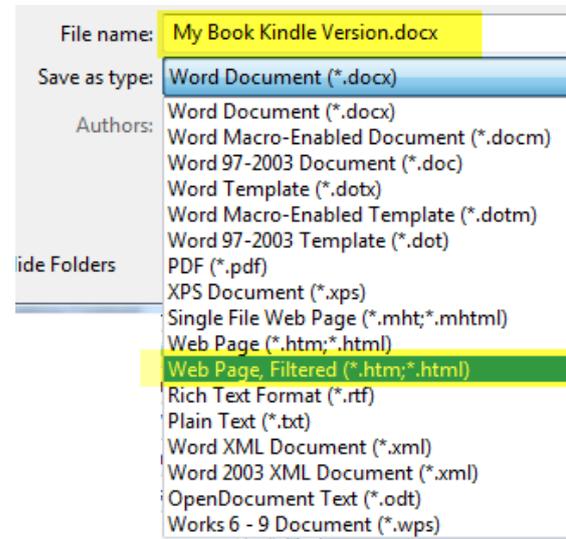
There are two parts of the process for preparing your book for Kindle. I’m going to discuss Kindle specifically in this section but the general instruction is applicable to Nook as well.

The first part of the process is preparing a version of your Microsoft Word file for uploading to Kindle. I’m going to show you a very simplified and generalized version of the process because each book will be a little bit different in how you prepare it.

Tip: you will get to preview and revise your Kindle version as much as you need before final submission to Amazon.

When you upload your book to Kindle, you will get to preview it. Based on that preview, you can go back to your Word document and make adjustments. There is a lot of help and support information available for preparing your book for Kindle - check the Kindle developer site as well as on the Internet.

- Open your Word document.
- Save it as a "Web Page, Filtered." I always give it a filename that says “Kindle version” so I will recognize it.



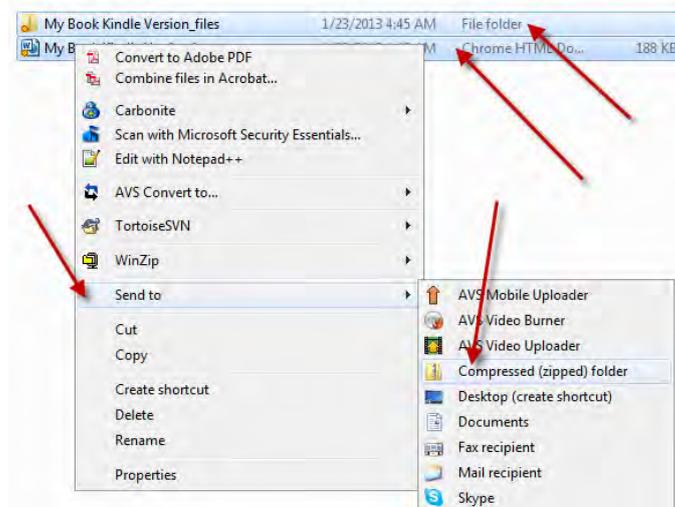
- If you get a warning about some office features that will not be available, click “yes” to continue.
- You may get another warning telling you about those features that are lost. Click “continue.”
- You will now see a totally different view of your content. Kindle uses an HTML webpage format and web pages have no sections, margins, or page breaks.

- Go through your book and remove extra spaces and empty lines that were caused by page breaks or other formatting. This part of the layout process takes a little bit of practice, and trial and error. You'll use the preview functionality when you upload your book to Kindle to see what your content looks like on a Kindle device. Then you can go back and make changes as needed to your file and re-upload.

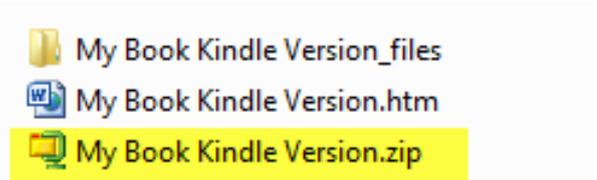
NOTE: Keep in mind that the Kindle device is like viewing a webpage. Forget page sizes, margins, and columns. Yes, Kindle displays content in columns but that capability is part of the Kindle device. Columns are not set in your content.

- Once you have made your changes to the layout and cleaned up the webpage-filtered version, save it and close Microsoft Word.
- Now go to the folder where the Kindle version of your mBook is located.

You will notice that Microsoft Word created a folder full of images when you did the webpage-filtered version. Select this folder and the Microsoft Word file you created for Kindle. Save those two items together into a zipped file (you may have different choices in your context menus based on what software is on your computer but when using Windows or a zip program, create a zip file with those two items).



- This zip file is what you will upload to Kindle. Amazon processes both the file and the folder of images to create the Kindle version.



The second part of the process of publishing to Kindle is to go through the step-by-step submission wizard at kdp.Amazon.com.

If you do not have an Amazon account, you will be prompted to create one. Once you have an account and you log into the Kindle Direct Publishing webpage, you will be taken to your book page. Click the “add new title” button to begin the process.

Fill in your book details:

1. Enter Your Book Details

Book name

New Title 1

Please enter the exact title only. Books submitted with extra words in this field will not be published. [\(Why?\)](#)

This book is part of a series [\(What's this?\)](#)

Series title

Volume

Edition number (optional) [\(What's this?\)](#)

Publisher (optional) [\(What's this?\)](#)

Description [\(What's this?\)](#)

4000 characters left

Book contributors: [\(What's this?\)](#)

Add contributors

Language [\(What's this?\)](#)

English

Publication date (optional)

ISBN (optional) [\(What's this?\)](#)

Now complete sections two and three. These should be self-explanatory; but if you need help, there is help right on the screen:

2. Verify Your Publishing Rights

Publishing rights status: [\(What's this?\)](#)

- This is a public domain work.
- This is not a public domain work and I hold the necessary publishing rights.

3. Target Your Book to Customers

Categories [\(What's this?\)](#)

[Add Categories](#)

Search keywords (up to 7, optional): [\(What's this?\)](#)

Section four is the process of uploading your cover. Amazon gives you specific instructions on how to format the cover and size it properly. Click “browse for image” to upload your cover:

4. Upload Your Book Cover

Upload image (optional)



Your book cover will be used for:

- the book cover inside your book
- the product image in Amazon search results
- the product image on your book's detail page

A good cover looks good as a full sized image, but also looks good as a thumbnail image. If you do not upload a cover image, a placeholder image will be used. [See placeholder image example](#). You can change or upload a new cover image for your book at any time.

> [Product Image Guidelines](#)

[Browse for image...](#)

Finally, you are now at the step of uploading your content:

5. Upload Your Book File

Select a digital rights management (DRM) option: [\(What's this?\)](#)

- Enable digital rights management
- Do not enable digital rights management

Book content file:

[Browse for book...](#)

> [Learn KDP content guidelines](#)

> [Help with formatting](#)

[Upload book](#)

When you click the “browse for book” button, the file you’re looking for is the zip file we created for your Kindle version. After you have located the file, click the “Upload book” button.

Once you upload your book, you will be shown the preview functionality that allows you to look at your content in a simulated-Kindle-device environment. Use the preview to make sure your content is showing correctly; and, if not, go back and make adjustments to the Kindle version of your Microsoft Word file.

Keep in mind that each time you make changes to the Kindle version of your Microsoft Word file, you will have to save it and re-create the zip file. That revised file can be uploaded to Kindle as many times as you need. Use the preview process over and over again until you are satisfied.

At that point, you will click the “save and continue” button which will take you over to some additional information including pricing (which is all self-explanatory and has instructions).

The process of submitting your Kindle book is very easy after you have done it a couple of times. Your Kindle version will be reviewed by Amazon and you will be notified when it is published. This usually takes a day or so and while there are no guarantees, it seems that unless you violate one of their content guidelines, you'll be approved.

Content Guidelines From Amazon:

- Your books and other content (such as book titles, cover art and product descriptions) must adhere to these content guidelines. We reserve the right to make judgments about whether content is appropriate and to choose not to offer it. We may also terminate your participation in the KDP program if you don't adhere to these content guidelines.
- Pornography
 - We don't accept pornography or offensive depictions of graphic sexual acts.
- Offensive Content
 - What we deem offensive is probably about what you would expect.
- Illegal and Infringing Content
 - We take violations of laws and proprietary rights very seriously. It is your responsibility to ensure that your

content doesn't violate laws or copyright, trademark, privacy, publicity, or other rights. Just because content is freely available does not mean you are free to copy and sell it.

- Public Domain and Other Non-Exclusive Content
 - Some types of content, such as public domain content, may be free to use by anyone, or may be licensed for use by more than one party. We will not accept content that is freely available on the web unless you are the copyright owner of that content. For example, if you received your book content from a source that allows you and others to re-distribute it, and the content is freely available on the web, we will not accept it for sale on the Kindle store. We do accept public domain content, however we may choose to not sell a public domain book if its content is undifferentiated or barely differentiated from one or more other books.
- Poor Customer Experience
 - We don't accept books that provide a poor customer experience. Examples include poorly formatted books and books with misleading titles, cover art or product descriptions. We reserve the right to determine whether content provides a poor customer experience.

Once Amazon approves and publishes your Kindle version, it is immediately available on Amazon for purchase.

Automating Sales

One of the most exciting aspects of online business is the automated 24/7 nature of it. You can sell an mBook while you are sleeping and wake up the next day with money in your account.

The general process is this:

- Someone comes to your blog or a sales landing page for your mBook.
- They click the “purchase” button.
- They are taken to PayPal or some other merchant account for order processing.
- After the payment, they are redirected to a page where they can download the mBook.
- Meanwhile, PayPal or the merchant account processes the funds and transfers the money to your bank account.



That is a simplified (but accurate) overview of the process. There are many variations of it and other additions to the process you can learn as well (upselling, marketing, squeeze pages, subscription offers) but I don't want to overwhelm you as you get started.

I want you to understand the basic and simple process of selling one mBook automatically before you move on to learning more advanced processes.



Click here and be sure to read this...

Over 50 Ways You Can Make Money Online

More Than 50 Online Business Ideas Anyone Can Do

A reference list of 50+ ways you can make money online; followed with a detailed look at ten of the more popular options.

Paperback: \$11.97 | [Purchase](#)

eBook: \$6.99 | [Purchase](#)

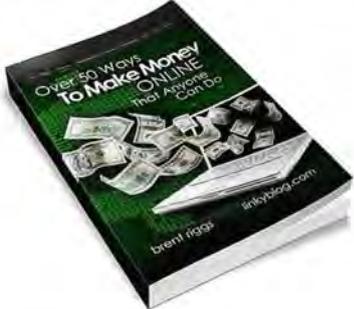
We live in a new business era built on technology. We live in a time when economic and political philosophes are causing it to be harder to make income and secure wealth.

But we also have the greatest opportunity for passive or supplemental income we've ever dreamed about: the Internet. "Online business" is the frontier of home-based business, side businesses, and the self-employed. The ENTIRE WORLD is literally your buying audience, accessible from a keyboard sitting at your kitchen table. It's mind boggling. I started on the Internet primarily as a writer before it was called "internet." A couple of years ago, I turned my attention to "online business" and have learned how to generate income from a wide variety of revenue streams. My "side" income from passive 24/7 online business projects now exceeds my income as an employee.

I'm just an average Joe. I did it, so can you, and I'm going to teach you how. It's too much to squeeze into one small book so you need to make sure you are signed up at www.linkyblog.com where you'll find tons of great information about online business, passive income, blogging, and personal finance in general.

Because I genuinely want people to succeed... because I genuinely believe "online business" is doable for everyone... because I believe that the Internet is big enough to let us all play together... and because I believe we are living in a time politically and culturally that demands we bring in income from multiple sources and not just depend on a job, I have dedicated this year to teaching anyone who wants to learn, all my secrets, lessons learned, and ideas about how to make good money with an online business.

I am going to start by going over a reference list of 50+ ways you can make money online; then I will follow with a more detailed look at ten of the more popular options.



Product Ad or Landing Sales Page

We will discuss sales pages more in depth in the next section but the automated sales process begins when someone in your audience clicks on a link to purchase your book.

Tip: one of my sites **Linky Tools** (linkytools.com) offers "Linky Ads" at great rates. Linky Ads are displayed millions of times to bloggers.

The sales link might be a link in a blog post, a product ad on your blog, or an advertising service you've paid for, or it might be a link on a sales landing page created specifically to sell your mBook.

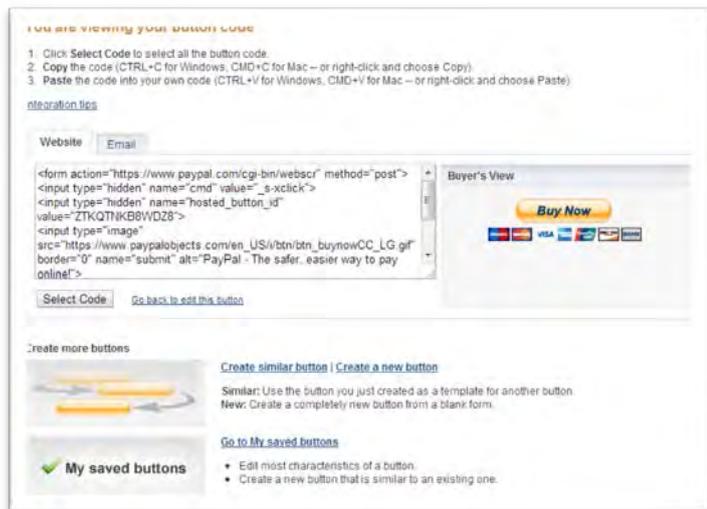
PayPal or Merchant Account

After clicking on a purchase link or button, the buyer will be taken to the payment-processing page. This might be a page on PayPal or might be an embedded shopping-cart system you have on your blog.

There are many different ways to set up e-commerce or payment systems on your blog. If you are new to the process and simply want to get started with the easiest and quickest arrangement, it is hard to beat PayPal.

Sign up for a PayPal account, create a PayPal "buy now" button, and follow their simple instructions on placing that button on your landing page or on your blog.

I'm not going to go into step-by-step details here because the process of signing up for PayPal and using it is very simple and well documented on the PayPal site.



Your mBook buyer will finish paying for their purchase and will be redirected to a confirmation and order delivery page that you designate when creating the button for this item.

Order Fulfillment & Delivery

After your audience member has completed the purchase process and been redirected to the confirmation page, you will provide them an easy way to download or retrieve the mBook they have purchased.

Giving the buyer what they paid for is the primary goal of order fulfillment.

On your order-confirmation page, feel free to include other information and marketing. As your online business grows, you will learn to use the order-fulfillment page to upsell other products and services.

Some online businesses go to a ridiculous extreme and you end up being presented with a dozen different offers before you finally get done with the process and often before you even get what you ordered. I'm sure this increases the amount of sales you get during one buying experience from a single user but it absolutely annoys the bug juice out of me.

If something irritates me, I'm certainly not going to turn around and inflict that on my audience so that I can make a few more bucks.

There's nothing wrong with some additional marketing after a purchase, but I don't recommend alienating your buyer by overwhelming them with additional "urgent, your only chance, you'll never see this again" offers. People get tired of manipulative sales techniques.

They came to buy a book, give them a book. Don't attempt to clean out their wallet while they are there.

Customer Service

At any point during this process, the buyer may have a question or experience a problem. Never, never, never delay in responding to a buyer inquiry.

Even better, use the purchase as an opportunity to personally reach out and express your thanks. Ask if they received their products without any problems. I often write a personal note to the buyer when I receive an email from PayPal about the purchase.

This is different from sending out an auto responder ("Thanks for your order!") which is usually pretty obvious. A personal touch builds loyalty and often I get an amazed response of "wow, I can't believe you wrote me personally."

While I realize that in the grand scheme of things I'm just an average nobody, the person who just bought my book obviously holds me in a certain amount of esteem and hearing from me personally really makes an impression on them. The same will be true for you.

The biggest mistake I think authors and bloggers make as they

Tip: personal accessibility makes your audience feel connected to you and important to hear from YOU personally.



become more successful is that they become less and less accessible to their audience. It is that personal touch and accessibility that built your audience loyalty in the first place.

Hire other people to do the work of your business, but try your best to continue being accessible for personal inquiries from your audience (they don't mind getting "customer service reps" for service issues) if you want to continue to cultivate loyalty over time.

Your mBook Sales Page

A sales page is exactly that: a page that advertises and promotes your book. "Landing page" is a term that has come about because of the Internet. It refers to the page you want people to "land on" from some link located on another page - such as a search engine, somebody else's blog, or a [Linky Tools ad](#). The term "landing page" is synonymous with a sales page.

Before I describe what I think a sales page should be, I need to tell you that I have a different opinion than a lot of Internet marketers. The common sales page that is promoted by most online business gurus is a very lengthy page with tons of information, testimonials (which are simply fake most of the time - but that is a dirty little secret no one tells you), endless bullet points, a money-back guarantee, and finally a long list of bonus products supposedly worth a ridiculous amount of money - but free if you "order now."

**A couple of dirty little secrets:
the testimonials are often fake and the
bonuses really are not worth \$999.**

I like to treat my buyers with more dignity. I think those types of sales pages are the "Jerry-Springer-infomercial" approach.

If your only goal is to pressure a person to buy your product - without creating a long-term win-win relationship - then this kind of lengthy and manipulative sales page will be perfect.

I decided a long time ago that I was going to take a more honest approach to sales pages. I'm going to present to you the benefits and features of the book or product, tell you what the price is, guarantee your satisfaction, and let you make a decision. I want to create a long-term loyal relationship with you, not twist you out of a few dollars with a hard sell.

How do I know that this type of manipulative, high-pressure landing page is ultimately bad for business? Because I am completely turned off by them as a consumer. I have always ended up feeling ripped off when it's all said and done. A quick Internet search will show I'm only one of a multitude of people that disdain and pretty much ignore this infomercial-type sales page.

I know there will be a lot of other online business people laughing their butt off all the way to the bank over my comments. That's okay. I certainly like to make money as much as



the next guy, but I'm not willing to trade my integrity or a long-term relationship with each buyer just to increase my income.

With that preface, I want to tell you what I think a good sales page consists of and you may decide to make yours more comprehensive or to take the minimalist approach like I do.

The Basic Elements

The basic elements of your sales page should be: the title, subheads, body copy, bullet lists, a “satisfaction guaranteed” statement, and purchase buttons or links.

There are tasteful ways to also include authentic testimonials and bonuses.

Headlines

A good headline is going to ask a question, present a problem or solution, and create a desire for the reader.

If a headline does not emotionally engage and attract upon first impression, the viewer will most likely not take the time to read the rest of your sales page. This makes the headline the most important part of your page.

Tip: utilize your editor, proofreader, copywriter, or marketing expert until you really get good at developing effective sales pages.

Mini Headlines

Subheadings are like mini headlines. They allow the reader to quickly skim the page. You can entice the viewer even more with good subheads (that are in essence little headlines).

Body Copy

The body copy of your sales page should be concise, compelling, and free of gimmicks. Make sure to include a list of benefits the reader can quickly digest.

Keep in mind that a benefit is something that presents an advantage to the reader (“this book will increase your overall net wealth”) whereas a feature is just a fact about what your book contains (“a list of 10 ways to save money”).

Remember, you are not trying simply to impress people; you are trying to serve your readers (which really is impressive). A list of benefits tells the reader how you can serve them and what the book will do for them.

Guarantee

Buyers have come to expect a satisfaction guarantee. I've seen a lot of gimmicks used for this as well. Don't do gimmicks.

Include a simple and clearly stated guarantee that if they are not satisfied with their purchase, you will give them a refund - no questions asked. That's what people want to know and be



sure of before they make a purchase. Oftentimes this kind of guarantee will bring someone who is “not quite sure” to the point where they will make the purchase, since they know they have the option of getting a refund without a lot of hassle. It removes the risk and doubt from the purchase.



Links and Buttons

Make sure that the links or buttons used to facilitate the purchase are easy to find and simple to use. The last thing you want to do is convince someone to buy your book only to leave them confused about how to purchase it.

Lead Them to an Action

The overall content of your landing page should be leading the viewer to the action of purchasing your book. The buyer should never be left puzzled: "what should I do now?"

Make sure your body copy, graphics, and buttons all clearly present a “call to action” that in essence boils down to: "the next step is to click this button and buy the book."

I have a minimalist approach to sales pages that I admit not everyone will agree with. I'm relying more on my reputation and relationship with the reader than I am on a long, persuasive sales letter:

Once again I return to the same trick I've mentioned a couple of times: go find other successful sales pages and mimic what works.

Digital Photography Guide

The Guide They Should Have Included with that Contraption When You Bought It

Whether you've got a pocket digital or a DSLR you still haven't figured out... this is the digital photography guide you've been waiting for.

Paperback: \$23.20 | [Purchase](#)

Guide (electronic version): \$6.99 | [Purchase](#)

Kindle: \$7.99 | [Purchase](#)

Whether you've got a pocket digital or a DSLR you still haven't figured out... this is the digital photography guide you've been waiting for. In this fun and extremely useful guide:

* I explain the digital photography thing in a way you can actually remember and use.

* I give you JUST what you really need to know

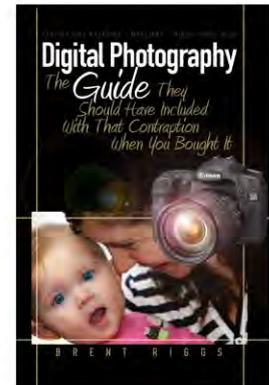
* I tell you the basics RIGHT NOW so you can start shooting better photos by lunch time... probably amazingly better.

* I help you save money by giving you the skills to do family portraits, senior pictures, baby photos and event shooting.

Here's a taste of what you get

* A Quickstart Guide so you can try something beside Full Auto before lunchtime.

* Clearly communicated, simple definitions for all those fancy \$12 technical terms you want to understand



Just like your book, your sales page should be well-designed, match the style of your book so that they look related in style, and be well written and proofed. No matter how good your book is, if your landing page is not of the same high quality, people will never buy your book.

Things to Avoid on Your Sales Page

Never lie to make a sale. It may work short-term, but you will reap what you sow. I've seen a lot of online business people come and go who made a big splash using gimmicks, exaggerations, and flat-out lies... only to see them disappear just as quickly once people put the word out about them.

This is strictly my opinion, but I encourage you to avoid the 27-foot-long sales page that screams “gimmick and manipulation.”

It goes without saying that the fake testimonials fall into the same category; and again, you reap what you sow. If you lie to your readers to get a sale, then do not be shocked when a bad reputation follows.

Don't treat people like they are stupid or try to trick them. I have seen landing pages that fool you into signing up for email lists.

In all aspects of business, the secret to long-term success is honesty, integrity, and the classic “golden rule”: treat people the way you would want to be treated or the way you would

want them to treat your family. You reap what you sow. I keep repeating that because it is true.

Final Thought on Landing Pages

One final thing, there are LOTS of approaches to creating effective landing pages. I certainly do not think my way (the minimalist approach) is the “best,” but it works for me and my audience. You need to educate yourself and find out what works for you.

Split Testing

The other thing you'll want to educate yourself on is “split testing.” It's too much to cover in this book but I wanted to throw the term out to you so you can begin learning about it.

Split Testing is simply testing two versions of a page, or ad, or email, to see which one “converts” better (which one gets more of the response you are looking for). There are lots of great books and blogs dedicated to educating you about split testing including one by [Linky Blog](#) that is in the works and may be out by the time you read this.

Marketing Your mBook

If nobody knows about your new mBook, no one can read it or buy it. Marketing consists of two things: 1) letting people know your book exists, and 2) telling them why they should buy it.

There many different ways to market your mBook, both traditionally and using the Internet. Many ways are free and some require an investment.

Free Marketing

Just like you can start an online business or produce an e-book for almost no cost, there are lots of free ways to market your mBook using technology.

Email Signature

Every time you send out an email, make sure that your signature at the bottom is an effective marketing piece. You don't have to copy the same boring format everyone else uses with your name and a couple of links. Be creative. Think of it as a little advertisement at the bottom of every email you send.

The email signature is a chance to be personal and friendly but also a chance for you to tell people about your new mBook. You might use a little banner ad or a copy of the cover art. You might use the title of the book or even the same headline that you usually use on your landing page. Any of those can link over to your landing page so that whoever clicked on it will get the full marketing message for your mBook.

Here is my email signature but it often changes depending on what new stuff I'm rolling out.

Brent Riggs

Here's my other stuff...

[LINKY BLOG](#): [Online Business](#), [Passive Income](#), [Successsful Blogging](#)
[My Books & Other Stuff](#)

Twitter: [Online Business & Blogging](#) | [Personal](#) | [Faith](#)

Blogs: [Linky Blog](#) | [Brent Riggs Blog](#) | [Serious Faith](#)

Sites: [Linky Tools](#) | [Linky Followers](#)

Professional: [Riggs Design Works](#) | [BrentRiggs.com](#)

I have used Arvixe hosting for years, and recommend them to all my clients and subscribers for web hosting, blog hosting, online applications, shopping carts, etc.:



Comments

Commenting on blogs is one of the most useful things you can do. It makes other people feel good when they get a comment. Commenting also allows you to build relationships with other bloggers.

If you leave a genuine comment, most bloggers do not mind if you have a link included. The reason I say "genuine" comment is that there are a lot of people who will get on your blog and write "great post!" and then put their name and a link. They don't care about your blog; they just care about getting a link on it. I immediately delete all comments like that.



Don't get me wrong. I don't mind if you come to my blog and your ultimate goal is to leave a link, but at least leave a comment that adds value to the conversation about the blog post. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

Discussion Forums

If you have written your mBook on a certain topic, there are probably discussion forms and Internet chat groups you can join that involve people who will be interested in your mBook.

A lot of spammers join these discussion forums and quickly get kicked out. Do not join the discussion forum if you don't want to actually converse about the topic and add value to the forum.

As with comments, it's a give-and-take situation. If you go there to genuinely contribute to the discussion, no one minds if they see your link to your new book or blog. In fact, they will probably appreciate knowing about it.



Creating Buzz

Mentioning your book and throwing out teasers to your audience is known as “pre-advertising” to create a marketing “buzz.”

Pre-advertising generates excitement and allows people to start talking about your mBook and telling others about it - before you have even published. You should always create a

buzz about new products with your own audience because it gives them time to cultivate enthusiasm for when you finally launch.

Strategic pre-publish marketing via advertising and guest posting can create buzz that will increase your potential for launch success.

A Special Introduction or Rollout Price

By offering a special price when you first launch your mBook, you create urgency about it. People want to buy it at the discounted rate before it goes up, and they hopefully will tell others to do the same.



It's a good form of marketing to have a special introductory price or a "grand-opening price" to generate that extra marketing exposure you otherwise would not get if you simply launch the book at the normal long-term price.

Guest Posting

In the same way writing guest posts for other blogs will get you exposure and traffic for your blog, it's obvious that guest posting will get you traffic for your new book.

You should specifically target blogs that have an audience that will be interested in your topic. Make sure that you write a

blog post of value which establishes your credibility with that audience. Giving them a valuable post increases the likelihood they will be attracted to your blog or mBook.

Just like a traditional author will do book-signings at a multitude of locations to get more exposure for a printed title, the mBook author can do the equivalent by guest posting on relevant blogs.

Tip: target blogs for guest posts that would have a high interest in your topic.

Paid Marketing

Free marketing is good and you'll do well if you work hard at it, but investing some cash in marketing can pay off big too.

You will have to track the return on your dollar when you pay for marketing so that you aren't simply wasting money. Only you can determine whether or not it is worth the investment. If you're making \$2 for every dollar you spend, it's an easy conclusion that you should continue investing in paid marketing techniques.

Online Publications

For every traditional printed publication, there is a similar online publication in the form of online magazines, online newsletters, online trade publications, etc., - almost all of these allow advertising in some form.

Contact the publication and ask for a media kit for information on their advertising rates. By advertising in online publications related to your topic, you can get a lot of highly focused interest; and, with a high level of competition for advertising dollars, usually you can get some pretty inexpensive rates for the advertising.

Pay-per-Click Campaigns

Advertising services like [Google AdSense](#) allow you to display ads on their massive search-engine network and you only have to pay them if someone clicks the ad. You can set up as many ads as you want and configure a budget for how much you want to spend each day or month.

The advantage of a system like Google AdSense is that you will get millions of ads displayed all over the Internet.

The disadvantage is that if you get people to click your ads but they come to your landing page and don't buy, you'll end up spending all that money for clicks without making any money from eBook sales.



A screenshot of the AdSense products page. On the left, there is a navigation menu with "AdSense products" at the top, followed by "Benefits" and "How it works". The main content area on the right lists four product categories, each with an icon and a brief description: "Websites" (display ads on your website), "Mobile webpages" (connect mobile users), "Site search results" (add a custom search engine), and "Video" (fuel online video production). At the bottom of the main content area, there is a link that says "View all of Google's solutions for publishers."

The other thing you have to be cautious about is that you can very quickly run up a big expense or eat up your budget on Google AdSense if you are marketing inside of a high-dollar high-volume market. Carefully monitor your account. If your budget is being consumed quickly with no sales, then pause it, and consider a different landing page.

If you use Google AdSense, create different ads and test them for effectiveness. Then carefully monitor your conversion rate on your landing page. Again, it does you no good to send 10,000 people to your landing page only to leave them unconvinced to purchase your mBook.

Tip: if your ads on AdSense aren't getting clicked, try new ads. If your ads are getting clicked but you aren't getting sales, try a different landing page.

Direct Advertising

Direct advertising is where you buy an ad space on another blog or website. You contact a blog or website and get the rates and the sizes for the ads that appear on their location. You create a banner ad or text ad (you might just display the book cover) and you simply pay directly to that blog or site owner for the advertising space.

Think of it like buying an advertisement in a magazine. You may be able to work deals with other blog owners where you trade ads or do something for them in return for ad space.

When it comes to two individuals who own their own blogs, there really are no rules about advertising; it's just whatever you agree to.

Traditional Marketing

“Traditional marketing” refers to advertising and exposure that is not online. Just because your mBook is an electronic product does not mean you can't do traditional advertising.

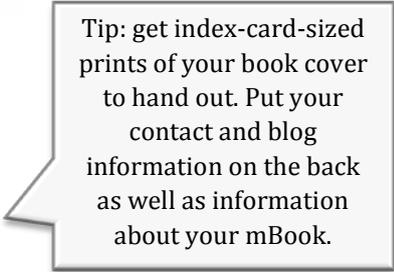
Traditional marketing of your electronic items is just as effective as online marketing - if you are reaching the right target audience.

For example, [my twin brother](#) routinely speaks at business groups, corporations, and educational events. At each of these, he has people take out their iPad, phone, or laptop and encourages them to sign up to his blog or visit his landing page right on the spot.

He gives them business cards, printed promotional material, and other literature that is all for the purpose of marketing his online business.



At a minimum, you should have a business card and some sort of small flyer about your mBook that you can just hand out to people. This is much more effective than trying to tell them about it quickly and hoping they will remember.



Tip: get index-card-sized prints of your book cover to hand out. Put your contact and blog information on the back as well as information about your mBook.

Affiliate Sales of Your eBook

An affiliate program is most simply defined as other people selling your mBook and receiving a commission (from you) for the sale. Affiliate sales can dramatically increase the overall profitability of your mBook. There are entire services devoted to displaying your product or book to interested people who have signed up to do affiliate sales. You can do your own affiliate program through your blog or you might submit your mBook to one of these affiliate programs.

The real trick to doing well with affiliate programs is to offer a very generous commission. Most affiliate programs (when it comes to e-books) usually pay the author at least 50% of the sales price, if not more. A good strategy to consider is even paying 90% to 100% commission so that you simply get your mBook out to more people and let them find out about you and be exposed to the other marketing inside of your book.

You can buy your own software, purchase hosting services that have affiliate programs built in, or join a third-party affiliate company. If you have your own software, it will track all the necessary information about sales and affiliate referrals; you are then responsible for paying out commissions.

Affiliate services like Click Bank or Commission Junction, two of the most common, already have affiliate systems in place and are very popular for affiliate sales. You need to spend time educating yourself about the features, time investment, administration, and benefits of both the software and the third-party services so you can make a good decision about what works best for you.

Your affiliates who already have some experience will be used to having a lot of marketing materials readily available to them: text ads, banner ads, sales letters, and other promotional materials. Think of it like traditional sales. The company will provide all the materials and sales collateral needed for the representatives to have the greatest success possible. You need to do the same thing as you create your affiliate program.

It's beyond the scope of this book to give you a comprehensive education about affiliate programs because that topic could fill an entire book in itself. You should invest the time to educate yourself about affiliate programs.

Finally...

Writing and creating an mBook will be hard work, but it is a thrilling and satisfying adventure. Once you complete it, publish it, and print it, it's an achievement you won't soon forget.



Even though there are millions of books, there are hundreds of millions of people in the market to buy.



Good content and valuable writing will always be a good product for you to build a business on. Done correctly and

with a firm commitment on your part to work hard and persevere, you can build an audience and do well online. Tens of thousands of people do.

Technology has completely turned traditional writing and publishing on its head.

The only rule is that there are no rules.

The only limit is your creativity and personal discipline. Don't be constrained by any guidelines or instruction from me or anyone else. What I've written in this section will help you get started, but there is absolutely nothing constraining you on what kind of mBook you write, how you produce it, or how you deliver it.

The only measure of success is whether or not people read it or buy it.

Let me close with a story to demonstrate how things have changed in a short two decades.

Twenty-five years ago, I was doing graphic arts by hand in a little print shop. That was before personal computers. Many of you reading this probably can't imagine life without computers. They came on to the scene when I was in my early '20s.



I was just starting college to earn a graphic arts degree. Somebody at the print shop had bought some weird little box called a Macintosh that was sitting over on a table in the corner. It wasn't even plugged in.

I had heard about computer graphics so I got curious and started playing with it, even though no one had a clue how to use it. I was absolutely hooked.

I immediately dropped out of college because I knew that the future of my industry was computers. Over the years, my passion for computerized graphic design morphed into

developing websites and online publishing. It was a perfect vehicle for my two most natural gifts: design and writing.

All along the way, I was told that I was taking the wrong career path, and not doing things in a way that would be successful. What they were really saying was: **I wasn't playing by the traditional rules.**



I knew that computers and the Internet had changed everything. I was blessed to be young when computers and the web came into common use. If had been 20 years older, I would have probably been too old and entrenched in a career to really get passionate about online business. Had I been 10 years younger, I wouldn't have got to "ride the wave" from the very beginning of all things "online."

Technology has ended traditional publishing as we know it, traditional news as we know it, traditional education as we know it, and traditional visual arts.

The Internet opens up the entire world and removes constraints traditionally dictated by well-entrenched industries. A global audience and market is just on the other side of your keyboard.



That's me in my early '20's when I worked at Kennedy Space Center doing my first real graphic-design job using Mac computers. No college degree - just a portfolio produced with a computer. The computer and the Internet changed everything.

My point is this: do not let anyone tell you that there is only one way to do your mBook, blog, or online business. Do not let them constrain you to their version of what works.

What works in the online business world one day is quickly replaced by some new creative idea the next. The only

limitation is how hard you want to work and how creative you want to be.

I'm on your side and cheering for you!

Quick Reference Guide

For your convenience, here is the list of typical steps I take with each of my mBooks so that you can quickly see where you are in the process and if you are missing anything.

You may not understand these points now but you will by the time you read this book:

1. Decide on a topic.
2. Think of your book title and subtitle.
3. Write your sales page or back-cover content.
4. Get feedback from your potential audience or Editor to help you fine tune and improve your sales page or back-cover content.
5. Create your book outline from your sales material or back cover.
6. Write your content.
7. Have the content edited and proofed.
8. Get some initial feedback from potential readers and respond with revisions if needed.
9. Repeat the cycle of revisiting your content and then having any changes edited and proofed.
10. Insert graphics, images, and clipart (this step can be done whenever it works best).
11. Design the interior layout/format of the book.
12. Design the cover of the book.
13. Output PDFs for print, download, and email.
14. Output Kindle version.
15. Upload to on-demand print service.
16. Create sales landing pages online.
17. Setup payment methods like PayPal for the PDF version; on-demand print and Kindle payments can be handled at those sites (such as CreateSpace and Amazon).
18. Create confirmation pages where the user is taken after purchase to download book or receive order fulfillment information.
19. Announce and market your book.

If at any point you have questions about these steps or need some help, feel free to contact me
(brent@brenttriggs.com).

My subscribers are given first priority in my email inbox, so be sure to get your

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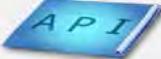
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Checklist: 30 Things You Can Do To Improve

Don't you wish someone would write up a checklist of things you can do to improve your blogging experience?

I thought you would never ask. Here you go:

Click through all the links on your blog.

Make sure all your links are accurate and active. Never get comfortable and assume all your links work. There's hardly a better way to communicate "careless," "low quality," or "amateur" than to have a bunch of dead links on your blog.

Write up a link post.

This is simply a blog post full of links that will benefit or interest your readers. It might be useful resources or information related to your blog topic. Your audience will find this very helpful and appreciate you for doing it.

Check these site statistics for your blog.

Check page impressions, which are how many times a page was displayed in a given timeframe; unique visitors, this is the number of people that have visited your blog regardless of whether it was once or many times; bounces, this is the percentage of people who entered your site on one page and immediately left your site without visiting any other part; average time on site, this tells you how engaged people are;

referrals, this tells you where your readers are coming from; and the average number of pages per visit, which allows you to see if your site is engaging people in multiple ways.

Write a post sharing your opinion.

Share an opinion about something related to your blog topic. Stating your opinion about something projects confidence in your knowledge. If you have earned the trust of your audience, they will appreciate the education. People want leadership and confident opinions.

Find a friend that has never used your blog.

Get permission to peek over their shoulder to see how they navigate through your pages. Pay attention to what catches their attention and what they seem to overlook. Do not bias them with information or direction. Resist the temptation to coach them or tell them how they should have used your blog. Just watch what they do (without any interference) and you will learn a lot lessons about how your blog works. As a blog owner, you have a bias in your mind about how your blog should be navigated and viewed. The reality is often much different than our assumptions.

Write up a list post for something that will benefit your readers.

A list post is different than a link post. A list post is simply that: a list of things. It might be a top-10 list, or a most-important list... Some sort of list that will benefit your readers.

Learn to write posts frequently that include lists. It is one of the most proven and effective ways to communicate and provide value to your audience.

Set up an Editorial Calendar.

Develop a writing schedule for your blog; and then stick to it! An editorial calendar is a plan of how often you will write, when you are to write, and what you are to write. It is important to have an editorial calendar because you can view it to see if you are staying on message, posting in a predictable manner, and meeting your audience expectations.

Write up a “Call to Action” for your readers.

Do readers know what to do when they come to your blog? Have you given them directions or instructions at the end of that great post you just wrote? Whenever appropriate, always include a “call to action;” which is basically a directive or a stated instruction telling your reader what you want them to do next. You might want them to click on a link, write you an email, or leave a comment. Never leave them wondering what they should do; include a call to action whenever you want them to act.

Write an email to one of your blog readers and further your relationship.

Identify one of your blog readers from a comment or email you have received from them. Express interest in them, give some feedback, and begin to develop a relationship with them.

This is one of the strongest ways to build audience loyalty and engagement.

Join a forum and participate in it.

For just about every topic or niche, there is a discussion or group forum you can join. Not only can you get exposure there for you and your blog, you can also gain valuable knowledge and make great professional connections. Forums are the online hangout for people interested in your topic or expertise; be involved in them.

Write down why you think a top blog in your niche is so successful.

Communicate what you think they could improve and consider sharing your analysis with your readers. By analyzing and reviewing other blogs, you fuel your own creativity and desire for continuous improvement, as well as educating your audience on the same things. You are letting them know about a great blog which they will appreciate; and, at the same time, giving them good education on blog improvement techniques that they can use themselves.

Re-vamp one of the main pages of your website.

You have to find a balance between changing your blog too much and letting it get stale. If you change your blog too much, you cause discomfort with your audience because they never know what to expect. There is comfort in the familiar. If you never change your blog, then it will get stale and uninviting.

Continually evaluate your pages for better-design possibilities, and more-effective audience interaction.

Visit some of your favorite blogs in your niche and leave thoughtful comments

Commenting on other blogs helps that blogger, they appreciate it, and you spread yourself around a little bit more. It also falls into one of those "you reap what you sow," or "what comes around goes around" type of situations. You want people to comment on your blog, so spend some time commenting on theirs.

Visit the local mall and look for inspiration.

A local place with lots of people in activity usually has a wealth of ideas and inspiration. Watch how people interact. Listen to how they speak and what they are speaking about. View the common activity, and then focus in on the subtleties and idiosyncrasies of people. I rarely go into a public place without gaining some inspiration for something to write on my blog.

Come up with a list of 10 (or more) blog-post ideas.

Writing up lists of ideas fuels your creativity. Your mind is a muscle - the more you use it, the stronger and quicker it gets. The hard work of being creative is a perpetual cycle that stirs up more creativity. Learn to put it to use.

Create an Elevator Pitch for your online business.

An elevator pitch is a quick thirty- to sixty-second speech, explanation, or verbal advertisement about your online business. If someone were to ask you: "what is your blog about?" Or: "what kind of business do you do online?" and you cannot immediately and clearly answer the question, you have a problem. That hesitation and indecisiveness will almost assuredly show through in your writing and business development for your blog. If you don't know exactly what you're doing and why, how do you expect your readers to know?

Promote one of your flagship blog posts.

Most bloggers can identify their very best posts. These include posts which had the most engagement, got the most exposure, or resulted in the most feedback. You can revisit those posts once every few months or a year because you have lots of new readers who were not around when you previously posted them. Do not leave those flagship posts in the back of the closet. Dust them off for your new readers.

Brainstorm ideas to improve a different blog.

Go check out someone else's blog, preferably a competitor. What could they do better? What are they doing better than you? What would you do to improve it? Now take the same principles and ideas and go back and evaluate your own blog and make sure you are doing the same on your own.

Write up a plan (and goals) for your online business.

Planning and goal-setting applies to online business just like any traditional business. If you have no plan and you have no goal - don't be surprised when you get nowhere and accomplish nothing. Write down your goals and then create a plan that is guided by those goals.

Write a review of something.

Reviews are a good way to educate your readers, make for good content, and reviews can also be a source of revenue. Learn to review other blogs, other blog posts, products, services, or pretty much anything online.

Update and refresh an old post.

You can often revisit a really good post several months or years later and realize that, with your added experience and skills, that the post can be updated and improved. Once you have refreshed the content, you can republish it for your current audience.

Come up with a new squeeze page.

Giving people the opportunity to subscribe to your email list is one of the most important tasks for successful blogging. Most people slap up one little sign-up widget on the homepage and that's pretty much it. Educate yourself about "squeeze pages" and learn the different techniques involved in giving readers the opportunity to sign up for your email list.

Improve your online profile.

As people discover your blog and find reason to return to it, they will naturally want to know more about you. Your online profile is a statement of credibility, expertise, and experience. Make sure your online profile and biography are accurate, interesting, and routinely updated.

Set up your own “mastermind” group.

Find online buddies to bounce ideas off of and work together with for the betterment of all your websites. This might just mean finding one new online contact that you respect and can learn something from, while also sharing what you have learned.

Create alerts so you can stay on top of the news in your niche.

Google allows you to create alerts that monitor certain phrases or keywords for you. When they are detected out on the Internet, Google send you an email with a link to it.

Set up alerts with keywords related to your blog topic or niche and allow Google to monitor the Internet for mentions of it; this will keep you current and often results in a lot of content and ideas.

It also keeps you educated about what's going on; this will increase your credibility and level of engagement with your audience.

Link up your old blog posts.

Make sure you have a well-organized page linking back to your blog archives. Most people just have a long boring list instead of a proper and well-executed archives page that allows you to search your old content.

Create a new-subscriber campaign.

When a new reader subscribes to your email list, are you doing anything for them at that point? Create what is called a "new subscriber campaign" wherein a series of prewritten email messages are sent out to your new subscribers on a preset interval.

For example, you might have six prewritten emails set up in a new-user campaign to go out to them once every week. For six weeks, you will be putting a different email in front of them and it will be the same six emails that every new subscriber gets. This is one of the most effective ways to retain subscribers. I use [Aweber](#) and love it.

Run a contest.

People love contests. A good contest can generate a lot of new traffic, loyalty, and buzz about your blog.

Have someone proof your blog.

There's nothing quite so detrimental to blogging as having a bunch of posts with bad grammar, typos, and spelling errors.

Utilize a proofreader to go over your blog and preferably proof each post before you publish it. It's not as expensive as it sounds. There are a lot of people out there who proofread pretty inexpensively. You just have to ask and look around.

Ask Readers

Ask your readers if they have any questions they would like you to answer related to your blog topic. Your audience might not understand something that you have neglected to teach them because you didn't think of it (or figured it was basic enough that everyone knew it).

Visit Top Bloggers

Visit some of the top bloggers' sites in your niche market and see what kinds of products (books, podcasts, videos, tutorials) they offer to their readers that you can consider creating for your own audience. (OR go and find these kinds of materials and read them yourself – continual education is important).

Get Your Book on Kindle & Nook

If you have an eBook and have not yet offered it in Kindle format on Amazon, you are missing out on a huge opportunity. Go figure out what you need to do and get your book out there in Kindle.

Compile A Series

Consider compiling a series of related blog posts (or a popular series) into a brochure or eBook to give away to new subscribers, or charge a small fee for.

Go Social

If you have been avoiding social-media networks (or specific ones like Facebook, Twitter, or Google+), take some time to research out the benefits of each of these social-media networks and how to make them work for your online business.

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Over 100 Ways To Save Money & Eliminate Debt

Why am I including a section in this book about how to save money, reduce expenses, and eliminate debt?

Because there are TWO sides to the wealth equation: 1) more money in, 2) less money out. Online business and blogging is about bringing money IN. If you learn how to have less money going out, then your business can grow and prosper faster.

If you reduce your debt, your stress will be reduced and you can concentrate on your business more. Eliminating your debt allows you to spend more time getting your online business started (when it is not making any money). If you get out of debt, there is more of a chance you can make enough money online to start blogging (or running your online business) full time. To get you to that point, it is as important to learn about the “out” side of money as it is the “in.”

From gas to food, transportation to insurance... everything seems to be skyrocketing in price as the dollar fights the world currency, socialism creeps into every civilized country, and Orwellian governments over-regulate the free market. People are more willing than ever to trade freedom for a freebie. The result: higher prices across the board.

You know what though? I have noticed that this isn't doing much to slow down or reverse the out-of-control consumerism (more "stuff" no matter how much we have), and what I call "lifestyle bought on credit." It is the disease of "affluenza" that has the typical family needing a couple of new cars with all the gadgets, a big house in a nice neighborhood they can't realistically afford, \$20,000 (or more) in credit card debt, and a seemingly endless need for new clothes, entertainment, vacations, and all the symbols of success. "Status" appears to be the name of the game nowadays.

Some Wise Words From Honest Abe

Before we get started on the tips, consider some great advice from Abraham Lincoln about finance:

- You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.
- You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.
- You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.
- You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down.
- You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.
- You cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence.
- You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves.

104 Ways to Save Money, Reduce Your Personal Expenses, & Eliminate Debt

1. Quit drinking expensive coffee. Do you really need to pay five dollars for a cup of coffee at a shop? The overwhelming majority of people cannot tell the difference between an expensive coffee and expensive name brand brews from coffee shops.
2. Shop around for auto insurance. The average person can save anywhere between \$65 and \$85 a month on their car insurance if they spend a little time researching different companies and getting different quotes.
3. Pay off your credit cards. The interest rates on credit cards will eat your budget alive. You are simply throwing money in the toilet when you buy on credit and hand over unnecessary cash to the credit-card companies (as interest payments).
4. Shop around for a better cell phone plan and make sure you cancel features you are not using or that you can live without. Do you have to have every feature and have it all unlimited?
5. If you are paying any sort of bank fees, you should not. Take time to find a bank that offers free checking, free

online banking, and just about free everything when it comes to the bank's services.

6. Quit buying prepackaged food. Bite-sized, prepackaged, and conveniently-portioned already-prepared foods are many times more expensive than regular foods that you prepare yourself.
7. When you enter a parking lot, park near the street and far away from the building. This not only saves gas from driving around the parking lot, it also gives you a little exercise; which, in turn, will cut down on your food and medical expenses.
8. Befriend your neighbors. Learn to borrow and share items with each other. There is really no sense in every person having their own seldom-used items or tools. Make a list of the items that you would like to have but would rarely use, and see if you can get a group of friends to divide up the list; each of you can buy a separate item and then share them.
9. Stop drinking soft drinks. It costs money when you buy them, money when you lose productivity because of them, and money for increased health-care costs when they makes you fat and sick. Result: soft drinks cost you LOTS of money.
10. Do not put a light bulb in every socket of a multi-light fixture. Often half the lights or even less will give you

plenty of illumination. Lower wattage bulbs or motion sensor light switches can save money too.

11. Slice food very thin. Foods like cheese, breads, fruits, and anything else you can slice go a lot further if you are eating lots of little slices instead of big chunks.
12. Call all your credit card companies and ask them - no **beg** them - for a lower interest rate. Do not take no for an answer and request to speak to many different people before giving up. Often you will be able to get your credit card interest reduced by varying degrees.
13. Buy classic clothing that does not go out of style rather than spending top dollar for current fads. The most current and popular styles are always significantly more expensive than clothing that is simply classic in style but not on the cover of Hollywood magazines.
14. Have a list and a budget when you go shopping for food. If you know what you're going to buy, you're much more likely to control the cost of your grocery bill.
15. Be sure you go grocery shopping on a full stomach. If you start walking the aisles and your belly is growling, everything will look appetizing and you will buy twice as much as you intended.
16. Just get rid of all those stinking credit cards. Don't make up excuses about why you need one for emergencies or to build your credit or to get airline miles. Use a bank

- card instead of credit cards and quit flushing your money down the interest-rate toilet. None of the promotions, frequent-flyer miles, or other “incentives” are worth having debt – most people that vow to “pay it off every month” fail to do so.
17. If you cannot get lower interest rates and have not paid off your credit cards, try to consolidate all your credit cards to the lowest interest card.
 18. Pay off the smallest debts first, and roll that payment into the next smallest debt. By doing this, you see quick results and gain momentum in paying off your debt.
 19. Before buying software, check the Internet for free or open-source versions. Most common software like word processors, spreadsheets, calculators, or finance programs all have free versions available on the Internet. There are also many graphics and business programs available for free.
 20. Do not buy magazines off the rack. Either get a subscription (which is usually heavily discounted) or go to the library. Another way to read fresh magazine material is to read it online.
 21. Buy used books, go to the library, or again choose reading material available online. Any of these choices are a fraction of the cost of new. Even Kindles or Nooks are a lot less expensive than new books.
 22. Quit smoking. It is hard to exaggerate not only the cost of cigarettes but also the long-term costs in health and productivity. This one choice alone can save hundreds of dollars a month.
 23. Find someplace cheaper to get haircuts. You can sneak around so your friends won't see you go into the Supercuts, but using expensive salons and name-brand hair care products is unnecessarily expensive.
 24. Cancel the gym membership. Full-body workouts at home or at the park are not only just as effective - they are free.
 25. Sell all your home-gym equipment. Forget treadmills, ellipticals, BowFlex, and weight sets. Wind sprints, push-ups, and pull ups are better than anything you can do on a piece of equipment.
 26. Get to know your neighbors and share rides, not just to work but also to the store or out for a recreational activity.
 27. Make the most of your deep freezer. A freezer full of frozen vegetables, bulk-prepared meals, and left-overs uses very little electricity because it full of frozen food; and it rarely changes temperature. It's a great way to save by buying bulk meats and veggies.
 28. Programmable thermostats that allow you to set a room temperatures for different times of the day and night.

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- No need to heat or cool during the times you are not normally home.
29. With gas prices going haywire, it now pays to plan trips carefully. We live about 20 miles away from any real shopping areas, so it now costs us \$10 every time we want to “run to town.” Turning several casual trips into one can save \$20-40/week, or about \$100/month... not exactly chump change.
 30. Eat leftovers. Gas goes up, food prices go up. Being more diligent and creative with leftovers can make a significant impact on your food budget. Cooking batches of meats (hamburger, sausage, chicken, etc.) then freezing for later use can save both time and money.
 31. Practice old-fashioned fun. Reading, going for walks, rocking on the porch, doing crafts... old-fashioned fun saves lots of money over movies, dining out, and shopping, AND it’s a lot more healthy for your family (physically and spiritually).
 32. Find some friends either at work, or neighbors who work in the same general vicinity as you, and set up a rotating car pool. You can use email or classified ads to find people, as well as posting flyers in your neighborhood. Be creative. Someone might not live next door, but they might be **PASSING BY** your neighborhood on the way to work. On days you drive, they can leave their car at your house. Or you can just pay them for the gas.
 33. Keep your car tuned up, oil changed, and tires properly inflated so that you can get the maximum gas mileage at all times. Proper air pressure in tires can have a great effect on mileage.
 34. Run your A/C less. Save it for genuinely hot days or when you’re stuck in hot, slow-moving traffic. When you have a little speed, open the windows and use your “4x60 Air Conditioning” (four windows down at 60 miles per hour).
 35. Drive like “a little old man.” Slow starts, easy stops, reasonable speed, don’t “gun” the gas pedal. This will greatly increase your gas mileage.
 36. Don’t waste your time or money or risk your car on gimmicks. Most additives are worthless, and outrageous claims of gas mileage are nonsense.
 37. Combine trips when possible. My wife and I plan to take care of other errands whenever we know we are forced to drive anyway. For example, we leave early (or go after) for some scheduled event to take care of a few quick shopping needs as well. Whenever you are forced to travel to a certain area of town, take a minute to consider if there are other things that are going to pop up soon that will cause you to drive to the same area.

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38. Call home before going home... my wife and I always try to call each other when we are already "out" somewhere. Frequently, this saves a trip. "Honey, I'm on the way home, do you need me to stop anywhere on the way home?" "I had to run by Walmart, is there anything you need while I'm here?"
 39. Consider carpooling trips with friends. Why drive to shop for groceries alone? Arrange with a neighbor to take turns driving every other time.
 40. Buy and sell at consignment stores and garage sales. It is amazing the bargains you can find and the nice things that others cannot use. Pare down your closets and you will feel better knowing you have only what you need and what you use.
 41. Stay out of the mall and stores except when you have a plan and need to be there. Shopping shouldn't be a hobby. It's much easier to not waste money when you aren't bombarded by a mall full of ads. Watching for deals on Amazon.com is a good way to avoid stores. When it comes to paper products and other household stuff, Amazon often has great prices and you can stock up. Free delivery with Amazon Prime also means no gas. And no just-need-one thing \$100 trip to Target.
 42. Use CASH when mall shopping, grocery shopping, and for other entertainment like bowling, movies, golf, etc. It's much easier psychologically to part with a piece of paper (check) or plastic (credit card), than to actually relinquish cold hard cash. It will make you more cost conscious and help you to budget better as you see you are running out of money.
 43. "Craigslist" those items that are sitting in storage which you never use and just take up space (which ultimately costs money). On Craigslist, you can post an "asking price" or just give something away to the first person willing and able to come pick it up.
 44. Garage sales, estate sales, and resale shops offer quality merchandise at extremely low prices. Clothing, furniture, games, home decorations, CDs... just about anything can be found.
 45. Save your change when you make a purchase. At the end of the year, you can accumulate a nice little chunk of money to help with Christmas shopping or other needs such as the heat bill.
 46. Use automatic and online bill pay systems. You not only save money with postage and envelopes, you save time which is important too.
 47. Use debit cards not credit cards. Debit cards take the money directly out of your bank account instead of paying interest on borrowed money; in fact, you probably make a little bit of interest on your money in the bank.

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48. Use the ATMs from your bank system; these typically do not charge fees for withdrawals. You might be able to avoid debit fees by choosing "credit" when you use your card.
 49. If you must use an ATM outside of your system that charges fees, think into the future and determine if you are going to need more money. If yes, withdraw it then to save from paying more fees in the future. You can choose "debit" with some cards and get cash back with no fees.
 50. Look into computer Internet-based phones like Vonage or Skype. Both services can be significantly cheaper than traditional or cell-phone-based services. If you have cell phones, consider dumping your land line. Unless you need it for DSL, it has become pretty useless.
 51. Consider dropping cable or satellite services or at least cancelling the extra channels and movie channels. Even basic cable has more choices than any person should waste their time trying to watch.
 52. Give serious thought to times that you can bike, walk, or even ride public transportation. Not only does it save a lot of money in gas and maintenance, it will save you money as you strengthen your health and get more exercise.
 53. Break your "brand name" addiction. Whether it's clothes, food, or coffee, the truth is that most name

brands are no different or better than the discount brands.

54. Don't be fooled into buying something because it's on sale or there is a limited supply or offer. Marketers know that putting something on sale or implying you have a limited opportunity to purchase something creates an urgency to buy and people do not stop to thoroughly consider whether they really need it or not. Marketers hope people will forget that they have purchased the very same items will turn right around and have another urgent sale in the near future. It's all marketing hype, and you have to learn not to be affected by it.
55. Don't buy anything that you do not have the cash currently to buy. That means don't borrow money from friends or family to buy consumer goods, and don't buy them on credit cards. This one discipline alone will save you countless thousands of dollars per year.
56. Do things for yourself like lawn care, simple car maintenance, basic handyman work, and common manual labor. Not only do you save a lot of money, you also get good exercise and learn new skills.
57. Actually use a budget. I know everyone hates this, but having a budget would keep you from spending money that you do not plan to spend. You can either plan to spend your money, or it will disappear on its own.

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58. This one may sound funny, but learn to use the toilet at your job or school, or a public restroom before you go home. You save on both toilet paper water and electricity.
 59. Cancel magazine subscriptions, cable TV, even Internet if you aren't genuinely getting your money's worth. For occasional use of all of these you can go to the library, restaurants, and other places that offer them for free.
 60. Get rid of all but one phone, unless you need extra for business purposes. This idea today where every single member of the family should have their own cell phone on top of a landline at home can be very expensive.
 61. Always try to bargain and get more than you paid for. The worst that can happen is someone can tell you "NO." Learn to ask for a discount, learn to ask for extra items with your purchase, and try to see if buying multiple items can get you a volume discount.
 62. Cancel your landline telephone if you use a cell phone. If your home Internet is dependent on purchasing a landline as well, (which is often the case with DSL) consider going to a cable Internet service.
 63. Depending on your living situation, if you have a free room, you might consider having a housemate or roommate. If you find a good match, it can significantly reduce both of your household expenses.
 64. Try automatic savings. If your paycheck is directly deposited into your checking account, see if you can have a set amount automatically transferred or deposited into a savings account instead of into your checking account. This money becomes more "out of sight, out of mind" and you're less likely to spend it before choosing to save it.
 65. Stay current and educated on your credit score. While I discourage the use of credit cards, it is important that you pay other bills on time (such as medical bills and utilities) so that these will not have a negative effect on your credit score. This can save you a truckload of money on a mortgage-interest rate.
 66. Become disciplined about going through your house and selling the stuff you don't really genuinely use or need. Not only can you bring in extra income, but it helps you develop a greater resistance to buying new things, and you save money not maintaining, insuring, cleaning, and organizing stuff you don't need.
 67. Do not purchase shipping or mailing supplies. The USPS has just about every type of box, envelope, padding, and shipping materials that you could ever need and they will give it to you for free.
 68. Did you know there is a place, where endless amounts of books, magazines, and even movies and software are available? They even have free Internet service and

-
- oftentimes music for free. Have you ever heard of this place? It's called the community Library.
69. Make your own household cleaners. No matter what name brand they are, cleaners are usually made up of the same effective ingredients. Learn how to make cleaners with vinegar, baking soda, or ammonia. Buy your own plastic spray bottles, and mix up your own cleaning solutions for a fraction of what you buy name brand cleaners for.
 70. Do most of your laundry using cold water. This will save a bucket load of money and almost all of your clothes will come out just as clean.
 71. Keep your car tires properly inflated. This has a big impact on your fuel efficiency as well as being a safety issue.
 72. Be flexible on flight arrangements and you can save a heap of money using services like Priceline and Hotwire.
 73. Use the Internet to research car repairs. Often something can be fixed with an inexpensive part whereas a car mechanic may give you a more elaborate solution. For example, recently our van would not shift out of park. My first inclination was to go to a dealer to have it fixed because "obviously" something major was wrong. I took a few minutes to research it on the Internet and found out that it was a \$4 brake light switch that needed to be changed (which took me five minutes).
 74. Use Restaurant.com or Groupon to buy certificates for meals at participating restaurants at discounted rates.
 75. When eating out, try to get in before the evening dinner hour price increases occur, which is usually around four o'clock. Most of the time you can still get lunch prices before the dinner rush begins.
 76. Take your own snacks to work. Bringing a few Ziploc bags of snacks from home is a fraction of the cost of vending machines or concession stores.
 77. Take your lunch to work. Creating a new brown bag lunch is probably a pain in the butt every day, but learn to cook a little extra for dinner the night before and you'll have a quick and nice meal to take for lunch the next day.
 78. Unplug and turn off lights, electronics, appliances, chargers, and equipment when they are not in use. All those little fans, computer chips, and lights use up electricity.
 79. Instead of buying expensive coffee at Starbucks, buy a \$10 coffee pot and keep coffee and creamer at your office.

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80. If you just have to have a more expensive coffee like Starbucks, those coffee brands can often be bought in bulk at places like Cosco and Sam's Club. Brewing your own coffee is much cheaper (even if the beans have a fancy label).
 81. Brew coffee at home and invest in a high-quality coffee mug which you can take with you.
 82. Investigate mortgage refinancing. Depending on the terms and your plans for the house you are in, the right refinancing situation can save thousands of dollars over the years.
 83. Make sure you are maximizing the amount of money you are putting into things like 401(k)s, especially if your employer is matching. Not only are you getting a great return on your money but it is also money that you are not blowing on needless and impulsive purchases.
 84. Once you are a couple of months into a pregnancy, begin to look for the items you will need and carefully purchase them now at garage sales and clearance sales. You can save a ton of money if you don't simply run out one Saturday morning and quickly buy everything you need for the new baby. This also gives you time to put the word out to people who might want to give away things like cribs, high chairs, strollers, and baby clothes. People have so much of this kind of stuff - if they know you need it, you may not ever have to buy any of it.
85. Now I know there are some of us who just can't live without soda, coffee and tea; but if you can learn to drink more water, you will save a lot of money on beverages.
 86. If you are fighting the urge to cut back on dining out in restaurants, don't forget to add in the expense of gasoline in use of your transportation. Maybe realizing that restaurant food is 10 to 20 times more expensive than home-prepared food will give you the motivation you need to cut back.
 87. Plan for holiday spending. Make a budget months ahead of time, list out exactly what you're going to buy, and stick to that list. If you holiday-shop impulsively at the last minute, you will always spend many times more than you would have if you make a list and a plan. Also, by planning ahead, you can pick up gifts all year long when you see something that is a good deal that someone would like as a gift. This also is a huge stress-saver when December hits and all your gifts are ready and waiting to be wrapped.
 88. Good health saves money. Drink plenty of water and stop drinking anything with sugar in it immediately.
 89. Good health saves money. Get off the couch and go out and do some work in the yard, go for a walk, learn to spend most of your time being active. The savings in health care and increased productivity will amount to

tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, in your life.

90. Good health saves money. Reduce the stress in your life, slow down, and do a little less. Most importantly, get out of debt because financial stress is the #1 stress in most families and marriages.
 91. Good health saves money. Eat real food like chicken, fish, and raw vegetables. Prepackaged, convenience, and fast foods are pure junk and whatever time and money you save now you'll pay for many times over in health costs and lack of productivity.
 92. Look into bundling services like Internet, phone, and cable. You can often get a lower bundled rate than what you are paying separately for each.
 93. Cancel extra phone features that you are honestly not using like conference calling, three-way calling, or caller ID.
 94. Learn to use coupons, but be smart about using them. Don't drive 12 miles across town to save \$.50 on a can of beans.
 95. Keep your eyes out for free entertainment. Often there are free concerts, shows, and events going on that will reduce your budget money spent on movies and dining out.
96. Make sure you pay your bills on time so that you are not getting hit with late fees or increased interest rates.
 97. Make sure you are only purchasing the exact amount needed (or even a little less) of perishable items. Throwing away meat and vegetables can greatly increase your food costs. It never costs you money to run out of those and choose to eat something else.
 98. Purchase bulk items when appropriate. You can save a lot of money buying a case of something at a discount club if they are stored properly and you will actually use them. However; if you buy a case of an item and throw out half of it, you are obviously costing yourself money.
 99. Learn to eat foods that genuinely increase both your energy and your health levels. Increased energy means increased productivity, which translates into increased income. Increased health results in decreased medical bills and health-related expenses. Together both of these can have a very high positive net result.
 100. Have a set time to manage your bills once or twice a month. By having a disciplined routine to manage paying bills and tracking your budget, you'll save a lot of money by not making mistakes, forgetting to pay something, or losing track of your finances.
 101. Regularly view either your online bank ledger or your credit card statements to make sure you are not being

charged for things you didn't purchase and to keep a realistic view of how much money you're spending (and what you're spending it on).

102. Regularly review your statements to make sure you are not being charged for fees or services that are incorrect or that you have not applied for. This is especially true for credit cards and phone bills where lots of little fees show up and might go unnoticed.
103. Set aside some money for impulse purchases and to just simply blow. There's nothing wrong with just having some money to go shopping or to spend on whatever you want, as long as you have planned that amount of money and don't exceed it. It's when you do not have a plan for impulse buying that you end up spending a lot more than you should have.
104. Check to see if you can get a discount, reduced rate, or some sort of reward or paying off a bill, charge, or loan early.

Learn to Bargain!

You can make your money go a lot farther if you will learn the art of bargaining. Learn to make offers on anything and everything you can possibly wheel and deal.

You have to get over being embarrassed or thinking that only tightwads bargain with people. America is one of the few countries where bargaining is not simply a way of life.

The worst thing that can happen when you bargain is you will be told “no” or be ridiculed. What’s worse? Paying an extra 30% because you were too scared to bargain or risk being snickered at?



After you get used to bargaining, you’ll actually find that it’s quite a lot of fun. It becomes a challenge to see how much and what kind of deals you can talk people into. However, you have to be prepared to walk away. You have to learn to turn your back and move on if you

don’t get your asking price, no matter how badly you want something. You have to wait for another day.

Why? It is easy to sense when a person already has their mind set on buying something. Once you give off that vibe, they’ve got you. You can forget any bargains.

Never pay ticket price for any large item. If you are in a major chain store, ask for a manager. They often have the authority to give on-the-spot discounts, especially on things like appliances, furniture, and other large-ticket items.

Learn to wave your cash around, especially if it is a private seller. Usually a private seller is extremely motivated, and the sight of a few \$100 bills waving around in front of his nose will make him even more motivated. Make an offer, count out the bills in front of him, and if the offer is not immediately accepted, simply pick up your cash and tell the seller to call you if he changes his mind. You’ll find it humorous how many times you won’t get three steps away from him before he has changed his mind and wants to accept your offer.

TRUE STORY

I first started learning and observing this from my father, Mr. Super Bargaining Shopper of the Universe! We have always laughed at him and made jokes about his ability to make apparently ridiculous offers and then walk away “insulted” when they weren’t accepted.

I can remember countless stories of Dad making offers on cars, then walking away saying, “Call me if you change your mind.” Sometimes it was five minutes, sometimes a month, but often, he would get a call later on telling him “We really

had to do a special deal, but we can meet your price.”

My dad didn't play games either. If he went back to buy a \$20,000 car after they had accepted his offer, he would get up and walk if they so much as tried to tag on a \$100 fee above the price. Why? Because sales people don't think anyone will walk away from saving thousands of dollars if the dealership insists on some “required processing and administrative fees.” That didn't fly with Dad. He would walk if the price ended up being one dollar over the agreed price.

The result? My Dad is financially secure for the rest of his life and enjoys a nice lifestyle, not because he was CHEAP, but because he was NOT IMPULSIVE. There's a HUGE difference. He would sometimes do this bargaining game for MONTHS when buying a car. It always paid off.

Coupons, Specials, and Shopping

Learn to use coupons and keep an eye out for loss-leader promotions. Loss leaders are where stores offer a promotion on a certain product and actually take a loss because of the low price, knowing that it will bring people to their stores.

Coupons are good way to chop 10% to 30% off your household expenses. However, be smart about coupons. Don't spend \$10 in gas and time to save two dollars on a box of cereal. To save yourself travel time going to other stores, ask

the store you normally shop at to honor the coupons from other stores. Most of the time, they will.

Learn to shop the “dollar stores” and clearance aisles. Almost all of your household items and school supplies can be bought at dollar stores for a fraction of the cost you would pay in the normal shopping center.

Wherever you're at, keep an eye out for clearance racks or displays. You can save some serious money if you happen to come across the right clearance at the right time for something you actually need (clothing is a great example). Clearance aisles are also a great place to stock up on gifts. Stick them in a closet, and when a birthday or holiday comes around, shop your own closet instead of the store.

Buy Used!

Let's start with automobiles. Buying a brand-new car is a whole lot of fun, but it is also a whole lot of dumb. As soon as the tires hit the street in front of the dealer's lot, you can kiss off 10-20% of the value.

Don't believe me? Go buy a new car, drive it one mile away, and then turn around and go trade it in on another new car.



You will find that your “deal of the century, once in a lifetime bargain” is now worth about 20% less than it was 15 minutes ago.

Save your money, get your cash in hand, find a private seller of a good, single owner, two- or three-year-old used car and be amazed at how much more car you can get for your buck. Yes, you can get a good care from a reputable dealer but overall, you’ll be able to cut more of a deal from a private seller who is motivated by cash.

Buying a new car
is a whole lot of
fun... it's also a
whole lot of
DUMB for most
people!

Never, never, never buy a new car again unless you can comfortably do it with cash. Going into debt and stressing your finances for a brand new car one of the dumbest mistakes you can make.

Check out garage sales, consignment stores, and overstock stores for new clothing. It is amazing the amount of clothes people buy that they either never wear, or hardly wear, and then put in a garage sale for \$.10 on the dollar.

This is especially true of babies’ and children’s clothing. You can have the very nicest and best name-brand clothes for your children for a fraction of the cost without ever stepping into a

clothing store. Garage sales are also a great place for electronics, as are pawn shops. Used sporting-good-equipment stores are popping up all over the place too.

Whenever you want to buy something new, ask yourself if the equivalent can be found in new, or almost new condition, at a garage sale, pawn shop, consignment store, or used equipment store.

Garage Sales

While we’re on the subject of garage sales... have you been to any lately? Have you been to any in more affluent neighborhoods? It’s like Wal-Mart on steroids.

You can find anything: clothes, toys, tools, equipment, sports gear, electronics, kitchen items, baby stuff, and anything else you can dream up. Not only can you find all these things in like-new condition, garage sales are the perfect environment for your bargaining skills. Garage sale operators are usually tired, bored, and extremely motivated to get rid of all that stuff and get back in the house to watch the football game. Never underestimate the quality, selection, or price you can find at a garage sale.

Get Rid Of Stuff!

We already talked about selling things, so what’s the idea here? I’m trying to teach you two things:

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1. Stuff is a constant reminder of the consumer mentality and keeps you always wanting to get more stuff.
 2. Stuff is expensive to keep around.

When you have lots of “stuff,” it costs you time, money, and emotional energy. You have to maintain it, clean it, organize it, worry about it, insure it, and store it.

Rid yourself of the consumer mentality that drives you to have the newest, the latest, the fastest, and the most goodies. You can cure yourself of “affluenza” by minimizing the consumerism traps in your life.

TRUE STORY

Every so often, two or three times a year, we try to go through our house, garage, attic, and storage and give away, sell, or get rid of everything that 1) hasn't been used in several months and 2) is not truly seasonal like Christmas decorations or 3) is not a keepsake like photos or heirlooms.

No matter how big your house is, you WILL fill it up over time if you aren't actively clearing things out. Remember, you have to manage, clean, organize, store, insure, and spend your emotional energy to keep all that “stuff.”

It is a very good feeling to look around your house and garage and know that you aren't loaded down with a bunch of junk you don't need.

Lower Your Rates and Balances

Even though you've already run up credit-card and consumer-loan debt, there are possible ways to minimize the interest expense and maybe even lower the balances.

Call the credit card companies and ask for a lower interest rate. All they can do is say “no.” Tell them you're working hard to pay the balances and that you're having difficulty meeting your monthly minimum payments. Ask them to give you a lower rate for 90 days. Often, they will, and you can save a significant amount of money on interest payments while you're paying off debt.

Occasionally, you can ask the credit-card company if they will accept a lump-sum payment that is less than the balance. Depending on how much interest they have already made off of you, they will sometimes agree to this. I have known people that have made arrangements for as much as 50% off of the balance in exchange for a one-time lump-sum payment.

Be careful though, since often this will be reported to the credit bureau as a judgment or settlement (which is a big ding on your credit report). Since we are more concerned about paying off debt than we are building a good credit report, I consider it a good trade-off.

A warning here about personal ethics: don't use this technique to simply avoid paying what you owe. I have known people that simply threaten credit-card companies with nonpayment or bankruptcy unless they accept a deal.

There may be times when this is legitimately true, but if you're simply exaggerating or making up this kind of story to get out of paying what you owe, you are being dishonest.

Avoid Scams, Gimmicks, & Sucker Deals

Rent-To-Own

"Rent To Own" is where you pay a company to rent furniture, appliances, or electronics. The "to own" part is where, at the end of the contract, if you make all your payments, you either have "bought" the items, or you get to purchase them at some predetermined lower price.

It is a rip off and a waste of money from all aspects. The offering takes advantage of the "gotta have it now, even if I can't afford it" mentality that is rampant in credit-laden countries like America. Let me see if I can make this plain:

- Smart people don't rent-to-own.
- People who want to be financially free, don't rent-to-own.
- People who want to get out of debt, don't rent-to-own.

- People who want to set a good example for their family and friends, don't rent-to-own.

Rent-to-own is a poor man's solution. It is a sucker opportunity. If you've made the mistake innocently in the past, so be it. Now you know. If you do it now, be sure to take a Sharpie and write "SUCKER" across your forehead.

Rent-to-own is almost a 7 billion dollar a year industry. That's BILLION, with a "b." People are suckered in with "no money down, low monthly payments" offers. If you haven't figured it out yet, any time you hear that phrase, get ready to get suckered out of a LOT of money. There is only one type of payment plan for the financially wise: 100% down, no payments.

With rent-to-own, you can expect to pay SEVERAL TIMES the original price for the privilege of owning it. You might rent-to-own a flat screen TV for \$1500 and end up paying \$5500 by the time you "own it" (the only thing being "owned" is YOU... by the rent-to-own company). You can count on actual interest rates well over 100%. Would you buy something on credit if they advertised it as "no money down, low monthly payments, 130% interest"?

Industry spokesmen say they are not selling the items on credit, but "renting." Sorry... if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck.... Guess what? The reason for this "renting" vocabulary is to avoid the regulations about interest rates that apply to credit cards (allowing them rates that in reality range from 50-400%). Even with all the credit

card “fees,” it’s hard to get your hands on that kind of consumer rip off.

Unlike some popular authors, I don’t say that the rent-to-own industry is VICTIMIZING people. Nobody twists your arm to go get new furniture and a 72” flat screen that you can’t afford. You do that because of lack of self-control, or even in ignorance. But once you know better, you have no one to blame but yourself.

So what do you do?

Have some self-control, save up for the items first, then go purchase them CASH. For example, let’s say that new furniture and TV is \$2000 cash and the payment is \$150/month. Make those payments to YOUR SELF for about 13 months, and go pay cash for them... and you own them immediately. Or, you can rent-to-own and end up paying over \$6000 for the privilege of “owning” a year earlier than if you saved first.

Rent-to-own should be changed to “you rent, we own you.”

Payday Loans

While I don’t deny that there are legitimate and true emergencies that could cause a person to NEED a payday loan, I would still tell them to beg, borrow, and scrape every way possible to get help somewhere else before jumping into the black hole known as “payday loans” or “payroll cash advances.”

Payday loans are typically a small loan where you give them a post-dated check to repay the loan. If you are unable to repay the principle, you are “loaned” the money again for another pay period with renewed fees and interest. This is known as “flipping.”

A lot of people get into a vicious cycle where they have to take a payday loan just to pay the previous loan, plus a new loan amount to get them by because they are now short on money again. Pretty soon, their entire paycheck is gone before they ever get it.

Payday lenders raked in about 4.2 billion dollars a year by charging 300-1000%+ interest. The average person flips the loan over and over (taking out a loan to pay the previous loan) five times. The government may be trying to do something about predatory lending but there is still plenty of it going on.

While every single person who ever used payday loans will say they are the exception, the reality is that payday loans satisfy the need for instant gratification, are usually accompanied (or made necessary) by other impulsive habits, and are almost always a symptom of a lack of financial discipline. Payday loans are a ridiculous waste of money.

If you are TRULY in dire straits, turn to friends, family, and Christians for help. If you are serious about getting your financial house in order, people will help. If you just want to be rescued so you can return to poor spending habits, then people will be less likely to invest in your life.

If you are simply undisciplined with your money, ignorant about how to handle money, or clueless on how to go about getting out of debt and managing your personal finances, there are plenty of people and resources to teach you how. Learn how to budget, learn how to pay off debt, learn how to avoid impulse spending, and learn to recognize credit traps.

Payday loans, credit cards, monthly payment plans... calling all suckers. You will be a SLAVE to the people who offer these things if you do not make the disciplined choice to avoid them.

Low Down, Low Payments

Low down payment, low monthly payments. Nothing down, minimum monthly payments. No money down, no payments until next year.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think retailers and dealers make these offers because they care about you and just want you to pay as little as possible for their goods? Do you think there is a reason they structure financing in such a way so that it makes it “affordable” to you RIGHT NOW? Do you think they have a profitable reason to allow you a low down payment, and minimum monthly payments?

Low or No Down Payment

Why do you suppose they offer this? Because they want you to get the best deal, right? Puh-leeze. C'mon... how many times have you walked away from a salesman convinced you got a “great deal”?

Offering low, or no, down payment programs is a way to get people to buy impulsively when they simply do not have the financial means on hand. It is a way to get people to COMMIT their FUTURE to the creditor. “We can't get yesterday or today's money... but we can get what you make tomorrow.”

Low Monthly Payments

Out of the goodness of their heart, we are offered the lowest monthly payments possible, right? The terms are extended to longer periods of time, years and years. Payments are delayed for months or even a year. Why?

By allowing you to have “low monthly payments,” you are more likely to buy NOW, more likely to buy MORE, and more likely to buy something without really thinking about the long term.

By allowing you to have “low monthly payments,” creditors are assuring that the principle amount of the loan is paid off very slowly, thus maximizing the amount of interest you pay (as well as late fees, service charges, and other penalties).

The Overall Effect

Because you are using very little down payment, the creditor will probably charge you a higher interest rate right out of the gate. Not only will you start with a higher interest rate, you will be paying it on a LARGER beginning principle amount. Even if you don't get charged a higher rate, you're still taking out a bigger loan - which is more profitable to the creditor.

By making the smallest monthly payments possible, you maximize the amount of interest you are paying while making sure the principle is paid off as slowly as humanly possible, if at all. It's not uncommon after interest charges, late fees, and other penalties to have your principle stay the same, or even grow.

The overall purpose is clear:

- Attract people to buy regardless of their ability to afford it, or their financial discipline.
- Make it easy to buy even when you don't have the cash in hand .
- Get people to buy NOW rather than waiting (giving them time to reconsider).
- Get people to commit FUTURE INCOME to the creditor.
- Maximize the size of the loan,
- Maximize the interest rate, fees, and penalties.
- Minimize the amount of repayment so that the principle is slowly or never reduced.

Folks, learn this lesson: CREDITORS DON'T OFFER YOU A "DEAL" BECAUSE THEY GIVE A CRUD ABOUT YOU. THEY OFFER YOU A "DEAL" BECAUSE IT MAKES THEM MONEY... LOTS AND LOTS OF MONEY. You are committing your future

income production to them. They are HAPPY to give you something NOW in trade for a lucrative portion of your income LATER.

**There is only one good plan:
100% down, no monthly payments.**

College Loan & Scholarship Scams

As parents and students, you have to keep your eyes OPEN, and be really alert, even skeptical about federal and private college loans, and scholarships. There are countless cons, rip-offs, and scams to avoid.

The tale-tell sign of a rip-off is any college financial arrangement that requires you to give THEM money up front or disclose your financial/personal information (bank accounts, social security, etc.). Much of the time this will be in some form of "service" where you pay someone to help you get grants, loans, and "freebies" for college.

Since the individual amounts that are scammed range from \$50-\$1000, most of time the victim just moves on in embarrassment, and it's not enough money to fight for (and next to impossible to get back anyway). Those small amounts add up to over a HUNDRED MILLION dollars annually though, so it's a big business ripping off college-bound kids.

Look out for: offers with no contact information, poorly worded letters (a sign of a foreign scam), requests for money

or personal information, or anything else that looks suspicious. When in doubt, CONSIDER IT A SCAM.

The typical scam will start with a letter offering different types of loans and financial assistance which requires you to pay a “processing” fee. Legitimate lenders do NOT ask for any fees up front as they take them from the actual disbursed funds.

Also be wary of letters that LOOK LIKE official government agency letterhead. The Government doesn’t solicit new customers so this is an automatic sign of a scam.

Be careful of emails that originate in countries like Nigeria. A common scam is to send a check for MORE than the loan amount and then ask the recipient to send the difference back. Be especially suspicious of offers of unclaimed or unused loan funds that require a fee to make sure your student gets their “share.” There is also no need to pay money to have “scholarship search of a database” or “report” prepared. All that information can be easily obtained free of charge.

Parents should use well-known organizations like Sallie Mae, or utilize legitimate sites like Finaid.org. Federal loans have lower interest rates, and there are lots of grants and scholarships available. The “free money” is harder to get, and takes a little more effort, but obviously should be sought first before loans.

Of course, the BEST way to go to college is to work your way through college and have no debt or loans. This should be the

FIRST choice for most students and parents, although I realize that educations like medical school are as expensive as buying a house, and sometimes it is just not possible to do it debt-free.

Hard-Core Budgeting

The last thing I want to talk about is budgeting. Don’t stop listening now. I know budgeting is a dirty word to most people. You have to change your thinking about budgeting.

Budgeting is simply telling your money what to do and being in control of where it goes.

It’s your money; spend it how you want, but at least be in control of it. If you want to have a \$500 a month “eating out” category, then do it – it’s your money. At the end of the month, don’t be confused and in the dark about where your money went. If you want to spend \$500 on McDonald’s, go right ahead, but do it with a budget so you know exactly where everything went.

Budgeting is telling your money what to do, so other people don’t tell it what to do.

Use a “zero-based budgeting system.” That means that you tell every penny where it’s going to go and how it’s going to be used. That includes money that you simply want to blow on impulse. Again, it doesn’t matter what you spend your money on, it’s the fact that you know where every penny was spent.

Why is this important? Because, if you do not plan how your money will be spent, it will simply disappear and you will have nothing to show for it or any explanation as to how it slipped from your grasp. Remember, if you don’t have a plan on how to spend your money, you can bet other people have a plan on how to get it from you.

TRUE STORY

Budgeting has always been hard for me. I think it’s just the time it takes, combined with a naturally tendency towards being lazy in this area. However, it’s a great feeling at the end of the month to know where your hard-earned money went, rather than having it slip through your fingers, leaving you another month from financial peace.

There is also a danger to QUIT budgeting after you’ve become debt- free and financially sound. However, there are two negatives to consider: 1) it’s easy to slip back into impulsive spending and bad habits, and 2) it keeps you from BUILDING

WEALTH as effectively as you can when you budget. No matter how you feel about budgeting, DO IT ANYWAY.

One note for all you control freaks out there: I know it’s easy for you to do a budget because it is in your nature. If you use the budget to micro-control your spouse or family and use it as your way to be a tyrant, then don’t even bother. The benefits of budgeting will not outweigh the damage you will do to your relationships.

DO NOT USE BUDGETING AS A WAY TO CONTROL PEOPLE.

*Use a budget to control **money**, not **people**.*

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An Interview With An Online Expert

Interview with Brent Riggs: Can You Really Make Money Blogging?

Note from Brent:

Below is an interview I participated in about online business and blogging. It's informal and in conversation format. I love doing interviews and speaking. If you ever want to interview me for your blog or business, contact me: brent@brentriggs.com

My name is Jessica. I am an average mom and homemaker. Since I am interested in making extra money for my family, I have been researching how to earn an income with an online business or blog. The information is overwhelming and it is hard to know where to start.

Like you, I have seen lots of claims, gimmicks, obvious rip-offs, advertisements, and spam emails about "blogging for profits" and "making money online." It seems impossible to sort it all out. So I set out to interview someone with a good reputation who is widely considered not only as an expert in online business, but someone who people trust to tell them the truth.

Brent Riggs is the owner/creator of the Linky sites (www.linkytools.com and www.linkyfollowers.com with several others in the works from what he says) as well as his own blogs (www.brentriggsblog.com, www.linkyblog.com, www.seriousfaith.com) and his online internet and marketing businesses (www.riggsdesignworks.com, www.brentriggs.com). Brent has written several books, a truckload of blog posts, and has a reputation online of being accessible and trustworthy.

Sounds like just the right guy for this interview. Now right up front he wanted me to tell you this: one way to make money is to work with companies and services that you trust and recommend who will pay you a commission (“affiliate programs”). Throughout this interview, Brent will talk about (and I link to) services, products, and blogs that pay him a commission, demonstrating the real use of this particular income stream. Brent believes you should never recommend a service you do not HONESTLY use or approve of – that kind of dishonesty “for profit” will always come back to bite you. Part of his philosophy is to always be honest and never “trick” someone or fail to disclose commissioned recommendations. If it is a good service or product that can help your client or reader, they will appreciate you telling them about and not mind that you got a commission for it. So, in keeping with his reputation for shooting straight, he wanted me to inform you of that before we begin.

Here are my questions for Brent and his answers:

Can someone really make a blog into a business?

I only have one answer to that: absolutely.

I say that with a bit of hesitation not because the waters have been muddied by all the scammers and gimmicks out there promising online riches with little or no work - in record time and you don’t have to learn a thing. Of course that kind of mentality has been around long before the Internet showed up.

The reality is that the Internet offers a mind-boggling and unprecedented opportunity to have your own business. The obstacles that someone used to face when starting up a business (the need for large amounts of capital, physical locations, employees, and jumping through all sorts of hoops just to get opened on the first day) have largely evaporated because of the Internet.

The other thing that makes the opportunity so magnificent is the size of the market available to you. Before the Internet, you had to start out with a small market and grow it over time, unless you had a dump truck full of money to begin a national or international campaign. Now the entire world market sits behind your keyboard and is ready for you to present your company and product to them.

Don’t let the online-business-snake-oil salesman ruin your enthusiasm and cloud your dream of having a business online.

There has never been a more golden opportunity with a higher percentage possibility of success for just about anyone who wants to start a business as there is now because of the Internet.

What about these services and products you can buy guaranteeing that you will soon be “making money online”?

Sadly, there is a dirty little secret about all those "make money online" programs, offers, and scams. The dirty secret is that most of those are just copies and regurgitation of the same old thing over and over again offered to a new generation of suckers.

The reason why I say “suckers” is not to insult anyone but to point out that it really is a repeated cycle of taking advantage of people who do not know any better. The overwhelming majority of people selling programs and information about how to make money online have never had a product or service that makes money, except for their product teaching you how to make money online. It's kind of like the old “no money down” real estate programs or any number of multilevel marketing or infomercials that we have seen in the past. The way you make money is to turn around and sell that same information to a new set of people; however, no money is actually ever made except for the selling of the product on how to make money. See what I mean?

There are legitimate online business bloggers and programs that can provide valuable information to you on how to build

an authentic revenue-producing business using the Internet. What you have to look for are those people (and of course I like to include myself in this group) who have actually made money not only by selling useful "how to make money online" books or programs, but have legitimately made income from a wide variety of techniques and online businesses.

Be on the lookout for a reputable blogger who has made money online using several different methods. The more variety of opportunities they can present to you, the better chance one of those techniques or business models will fit your passion, experience, and skill level.

I would say that I have made money probably 10 or 12 different ways on the Internet. I have researched the validity of making money in over 50 different ways on the Internet and have written a book about that titled "50 Ways to Make Money Blogging." All 50 of those are legitimate ways to earn income on the Internet and almost everyone should be able to employ one of those techniques to bring in passive or active income. You must choose to do the hard work that it takes to build an online business in order to succeed.

So yes, there are programs, bloggers, and online business people who offer legitimate products and information about how to build a business online; but there are also tons of scammers and gimmicks. You must do your homework, find someone you trust, and soon you will be on your way to building a business tapping the mind-boggling potential of the Internet.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #1: Is there a “review site” or some other online directory of bloggers that might provide insight into who is worth reading and following?

There is not really one primary site where you go to find out who is a legitimate online business expert and who is not. The best way to do it is to start out with someone you trust that has proven success and then branch out based on their recommendations. If they are successful with their own online business, they probably know who the other legitimate and trustworthy experts are as well.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #2: If I come upon a website and the blogger looks legitimate, but I’m not sure. . . is there any specific qualifications I should look for to see if this is someone worth paying attention to and using as a “mentor”?

There are several things you can do to get a good feel for how honest, successful, and realistic an online business expert is. First of all you can Google them and find out what people are saying. This comes with a word of caution because even legitimate and reputable experts will have people badmouthing them. One of the downsides to being online is that it creates a lot of what I call “brave cowards.” What I mean by that is that people hide behind a keyboard and feel free to criticize and badmouth everyone at will. So even the very best online business experts and bloggers who have sterling reputations will have people out there insulting and criticizing them. It’s just part of doing things online.

However, you should be able to weed out the “brave cowards” from the overall honest recommendations/feedback about someone on the Internet. If 90% of the online feedback about that person is how they rip people off, cheated them, and offered a bunch of junk at high prices - then obviously you know that is someone to avoid.

The other thing I counsel people to look for is how that online business expert makes money. You’ll find that the vast majority of people offering online business training and products have never made money online except with “how to make money online” products. I find that to be a problem. You can only perpetuate that cycle so many times, through finding a new set of suckers who will buy that kind of product without any proven history of your making money any other way. That kind of thing has been around for a long time in markets such as real estate, finance, and a variety of multilevel marketing schemes.

When an online business expert has proven they can make money online in a wide variety of ways, then they are qualified to teach you how to do it well. If they are simply copycatting what other people have said and never actually done it themselves, then they are not much of an expert. Don’t be afraid to ask them and have them tell you specifically, not vaguely, not conceptually, but specifically in what ways they can demonstrate to you they have made real income in other ways online.

Another indicator I teach people look for is the “hype factor.” If an online business promoter smacks of all that infomercial, get rich quick, too good to be true, over sensationalizing everything, then you can pretty much bet they are not someone you want to hitch your wagon to. Reasonable and successful online business owners don’t buy into all that late-night infomercial-marketing-hype language.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #3: If I decide that a particular blogger looks like a good teacher, and the website information appears to be valuable, would it be appropriate for me to contact the blogger and ask for advice? Do you think they will be offended?

You absolutely should contact them. Don’t hesitate. The very best online business experts that I recommend all welcome and encourage contact. Many freely help people and offer encouragement and advice. That is part of what makes them successful.

If you get on the site of some so-called online business guru and all you can find is a contact form with no real names or people and no way to directly contact them - in my opinion that should be your last visit to their site. They probably don’t want you contacting them because they are selling junk and looking for suckers, or they have become so big and successful that they don’t have time for the people who helped them get there in the first place. In my opinion, either of those reasons is appropriate cause to move on to someone who you can trust and is accessible.

I look at it this way. You work hard just like I do. You want to make a living just like I do. You have a family and people you care for just like I do. You have the same amount of hours in the day and opportunity as I do. So when you decide to invest your time and hard-earned money with me, I’m going to go out of my way to show you the greatest amount of appreciation and reasonable attention that I can. If there is anything I want people to think when my name comes up, it’s that I am appreciative of those who put their trust and investment in me.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #4: A lot of the e-mails that have been rolling in (and mostly going in to my junk-mail folder) have to do with buying something to get “traffic” to my website. Are any of these legitimate? Can I really pay someone to drive people to my website?

The only legitimate way to pay someone to drive people to your website would be through legitimate advertising techniques. If you get promises of high amounts of traffic for low amounts of dollars, what you are getting is a bunch of unfocused and uninterested visitors. It’s a total waste of money.

There are legitimate advertising experts who can help you build advertising campaigns that will effectively drive the right kind of traffic to your site, but these don’t typically come to you in these over-sensationalized and over-hyped junk-mail advertisements. My rule of thumb is this: if it sounds like junk mail, it is. Successful online business operators don’t rely on that unless they are of the snake-oil-salesman mentality

and simply don't mind cheating people out of their hard-earned money.

The best way to build highly targeted and loyal traffic to your business is by creating high-quality content and products that are spread by word of mouth and reputation. As people tell other people of your reputation for excellence and honesty, your website traffic will grow accordingly.

There are other ways to get traffic such as advertising, guest posting, leaving comments, discussion forums, etc., and those all work to some degree, but the truly long-lasting and loyal new visitors will come because they were attracted to your reputation, quality, and message.

How much is the initial investment?

It really depends on how you want to get started. There are lots of ways to get a website or a blog for free or for a very inexpensive monthly hosting fee. There are lots of places to buy world-class professional blog and website designs already pre-done, most of the time for less than \$100. You can get off-the-shelf and ready-to-use shopping carts and email-list-subscriber services that are very easy to use and can be up and running in a matter of minutes.

Basically, given the abundance of available services and programs, a person can get an online presence and full business running very easily in a day or two for very little investment of time or money.

Now, if you have some money to invest, I would recommend it. Like all things in life, you get what you pay for. The really nice designs for your blog or website will cost more money, especially if you are hiring a graphic designer to do exactly what you want to customize your blog. Getting a really good shopping cart will cost a little more than the cheap freebies. One of the better email-list-subscriber services is going to cost you a fee every month. But even with all those paid services, if you were to add up the monthly fees for hosting, subscriber-list services, backup services, and maybe some stock photography or clipart services, you are still talking about way less than \$100 a month to set up an entire professional online business. So even if you go the route where you are buying all this stuff that the experienced and successful bloggers use, you are paying an almost ridiculously low amount to get a business set up on the Internet. That is what makes the Internet so incredible.

I call the Internet a great equalizer in business. That is because someone sitting at home at their kitchen table can literally create an online business presence every bit as professional and "big" looking as any corporation with their own development and marketing team. There are a mind-boggling amount of resources, services, information, and other helps available on the Internet to get you moving not only blazingly quick but at a very reasonable cost.

Considering these factors, along with being blessed with a good mentor or trainer (okay, once again I would like to include myself in this group) that can show you the ropes on

how to build an online business, the Internet becomes far and away the easiest market for you to enter into a personal business and tap into the world's largest collection of clients.

In a nutshell, here are your potential expenses and investments to getting an online business started:

- A domain name.
- Website or blog-hosting fees.
- An email-subscriber-list service.
- A shopping-cart hosting fee or PayPal fees (if you plan to sell anything).
- A subscription to an online photo or clipart service.

That's really the basics of what you need to get your online presence and business storefront set up on the Internet. It's almost insanely and unbelievably inexpensive.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION#1: Why should I pay for a domain name? Can't I just use the one that Blogger or Wordpress provides? What are the benefits to paying for one?

You want to have your own domain name. Kind of like the difference between having your own email address and using one of the email services like Gmail or Yahoo. When I see someone with an AOL or MSN address, I realize they are probably not all that serious about their business. I know that is not always true, but very often it is so why risk it?

When I see someone's business address listed as .blogspot or .WordPress.com then it tells me that business owner either doesn't want to invest a few bucks a month in their business,

or simply doesn't know better - neither of which makes a good first impression. Again, I realize there will be exceptions to that rule, but why chance it?

What sounds more professional and serious to you? Mydiystore.blogspot.com? Or BethsDIY.com? Healthylivingblog.wordpress.com or HealthyLivingOnline.com?

The added benefit of getting your own domain name means that you can then set up your own email as well and not use one of the big email services. So instead of having healthylivingblog@gmail.com I can have brent@healthylivingonline.com.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #2: Where can I go to research the services you recommend? How do I know if they are worth my money and my business? Do you recommend any particular service?

Like anything, you have to do your homework. Visit their sites. Look for reviews. Poke around on the Internet and find out what the general consensus is for their product or reputation. Keep in mind that every company, blogger, or expert will have those out there who are criticizing them but you can still get a general feel for their overall reputation.

For products and services that I specifically recommend, check out the section at the beginning of this book where I list those.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #3: Why can't I just take my own photos and put them in my blog, or just download and use photos floating around the internet?

You can take your own photos, and there are a lot of good reasons to do so. That means your photos will be original, you don't have to worry about copyright issues, and you can control your own creativity. For help on taking high-quality photos, check out the digital photography section in this book.

If you are tempted to use images that you find on the Internet, you must be very cautious about copyright issues. When in doubt, if you do not own the image or have specific permission to use it, then do not. You can find yourself on the other side of a lawsuit pretty quickly; and while I am not a big conspiracy buff, I have often wondered if there are a lot of traps set for people to use images without permission so that they can be threatened with a lawsuit.

Your other option is to purchase the rights to use images from companies that offer that type of service. Check out the resource section in the front of this book for the services that I recommend who offer stock photography and clipart.

How much time will it take to see profits?

That really depends on many factors. The bad news is that you have a lot of competition these days. I was fortunate enough to start using the Internet for blogging and business purposes from the very start. Getting into the Internet now means you are already facing a huge amount of competition and choices.

The good news is that the last statistic I heard estimated that there are five million new Internet users a day. Even though the Internet is huge, it is still relatively young in age and there is not only a large user base currently, but the untapped amount of users that still are not yet on the Internet is exponentially larger. The most encouraging and exciting thing that fuels me and my online business (which I often share with people who are just starting out because I want to spike their enthusiasm) is this: you only need a teeny tiny sliver of the available market on the Internet to be unfathomably successful with an online business. You don't have to go out and get 1 million customers or even hundreds of thousands. A few thousand clients and customers (out of the available hundreds of millions) can bring you online success to a degree that is hard to describe.

Making \$5,000 or \$10,000 a month on the Internet is a very average and achievable goal for just about anyone who wants to work hard, stick with it, and follow someone who is successful. Making \$30,000, \$40,000, or \$50,000 a month on the Internet is still a relatively conservative income goal for someone with passion, drive, and most of all: perseverance. Those numbers are correct. I am not exaggerating them. So if you are looking for, and would be happy and satisfied with, making an extra couple of grand a month, it is 100% doable by anyone willing to follow instructions, work hard, and again, persevere.

The reason I often mention perseverance is because most people give up very quickly. Some of this is due to our "get-

rich-quick" mentality or because people fall for scams that say you can "work 10 minutes a week and 60 days later you'll be a millionaire!" That has always been a scam and it always will be a scam. Aside from that mentality, it is equally true that you absolutely can build a business online if you are willing to work it like a business, have patience with it like a real business, and put in the blood, sweat, and tears that a real business requires. The degree you are willing to do these things will determine the level of success you can have; but, I guarantee you, that success is achievable and available to you.

From my experience, I'm comfortable saying that if you work hard and are serious about your business, you should see it to begin to produce income within a few weeks at most. It will be small at first, like a snowball that you want to turn into a snowman. It starts out as a small handful of snow that you pack into a ball, begin to roll it and push it and move it, and then it picks up momentum, gains size, and after a while actually creates its own momentum and energy. The average successful online business usually sees a few hundred dollars a month in income after a few months, with realistic expectations of income growing to five figures a month after the first two or three years of business. I have no scientific proof or financial statistics to show you, I am just telling you that this has been my experience with several different online businesses and those of many different friends and acquaintances who do business online.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #1: What do you mean by "stick with it"? Can I just set up a blog using some of the income-

generating ideas suggested by the professional bloggers and just wait and see what happens?

Sure, you can sit and wait all day and see what happens. But I doubt anything will.

Having a business online is no different than having a traditional business. You need a plan, you need good execution, and you need good old-fashioned hard work and commitment. Anyone telling you that you can make a bunch of money online by purchasing a service from them or some software and then sit back and watch the rent money roll in is lying to you. Think about it... If that were true, why would they sell it to you? Why wouldn't they just set it up themselves and watch the money roll in straight to them?

I'll tell you why... It's because the way they make their money is selling you that type of get-rich-quick nonsense.

What I mean by "stick with it" is that online business takes the same kind of hard work and dedication as any other traditionally successful businesses. If you are not committed, in it for the long haul, and willing to work hard, you are simply going to throw a bunch of money into the pockets of scammers and make them rich.

Where does the money come from?

That's almost a whole book or interview by itself. There are definitely a lot of different ways to make money online - more than enough to fit different personalities, skills, and passions. You can write information and sell it. You can build up blogs

or websites that get a lot of traffic and make money from advertising sales. You can create training courses, demos, tutorials, and all sorts of different media that teach people something they want to learn. You can sell subscriptions to special content or members-only functions or information. You can make money from advertising systems such as Google AdSense where you get paid to advertise other people's products. You can do product reviews or consulting.

What the Internet does is open up an almost endless market to you. If you can write it, record it, demonstrate it, video it, animate it, or in any way present it on a computer screen, then you can present information, exclusive content, or products that people will buy. What it boils down to is this: if you can think of something that you can make appear on someone's computer screen, or in their email box, or download onto their computer, and it is something they want to pay you money for, guess what? You have an online business. I keep using words like mind-boggling, ridiculous, amazing, and infinite because that literally is the scope of not only what you can do on the Internet but the potential market that you can reach.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #1: I like to write but I'm not sure how to put a book together (or how to come up with enough writing to fill a book). Any suggestions? If I do come up with a book-length document, how do I market and sell it?

Yes, I have a lot of suggestions and they are all found in the section of this book on creating, publishing, and marketing your own e-book. *Note: originally the interview would've had*

an answer here covering this but since this book has an entire section on it - I'll just point you to that.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #2: Other than books, what other kinds of things can I sell online? I don't want to have to stock a warehouse full of widgets, and I also don't want to "knit-on-demand" like people do on Etsy.

What you are basically describing is that you don't want to trade money for time and that is one of the beauties of doing business online. There are many ways to make income and sell things online where you don't have to keep inventories, or turn around and do work each time a sale is made. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that, and many online businesses are centered on producing and delivering a product with each order that is processed.

The Internet offers the opportunity to create many types of passive income or non-tangible products such as electronic downloads or services. Here's a quick list off the top of my head: e-books, music, membership or subscriber sites, drop-ship products (you don't carry an inventory of products; somebody else does, you just process the orders), reviews, advertising income, and affiliate marketing (you recommend and sell other people's products and get a commission). Check out the section of this book where I list over 50 ways to make money online for other ideas.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #3: You mentioned Google Adsense, how does this work and do I get to pick the advertisements that go up on my blog? What if they are

selling something I would never encourage anyone to purchase?

Google AdSense is a system which allows you to put a piece of code on your site and the Google ads are displayed. When someone clicks on one of those ads, you receive a payment from Google. It goes without saying that the more traffic you have - the more chances your ads will be clicked on and the more money you will make.

You do have some control over which ads appear on your site but it is hard to have total control over it. A lot of that depends on how picky you are about what appears on your site. If you have some very stringent objections to a lot of different types of content than you may have trouble keeping Google AdSense under the level of control you desire. However, they do not deliver a lot of highly objectionable material such as pornography. So it just boils down to your own personal guidelines about what you want to appear on your site.

Is this something I can hire someone else to do for me and I just manage them?

Absolutely. Like any business, you can hire employees or contractors to do work for you. It is no different on the Internet. What sets the Internet apart from traditional business is that much of it you can do yourself or pay for existing services that are relatively inexpensive compared to traditional costs to get involved in brick-and-mortar business.

For example, you could buy a server and do all your own website and shopping-cart hosting, but why bother? You can

pay a service to do that for a few bucks a month and they will administer it, update it, and secure it for you. Being a long-time graphic designer by profession, I hate to cost myself business, but you can pay \$40 - \$50 and get a world-class website and business design, something that would have cost you thousands of dollars a few years ago.

If you are a big-picture person who does not want to run the day-to-day operations of your blog, that's another great thing about the Internet. I use proofreaders and editors that I met on the Internet who do contract work for me. The nice thing about using contractors is this: if they do poor work, or if for any reason you simply can't pay for them or do not need them anymore - you don't have to fire them. You just simply stop giving them any more work. That's the beauty and convenience of contractors. I contract out graphic design, programming, writing, proofing, and editing... those are all things that I can do myself and that I very often do much of myself because I want to and my schedule allows for it. But when I need help, I have the entire Internet out there to tap into for talented contractors. Websites and services like eLance.com and guru.com allow you to post projects and needs, and you will instantly have a variety of companies and individuals who are ready to do the contract work for you.

Once again, this points out one of the incredible things about doing online business: you get to choose the amount that you participate or delegate. You can do all of it yourself, you can do most of it and hire a little bit of help, you can have most of it done and just do the part you want, or you can find an endless supply of contractors to do every single bit of the work for you

on a contract basis. Of course you have to pay them and it cuts into the profits, but over time you will find that your business can grow much bigger and much faster if you are willing to invest in help rather than trying to do everything yourself.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #1: How will I know when it is the right time to hire help?

The answer to that question is different for everyone but I measure it this way: when I compare the money that I'm making with the money that I'm losing doing any given task that I could pay someone else to do (for less than what I would be making if I was doing something else), I consider hiring help.

In other words, if I can hire someone for \$25 an hour to do one hour's worth of work when I could instead be earning \$50 an hour doing something else with my business, it only makes sense to hire someone. If I do not, I am in essence costing myself \$25/hour.

The other aspect of this is productivity. Once you reach a certain number of hours and intensity in your work, your productivity begins to decline. By hiring some help, you stay fresher and more energized - which increases your productivity and profitability. I ask myself: can I make more money by spending some money to hire someone to help me with this task or responsibility? If the answer is yes, then you have to be smart enough to know that writing a check for money that leaves your business will result in even more coming back in. Invest in your own success.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION #2: If you are hiring "strangers" you met on the internet, how do you know that they are qualified? Do you have to pay them if they complete the assignment but their work is sloppy and not something you will use? Do you have to pay for assignments ahead of time?

The nice thing about hiring people over the Internet is that you can do it on a contract basis. Give them a little bit of work to start with, test them out, and if they do well give them little more. Incrementally increase the amount of work and responsibility given to them as they prove themselves trustworthy and competent.

One great thing I have found is that there are a lot of people who want to do side work or create some sort of home business. So if you're looking for graphic designers, proofreaders, editors, web developers... Just about any skill that you'll need for an online business, there is usually plenty of people out there willing to work on a contract basis.

How and when you decide to pay each contractor is really your own decision. If you have legitimate reasons not to pay a contractor who has done sloppy or unacceptable work, then you just have to inform them of your decision and wait to see if they take any legal recourse. In my experience, if you can pretty clearly prove they didn't earn the money, they normally will not try to come and collect it from you. On the other hand, you have to weigh the emotional stress and loss of time if you do have to fight someone over money. There have been plenty of times I just paid someone to go away because it is not

worth the lost time or stress to decline payment to them. Of course, I never use them again, and I will make use of any way that I can publicly review them and tell others about their unacceptable work. Often, the contractor will not fight you over a nonpayment if they realize they really haven't earned it and you are about to go out and publicly state that fact in a review of their services.

There are times when I will agree to pay some sort of down payment but most of the time you pay after the work is complete. Many of the services where you can hire contractors (such as elance.com) will have you put the pay into an escrow account and then they will mediate if there is a dispute over payment.

What is the downside to online business?

In one very real sense, I can say that there actually is no downside. What I mean is this: the cost of entry and investment is so low (and the potential upside is so remarkable) that I can truly say that there is virtually no downside to trying your own online Internet business. In fact, the lack of financial investment and low level of risk ensures that you could start or attempt several online businesses either simultaneously or over the course of time and still stand to lose very little financially. Given that, I confidently tell people that while there is no guarantee of success doing online business, the downside with regards to risk or capital investment is so miniscule it makes the decision to start an online business a "no-brainer."

If you mean by "downside": what are the risks, pitfalls, or mistakes that you should be on alert for? I have already mentioned many of those. The online business market is full of scammers, hucksters, and flat-out liars. Nine out of 10 people offering to teach you online business have not been online very long themselves and the only thing they have ever made money at is selling you their "how to make money online" information. So you can end up wasting a lot of money on gimmicks, false promises, the same old rehashed information, and just plain old junk - unless you are careful.

You can avoid the aforementioned downside with a piece of advice that I offer over and over again almost every time I talk about online business: find someone you trust, someone who is already successful at online business, someone who has made money on the Internet in many different ways (not just with their "how to make money online" products), watch what they do, and imitate what they do. There is no better way to be successful than to find someone who is already doing exactly what you want to do and imitate them. Imitation truly is the highest form of flattery and there is not a successful online businessman around (myself included) who is anything but honored by those who mimic and imitate proven success.

How do I get started?

I have a little different approach to how to get started than most online business trainers do. Most of them will start walking you through the steps of how to set up a blog, get an email-list server ready to go, etc., but I think it is more important for you to identify and educate yourself about the

different ways you can make money online before you ever set up a blog or a website. I think that when you have identified and felt drawn towards particular techniques of how to make money online, then you will keep those techniques and goals in mind as you go to set up your online presence (that would be your blog or website) and other services you need to conduct business.

Remember: there are dozens of ways to make money online; over time, you will try some that will be very successful and will move your business forward. Occasionally, you may try a technique that just does not work for you and you will drop it. That is why I believe it is important for you to first research all the different ways that you can make money, so that you do not find yourself trapped by a lack of knowledge into thinking that there are only one or two ways to make money (such as posting advertising).

My advice to you if you want to get started right now is to start researching all the ways to make money online and educate yourself.

Once you have a really good number of different ways to generate income online then you'll be ready to kick into high gear creating your blog, shopping cart, and other blog set-up tasks. If you do not educate yourself first about online revenue streams, and simply jump into setting up a website or blog and other items, you might look up and realize you spent a long period of time constructing your online presence but you have no clue what you are going to do with your blog; or

worse, maybe you have set it up all wrong given the type of income you finally decide to go after. My "getting-started" advice is fairly unique in that sense. Most every other program or Internet marketing guru out there (that I am aware of) will start you with building things instead of educating you about business itself.

It would be like someone advising you to begin a brick-and-mortar business by having you run down to the lumber store, buy a bunch of construction material, then telling you to go ahead and start putting a building up . . . when you have no idea what you're going to do with the building, what kind of business you're going to have, or maybe not even knowing anything about how to run a business in the first place. So I want you to learn all the ways you can make money online and educate yourself about how to do it properly before you actually begin grabbing those virtual two-by-fours and nails and start to build the structure. It is not a long process. Spend a few days, a couple of weeks, or even a month educating yourself very intensely and then you will be ready to launch yourself like a thoroughbred out of the starting gate -- knowing exactly what you need to do and why you are doing it.

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Linky Blog Useful Articles

Five Big Blogging Mistakes You Must Avoid But Probably Won't

It is often more helpful to know what NOT to do. Here are five common blogging mistakes that you should avoid (but most will not):

Sloppy Writing

u don't got to be a wurdl CClass writer butt u do gotta not be a slob whin righting.

The biggest turn off with blog content is not a lack of professional writing skills. Good stories and ideas can overcome a lack of writing style. However, it is always a turn off when we lack diligence concerning those things we CAN control: punctuation, capitalization, avoiding those "texting" abbreviations, and generally typing like an adult rather than a scatterbrained adolescent.

Clean up your typing. Use capitals and punctuation. Take advantage of your spell checker. Write in short sentences and short paragraphs just to be safe. Avoid cutesy cultural "texting" words unless they clearly add to the style and message.

Crappy Photos

The best writing, best design, and best content ideas in the world are quickly ruined when we put no effort into making our photos and images as good as they can be. Not everyone can have world-class, fantastic images but pretty much anyone can avoid putting up lousy photos that show very little effort or concern. I use [istock.com](https://www.istock.com) and love them.

Widget and Gadget Dementia

Many bloggers (especially those with more personal blogs) have an obsession with miles and miles and miles of endless gadgets and widgets lining the sides of the blog. If not an obsession, maybe they have seen it so much they think it **MUST** be the right thing to do.

This widgetpalooza is bad for several reasons:

- They slow down the blog from loading.
- They are ugly.
- They are often useless.
- They run the risk of something incompatible causing problems on your blog.
- They are a design nightmare.
- They are distracting from the **REAL** treasure on your blog – the posts.

Group widgets and badges tastefully. Get rid of gadgets that do not add value for your readers. Do not extend 20 feet of widgets down your page - miles past the last blog post.

Eye-Gouging Mind-Numbing Style

This one is a little more difficult to describe but it goes something like this: if one of the following reactions is common upon visiting your blog, then you might want to get some graphic-design help:

- The urge to gouge your eyes out.
- A desire to overdose of Oxycontin to numb the mental chaos.
- An overwhelming desire to strangle yourself.
- An instant decision to leave your blog and never come back.

You do not have to be a professional graphic designer. But **ANYONE** can employ some general design rules **AND** ask for the opinion of designers. There are **LOTS** of designers out there and chances are someone reading your blog is pretty good at design. Ask their opinion.

When in doubt, find a blog that is well done and mimic their style. There is no excuse for a blog design that runs people off; or worse, makes them want to shove their head through a monitor.

Not Learning

I'm always amazed at people who spend zero time learning about blogging. If you are going to do it, why not be educated about it? Maybe it's just my personality.

Learn about good writing and how to take/get great photos. Learn about good design, navigation, and how to interact with your readers. Blogging is a lot more fun, not to mention more successful, if you actually know what you are doing. It is not rocket science. Anyone can learn the ins and outs of good blogging.

The fact that you are reading EPIC Book is a good start...

Love That Hate Mail

If you blog for any length of time, you will get hate mail, and it is almost always from those courageous “anonymous” writers. People become VERY brave behind a keyboard and a thousand miles of fiber optics.

IGNORE IT

If you have not gotten hate mail or vicious comments yet from anonymous cowards, don't worry - you will. There are two ways to handle it but they both come down to a single principle: IGNORE IT. Trust me. This advice comes from 15 years of experience: IGNORE IT. Hate mail is not worth the time it takes to delete it.

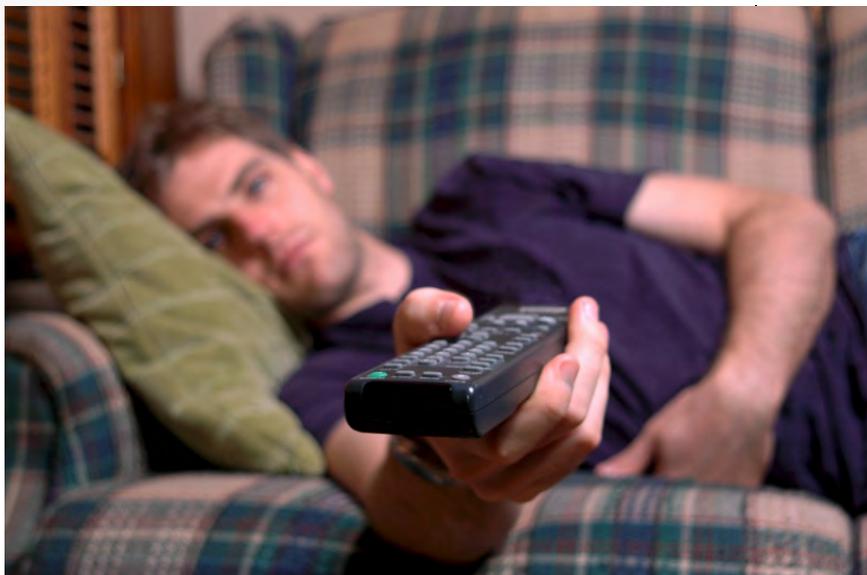


If a hateful comment comes from no one (“anonymous”) then it deserves no one's time and no one's consideration.

Here are two suggestions:

If you are thin-skinned and sensitive: have someone else moderate your comments or blog email and delete the bad stuff before you ever have to see it.

If you aren't so sensitive, be ready with the DELETE key whenever a message is from “anonymous.” As soon as it becomes obvious it's troll scroll, then trash it. Resist the



temptation to keep reading (it will be like watching a car crash though - it's hard to look away).

If someone does not have the integrity to identify themselves and own up to their criticism, they do not deserve the micro-seconds it takes you to send it to digital Never Land.

But what if you get criticism or ugly-grams from someone who includes their name and email? Treat it like you SHOULD treat all criticism: read it carefully... honestly accept any gripes that have merit (and do something about it), and disregard anything that has no merit.

Most of the time you will want to respond back, acknowledge their feedback, and sincerely thank them for pointing out something that really was accurate even if it hurt... but don't give in to the temptation to defend yourself from inaccurate criticism. When you respond to honest critics who have a point, you will often gain a friend and ally.

Just Can't Find the Time

I often have people tell me "I just can't find the time to blog more often." Okay, then don't. But don't be surprised... ready for this... that you will not be a successful blogger if you do not blog.

Except for the very rare exception, I don't believe anyone who says that to me anyway. Why? Because 99.9% of folks have some amount of passive electronic time during the day - usually hours of it. Some justify it as "relaxing" or "winding down." Whatever. Do yourself a favor and just admit it is easier to sit and watch a movie or surf Facebook than to do the hard work of writing something that will help build your blog and serve others.

Lots of Ways to Find Time

Over the years, I have observed several common ways people can "find time":

-
- Get up earlier – the art of rising early seems to be lost; it used to be a hallmark of the successful.
 - Turn off the [electronic item here].
 - Use voice dictation to jot down blog-post ideas and notes while driving or going out and about.
 - Give up something else of lower importance.
 - Write MORE so that you get faster. Writing is like athletics... you get faster and more productive with experience and routine practice. I know this by personal experience. I can write a quality blog post in 10-15 minutes, while an inexperienced writer might struggle for hours or even a couple of days on it.
 - Learn to jot down quick outlines that are easy to flesh out later. For example, I might have quickly outlined this section with something like the following list; doing this makes it easy to simply fill in the details when you have time:
 - Can't Find Time
 - Screen time is the biggest problem
 - List ways to find more time
 - Priorities

In the end, it boils down to how serious and committed you are. It is about priorities and discipline. We all have the same amount of time. You cannot sincerely say "I can't find time"

unless your schedule is completely full of activity that is truly higher priority (including rest and disconnecting). But again, I do not find one person in a thousand that can say that.

Whether it is blogging or something else you wish you did more consistently, there is typically a common culprit. I find that almost without exception, "I can't find time" is due to one of these: laziness, poor productivity, inexperience, wasted time, or misplaced priorities.

You just have to be honest enough to admit it, brave enough to recognize it, and disciplined enough to change it.

Increasing Traffic, Readers, and Loyalty

One of the most common questions I get is "how do I get more readers, more visits, and grow loyalty for my blog?"

Many books have been written on the subject and you can find a lot of useful information at www.LinkyBlog.com; but for now, I want to give you six things that EVERY blogger can do right now to build traffic and loyalty.

First: let's review a little lesson about blogging. Since there are gagillions of blogs, content and entertainment exists in absolutely jaw-dropping abundance. Learn this rule: with

every “abundance,” a “scarcity” is created. What is the scarcity created in blogging? Personal attention.

Show Attention

More specifically, people have a finite amount of time so you are competing with other bloggers for the attention of readers; success is shown by them investing their time with you. Multiple and continued grants of attention over time are what we call loyalty.

People value their time and are more willing to give you their attention in exchange for what? C’mon... what’s that answer?

YOUR attention. When you invest YOUR time and attention in them, they feel valued and your value increases with them. It sends the message that you know their time is just as valuable as yours.

“Yeah, but I already give them my time by writing content on my blog...” So what. A googlegillion other bloggers do the same. Giving your time to create content is no longer a difference maker - it’s a mandatory ingredient that everyone else is doing as well. My main point is this: it helps you build traffic and loyalty if you invest the time and effort to RECIPROCATE ATTENTION. Want proof?

How do you feel when you leave a comment on a blog and you actually get a reply from the author? Do you enjoy having another blogger mention you on their blog? Do you like opportunities to leave your link or information on someone

else’s blog? Of course. They are reciprocating your attention. They value you.

Okay, you get the point, so here are some tips for reciprocating attention to build traffic and loyalty:

Comment Replies

As often as you can, reply to comments either with a meaningful response or a simple “hey thanks for leaving a comment, I appreciate it.”

There’s an art to this because if you simply copy and paste the same thing on every reply, then it becomes insincere and people pick up on that with lightning speed. The trick? Be genuine. Be friendly. Be a real person - not a marketer or a flatterer.

You can’t reply to every comment, especially if you get hundreds of them, or perhaps they aren’t really the type you reply to anyway. However, take every opportunity you can to sincerely reply to your readers. Comments are how your readers “speak to you” ... just like you do not ignore your friends when they talk to you in person.

Answering Emails

Answer every single email you get from your readers. If they can take time to write you and show you they value YOUR attention, you owe it to them to reciprocate. Failing to do so

will leave the door wide open for someone who DOES value them... and steal their loyalty from you.

Of course, you will get some emails from people you do NOT want to reply to. For the most part though, answer every email from every loyal reader.

Mentioning Others

Mention readers in your blog posts. Mention their blogs. Mention their achievements. Mention their needs. Mention their families. A personal mention of others shows that you care, and shows that you do not think you are the center of the universe. There are plenty of bloggers out there who achieve a level of success, start believing their own press, and think the whole blog world exists to worship at the feet of their URL. Never forget that there is a seemingly infinite number of blogs competing for the same finite amount of attention and loyalty.

Readers and loyalty are excruciatingly hard to gain, and can be lost with a wisp of haughtiness.

Linking to others

Links are both the glue and the power of the blog world. When you mention your blog friends, link to them. Linking to others very often leads to motivating them to link back to you. Many bloggers become obsessed with GETTING links to their blog, but are stingy and hesitant to return the favor. Don't let that be you....

Collaborating on Content

Ask readers for ideas. Ask them for suggestions. Ask them for their input on your blog and content. Involve them in what you do. Utilize their creativity, energy, and goodwill. People who feel involved feel a sense of community. "Community" goes a LONG way towards building loyalty.

Linky Lists

Okay, so this is a little self-serving, but [Linky Tools](#) and [Linky Followers](#) are great ways to do many of these things. Creating lists that benefits your readers accomplishes many of the points we've already talked about. Following other blogs draws interest. I have several new Linky sites in development and look forward to bring them to you.

Read This When You Feel Like Quitting

Before I get started, let me state something plainly and confidently: the Internet and blogging offer the greatest potential for self-employment and supplemental income that has ever presented itself to the average person. Making money online is not only possible, it is absolutely probable for anyone willing to work hard and stick to it. That is an absolute fact that should not get muddled or watered down because of the disappointment of marketing hype, gimmicks, scammers, and

quitters. Every business industry has suffered from those types of people but it doesn't change the legitimacy of doing business in any venue. The Internet and blogging offer mind-boggling potential and opportunity for anyone with a good work ethic and a laptop. Never lose sight of that fact.

Most People Quit Blogging or Building Their Online Business Within a Year of Starting

I get a lot of emails from people who have quit their blog or online business. The stories are usually similar and the reasons for quitting are typically vague. From my experience,



it almost always seems to boil down to “I tried it for a while, the results didn't happen as quickly as I expected, it just didn't work out for me, I've moved on to other more important things.”

If I had to write a summary of these emails (encapsulating what I think about 99% of them are saying) it would be this:

My impression was (from a friend, email, advertisement, or infomercial) that I could start a blog, put a little effort into it, and a whole lot of people would come and read it, and I would start making money off of it.

I call this the “infomercial syndrome” and it's been around since long before the Internet. Many people get caught up in infomercial sensationalism and all the marketing hype - both innocently and sometimes because of laziness or greed. In my opinion, the viewer is 50% to blame and the other 50% of the blame falls squarely on the “used-car salesmen of blogging.” There is an endless stream of commercials, courses, Internet-marketing gurus, infomercials, and gimmicks out there promising online riches to bloggers with the typical wild claims of how effortless and easy it will be. “Set it and forget it” may work for a rotisserie appliance but not for business success.

Caution: there is something that 99.9% of all “online business,” “make money online,” or “start a blog and watch the money pour in” marketers have in

common: the only thing they have ever made money on is selling something about “how to make money online.” They claim to be experts without expertise or experience; they claim to be successful before even having success. It’s all image over substance - hype over reality.

In other words, they have seen how profitable the “how to make money online” products are, created their own version of it, then gone out to find a new round of naive, anxious, and uneducated buyers to peddle their “get-rich-quick” infomercials to in various forms (emails, websites, actual TV infomercials). I hate to see this because just like all the ambulance-chasing lawyers give good attorneys a bad name, or the lying-cheating-used-car salesman gives legitimate auto sales professionals a bad reputation, these online business gimmicks and scammers taint the entire experience and possibilities that legitimate online business professionals and successful Internet marketing experts can offer to folks like you.

I hear the same story all the time. People get excited about blogging and creating a business online. They dream of making some extra money for their family or quitting a job they hate. They get sucked into a lot of gimmicks and marketing hype and spend a lot of money with people making big promises (but if you were to pull back the curtain you would see the only success they’ve had is in selling their online business materials).

The new blogger gets really excited and does everything they’ve been told to do. They blog consistently for a month or two but when the traffic and money don’t start rolling in, they begin to get tired. Then discouraged and disillusioned. Then they start doubting themselves. Then it becomes a drain on them. Then they start wondering if they should quit; and finally it moves into what they consider a waste of time... they gave it a shot, and it’s time to pull the plug. I’ve seen this play out countless times from people who have emailed me or contacted me. I always see the common threads: unrealistic expectations, lack of perseverance, being tricked or scammed by the online business hypesters, and almost always a poor level of education and knowledge of both business in general and online business.

It’s hard to convince folks that the opportunity really is there - they just have to go about it the right way. In their mind, they gave it an honest try and it’s just not for them. Or they believe the entire thing is a scam and that nobody is honest about online business. That’s a shame because multitudes of people are generating anywhere from a modest income, to supplemental income, to legitimate full-time income... and for some, real and significant wealth. It’s not that the opportunity is not real, it’s just that too many people are listening to the wrong people and getting scammed. It’s no different than what we’ve seen countless other times before the Internet came along: multilevel marketing schemes, no-money-down get-rich-quick gimmicks, work from home for five minutes a week and make \$1 million a day — lies. Don’t let the scammers and thieves rob you of your opportunity.

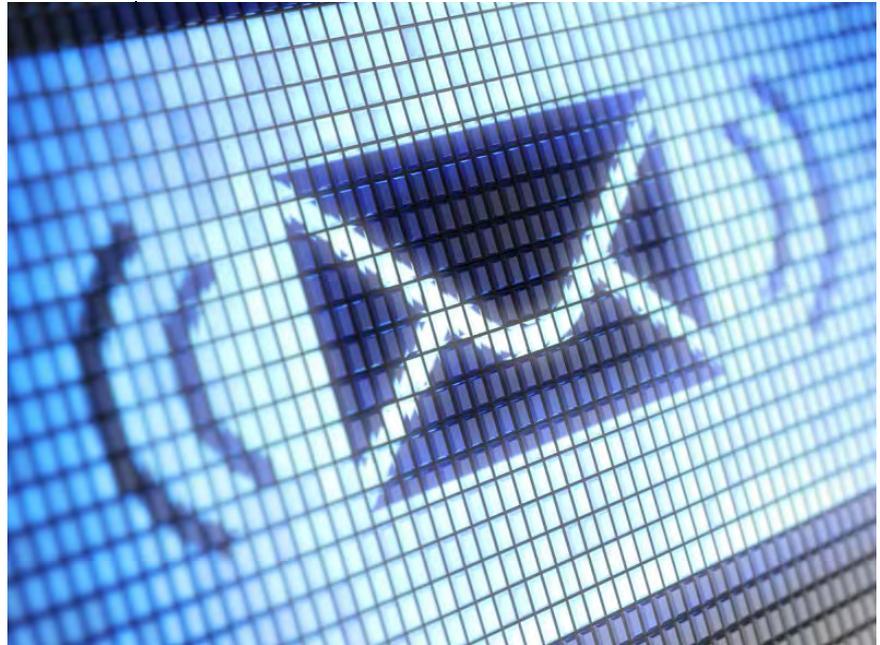
The Internet offers the most unfathomable and jaw-dropping self-employment and supplemental income opportunity that has ever presented itself to the average person.

So What is a Person to Do?

Thankfully, that is an easy answer. First of all, you have to know that online business and blogging for income are both legitimate and doable. Like any business however, it takes hard work, time, and realistic expectations. There is a direct parallel to the success and reward in relation to your hard work and patience.

The number-one thing you need to do is find someone who has been legitimately successful that you can trust and mimic. Of course, I would be insincere if I pretended like I didn't hope that person for you would be me. The kind of successful person I'm talking about fits these guidelines:

- They have a demonstrable and viewable history online. They didn't just create a blogging business yesterday and now claim to be an online business expert.
- They have made money online doing something other than just selling "how to make money online" materials. If that's the only thing they have ever sold and made income from, than they are just looking for new suckers rather than truly teaching people how to do business on the Internet



and make long-term legitimate income from blogging or online sales.

You should investigate and ask any so-called online business expert what else they have made money on. You have to be careful though, the scammers and snake-oil salesman will simply lie. The overwhelming majority of testimonials and customer claims on the sites are made up. Like any traditional business, you have to decide who you're going to trust, who is out there doing honest online business, and who is putting up

claims of income, customer testimonials, and history that is accurate and not exaggerated.

To be honest, it's not hard to figure out who is legitimate and telling you the truth. The scammers and gimmicks all have the same feel of hype and exaggeration. Just look at it the same way you would view the snake-oil salesmen and liars on TV infomercials: promises of lots of money quickly with very little work; you don't really have to learn anything at all – just happens on its own; you can't find any real history of them doing anything other than selling this how-to information. All the scammers look the same and feel the same.

On the Internet, there's one other common trait of the gimmick promoters - but I need to state it carefully. The vast majority of the scams and stuff that is a total waste of money concerning online business is produced and offered by a bunch of kids who look like they've been out of school for all of two weeks. There's no way they can have any real business experience or history. There's no way they've had time to prove that they have put their own methods and teaching into real practice and shown success long-term. And they almost all are just restating, rewriting, and repackaging the same old material and claims. It looks the same, feels the same, and guess what? It is the same: a waste of time and money. They themselves have been caught up in the hype of getting rich quick online by simply selling "how to get rich quick online" gimmicks and scams.



The reason why I have to be careful when I say that is because there are a handful of legitimately successful twenty-something-year-old folks out there who have worked hard, busted their butts, offer legitimate and honest products and courses, and have proven for several years (even though they are young) that hard work and honest effort online can pay off big. So I don't want to disparage anyone simply for being young but I do have to warn you that it is a common trait of most of the scammers out there that they look like they're fresh off a college campus and have about 37 minutes of real experience to offer.

Bloggers are real people who should be accessible and open about what they do and who they are. You can contact them, ask them questions, and get real answers. A common trait of scammers or the inexperienced is that they hide behind contact forms, keyboards, and anonymity, and offer only canned answers and vague non-specific experience. It is a good sign of honesty and integrity when your online business expert is well known, has a history, makes their contact information readily available, and actually responds to you and contacts you when you try to reach out to them.

Bloggers should have other businesses and things going on online that have a good reputation and history. It is another common trait for online-business-gimmick sellers that you'll find nothing else on the Internet they have done or been successful at where you can get a sense of their reputation and experience. Find an online business or blogging expert who has shown demonstrable success in multiple ways online. Since I obviously include myself in this category, here are some other things online that I've done successfully: Linky Tools, Linky Followers, BrentRiggs.com, Serious Life Magazine (not online anymore – but for two or three years enjoyed issues that had millions of page views; I discontinued this magazine simply because of the amount of resources and time it took each month to publish), my book publishing, and Riggs Design Works where you will find a 20-year history of business, publishing, website development, blogging, and online business.

If you simply spend a little time poking around, you will find out which of the so-called experts in online business and

blogging have a real history of success that you can trust, and which of them have probably never sold anything other than their “how to make money online” products.

10 Reasons People Want To Give Up on Their Blog

1. I had unrealistic expectations of how easy and quick it would be.
2. I am discouraged about false promises from scammers and gimmick products.
3. I am tired of wasting money on yet another high-pressured sales pitch.
4. I have lost faith and trust in everyone claiming to be experts at blogging and online business.
5. It's taking too long to see any real success and I am not willing to work and wait.
6. I think I have run out of things to write about.
7. The blogging trolls, vampires, and criticizers have sucked the life out of me.
8. Blogging takes more time than I thought and I just can't find more time for it.

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9. There's too much competition; there's no way I can compete and be successful with so many other bloggers out there.
 10. It's too much to grasp and learn. I just can't get my head around all of it and make it work.

Do any of these reasons ring true for you? Don't give up! Persevere.

What is Perseverance?

If I had to pick one word or trait that is most important, it is perseverance. Lots of things are important but if you toss out perseverance, you're wasting your time.

Perseverance is sticking to something. It's having a commitment to a certain amount of time you're going to invest and keep at something to give it a legitimate chance of success. Perseverance is a key character trait that most people are missing and that is why the "get-rich-quick" thieves have such great success. They play off the idea that you don't have to work hard; you don't have to endure hard times, discouragement, or failures; you don't have to try hard to educate yourself; and you certainly don't have to claw your way day-by-day and step-by-step to success.

It is that lie of ease and quickness that ends up discouraging a lot of people. Online business is no different than any other type of business. The harder you work and the more time you invest in it, the more likely it is that your success will come

faster and earlier - but there is no promise of it. Only those who are tough-minded, have a commitment to stick it out over the long haul, and are willing to work through adversity and disappointment, have the right to realistically expect success with their blog or online business. It is a realistic expectation for those who persevere; and, I can tell you with confidence beyond any doubt it is also a profitable expectation. But without perseverance, you're wasting your time.

5 Reasons NOT to Quit or To Get Started Again

The opportunity is real... don't let the scumbag scammers and get-rich-quick gimmick-mongers steal your dream.

The opportunity is VAST... the whole world is your potential market, unlike anything we've ever known in business to this point in time.

The startup cost is NOTHING compared to traditional business... you can start and fail and try again for pennies compared to the past.

The variety of ways to achieve your goals is endless... there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to blogging or online business. If one way hasn't worked, try 50 other ways.

There ARE experts and coaches and other bloggers you can trust - just like me. Don't throw everyone into the same boat just because of the bad apples. There are honest and successful online business experts who really do want to see

you succeed and help you get there. You just have to find them.

I will tell you without any hesitation or reservation that anyone willing to work hard, persevere, and educate themselves absolutely can be a success at blogging or any number of online business models. The opportunity to make a supplemental income, a full-time income, or even to become wealthy is open to just about everyone now because of the Internet. It's not easy, it's not quick, and it is no different than business has always been – as far as what it takes to be successful. The big difference with the Internet is how much wider and deeper the opportunity is for average people sitting in their own house with a laptop.

A successful business used to require huge amounts of capital investment, physical resources, and a hard-to-reach market. The Internet offers you the opportunity of almost absurdly low-capital investment to get started, physical resources that consist of only a computer and some software, and a worldwide global market that sits on the other side of your keyboard.

There has never been an opportunity like there is now (because of the Internet) for folks like you and me to bring in some additional income, build a business, or achieve influence and self-expression.

If you are like me, you know a lot of other bloggers who could use some good encouragement and motivation. A good place to start would be sending them a link to this book.

The Snowball Effect - Encouraging You To Keep At It

A couple of interactions with some of the people I mentor prompted me to write this section.

The first interaction was with a client who I coach on his branding and marketing. A few weeks ago, he published his first book. He had a great marketing plan, a very cool style, and theme that involved half a dozen books in the same series. The branding was excellent. Yesterday, as we were deciding on the details of the second book in the series, he changed his mind. He wanted to do a completely new cover design with totally different branding and marketing. When I asked him why he said this to me:

"The first book just hasn't done very well. I haven't sold very many copies and the marketing just isn't working so I want to try something new."

Now hold that thought while I tell you about the second conversation that led me to write this section.

A person I mentor in the online business arena was discouraged that he was working hard and things just were not moving along as fast as he wanted. He was also a little bit discouraged that he had not gotten started many years ago - which would have put him way ahead of the game now.

To encourage him, I sent him a screenshot of my morning's email inbox for the day. It had over 50 emails concerning payments made to me for various products and services since I went to bed last night. They ranged from \$149 to \$24 yearly subscriptions.

Is it nice to wake up and see a healthy paycheck for that day sitting in your inbox? You bet it is. Was it easy to get to this point? Did I do it overnight? Did I just get lucky and stumble onto some online business success? Not a chance. Being blessed with an inbox full of purchases today is the result of years of the "snowball effect."

The Snowball Effect

Every business effort, online or not, has to start somewhere. It has no mass and no momentum. To understand that statement, stop and visualize very clearly in your mind what I'm about to describe:

Create a giant snowball that is plummeting down a hill with increasing speed and power.

Got that visual in your head? How do you make that happen?

To begin, your snowball has no mass and no momentum. To begin to build mass, what you have to do? You have to manually gather snow and start packing it up in your hands. No one is going to do it for you. It's not going to magically appear on its own. You have to start. You have to take action. You



have to begin with nothing to create something.

Then you take that small grapefruit-sized ball of packed snow, lay it on the ground, bend over, and turn by turn roll that ball through the snow so that it gathers up the snow it rolls over. Little by little, more snow sticks to it and it picks up mass - but you're still doing all the work.

Your back hurts, your hands are freezing, and the only way the snowball rolls over one more time is if you stick your hands underneath it and give it a lift and a push.

Gut-Check Time

After a while, the snowball starts to get pretty heavy. It gets harder and harder to roll around but it doesn't have enough mass and weight to cause it to roll downhill by itself. This is the time of testing your fortitude. It's gut-check time; time to separate the pretenders from the contenders.

This is the phase of your business where it seems like you're working your behind off and not getting far. This is the phase of your business that requires patience and perseverance. This is the phase of business that separates the winners from the losers, the victorious from the quitters. This is the phase of your business that requires long-term vision where you keep your eyes focused on the end result, and not on the temporary aches and pains.



Then comes the magic... You push and you push and you push and you push... and one day you realize your snowball has become big enough that you can turn and head downhill. Ten feet down the hill, you realize for the first time that your last push was a little bit easier because gravity is starting to help.

Momentum

With each successive push down the hill, it is now becoming noticeably easier to roll that snowball. Pretty soon, all you are doing is nudging it and it's starting to almost roll on its own; your snowball is gathering speed, mass, and momentum quickly. A few more yards, and the snowball actually rolls on its own and you give it a good hard shove.

All that hard work, backache, frozen hands, sweat, aggravation, setbacks, and discipline is now paying off. You watch that snowball gather speed and size. Now it's barreling down the hill picking up significant weight and miles per hour with every turn!

Your Online Business

This is not some pie-in-the-sky fantasy concept. This is exactly the process that any business (including an online business) must go through. You are not going to buy a program or pay for some gimmicky get-rich-quick business package and be able to skip the snowball process. If you could, everybody would. If the thought of doing the long hard work at the top of the hill scares you off, then maybe you don't have what it takes.

The reason I share this analogy with you is the same reason I shared it with those involved in the two scenarios I opened this section with. Once they realized where they were at in the business cycle, they became re-energized and enthused.

It helps to know that building up mass and momentum in your business is normal and required. It helps even more to be able to visualize the process and know that you are doing what it takes NOW to get you where you want to be LATER. If you can see in your mind that snowball barreling down the hill from its own weight and momentum, then bending over and gathering up the snow to get started isn't quite so arduous a task.

Know where you are at in your business-growth journey. If you are just starting out at the top of the hill, don't be discouraged that your snowball is not rolling on its own yet. You have to do what it takes to get to that point - there's no magic to it. Like my friend mentioned above, maybe you see someone else's snowball barreling down the hill and you are deflated. You're still breaking your back at the top of the hill pushing around 50 pounds of snow that won't roll by itself yet.

Going back to the two situations I started with:

Changing the marketing plan for the 2nd book in the series would like discarding the 20-pound snowball he had worked hard to create and just starting over. The snowball wasn't big enough yet to start rolling downhill on its own, but it was still a long ways from the first handful of snow. I encouraged him to stay the course and keeping pushing his snowball. He is now re-energized about the original plan and sees clearly what phase of the journey he is in.

The second person is newly refreshed and realizes they are still at the top of the hill and just need to keep pushing. Do not look at someone else's snowball a hundred yards down the hill, rolling on its own, and be discouraged because you aren't there yet. Be encouraged that IT CAN AND WILL BE YOU if you don't give up.

Do not give up. Do not get discouraged. Your hard work and efforts will pay off. Wake up every day and keep pushing that snowball, making it bigger and bigger, and start heading down that hill. One day, you'll feel gravity and mass start to take effect and your momentum will build. The excitement that comes makes all the hard work up to that point worth every minute of it.

Earning Their Trust

The Internet has wiped the slate of our reputation clean.

Nobody knows us and nobody trusts us when we enter the online business world. We are still the same people that our friends and neighbors trust, but we need to work hard to establish that same kind of trustworthiness with our online audience. We have to build and maintain a high level of trust.

Here are three important components of building trust with your online audience and market:

- People care when they think you care. Develop relationships with your audience.



- Providing value, great content, and truly useful information will build your reputation and cultivate loyalty.
- Make every communication about your business, content, and service professional and high quality. It's hard to trust sloppiness, mistakes, and amateur effort.

When you are thinking about how to build your online reputation, you need to figure out what skills and knowledge you have that you can share. How can your experiences or knowledge help others? Here are some ways that will help you build your reputation while creating valuable content:

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- Be helpful. Find ways to solve problems.
 - Have an opinion. You might lose a few people; but, for the most part, people appreciate straightforward opinions of people that stand for something.
 - Let others build your credibility by promoting testimonials.
 - Guest post whenever possible. Guest posting has proven to be one of the quickest ways to establish credibility online.
 - Have your own voice. Share what is unique about you.
 - Give recognition to the people you have learned from. Write about them (or use quotations).
 - Create great content quickly through interviews of other experts in your field.
 - Write useful material. Decide what kinds of materials (publications/classes/tutorials) you want to be known for and then work on producing the best products you can.
 - Offer free materials (publications/classes/tutorials) to increase your influence.
 - Be unique. Stand out. Don't do what everybody else is doing.
 - Focus on teaching rather than sales to establish your authority; sales will naturally follow.
 - Build a loyal audience who will share your ideas with their sphere of influence.

- Use stories to share your lessons. People enjoy storytelling and are far likelier to remember a story than a tutorial.
- Be mission-minded. Have a mission: what do you want from your online business? Why?
- Share your track record. Using yourself as a case study, share your experience as a way to show people that you are open and honest about your business.
- Be a student. Continually strive to learn more.
- Surpass expectations. Be as helpful as you can be.

The next step is to develop relationships with your audience. People need to know that you are honest and willing to interact through your blog, email, and social-networking platforms. The following list should help you demonstrate to your audience that you are worthy of their trust:

- Be humble.
- Give credit to those who inspire you. Link to your sources of inspiration.
- Be transparent. Disclose any affiliate or other business interests.
- Be familiar. Use the same photos and marketing materials wherever you visit online.
- Interact with your audience. Let them know you are conversational.

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- Offer valuable comments and contribute to discussions (on and off your blog).
 - Promote others that you value - without expecting something back.
 - Use email-list-management tools because email is much more personable than social media.
 - Stick to your schedule. If you say you are going to do something, do it.
 - Let people see your personality. Be yourself.
 - Pay attention. Before you jump into the newest blogging trend, study and observe how it works.
 - Focus on relationships. Pay people attention. Ask questions. Answer questions. Thank people.
 - Be generous. This is a very common key to success.
 - Speak on the level of your audience. Try not to talk over their head - even on technical issues.
 - Show your passion. People will know whether you are faking or you genuinely care.
 - Focus on your audience. Self-centeredness does not build trust.
 - Accept responsibility if you make a mistake. Apologize whenever necessary.

- Do not pretend to know everything. Let people know when you can't answer their questions - show them that you are human.

The third step in earning your audience's trust is to have a professional website. Make sure that your website and content help establish your credibility rather than highlighting your inexperience. Here are some action items you should consider as you evaluate your own online business:

- Have a professionally designed website so that you will stand out from the amateurs.
- Make sure you are using a reputable host. Nothing kills credibility faster than frequent downtime and slow functionality.
- Have your own domain.
- Use symbols of trust like security logos and seals of approval.
- Offer a money-back guarantee to show you stand behind anything you sell.
- Use high-quality images and consider each carefully before sharing it.
- Learn how to write better by reading more. Practice writing often.
- Pay attention to spelling and grammar; better yet, get help proofreading. Poor spelling and grammar use will tarnish your reputation.

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- Get a professional headshot taken. Show that you are business-minded by not using a standard photograph.
 - Purposefully develop your brand. Create a logo that will last.
 - Establish consistency and credibility.

Everything you write, everything you produce, every interaction should have one goal: create relationship, engagement, and loyalty.

People trust people they know, people they have access to, and people who are real people. While it may seem antiquated, the little Golden Rule, honesty, and integrity will set you apart from the masses. Whatever business you do, whatever market you are in, do it for noble purposes: to help, to serve, to create, to learn, to educate and yes, to profit - with honest hard work.

That is how you build a relationship with your audience.

How to Rapidly Increase Your Subscriber List

If you want to bring a lot of high-quality visitors to your blog, quickly, then you need to pay very close attention to these two words: *guest blogging*.

We've all read guest posts, hopefully learned something from them, and gone back to the guest blogger's website and signed up for their email-subscriber list.

Guest blogging is the quickest way to introduce your blog to the world – but being able to guest post is not always easy. If you are just starting out with your online business (or have an established blog but have not yet tried guest blogging), here are some actions steps you can take to put yourself in a position to have your Guest Blog posts published:

What are the popular blogs for your target audience? Go examine them. In addition to reading the posts, check out the comments. Look to see which articles are Tweeted the most. Make a list of the most-popular topics featured on that blog. Use that list as your research base for deciding what you are going to write about when you guest blog. What interests you is not always what interests your target audience.

Take time to leave thoughtful comments on other blogs. Provide valuable information and ideas. You want the bloggers to notice you. Be impressive. Someone might invite you to do a guest post. Most people are not aware that popular bloggers really do spend a lot of time reading comments and they will notice you if you stand out from the crowd.



If nobody extends an invitation, contact the bloggers you have been targeting and ask them if you can guest post. If they decline, cross them off your list and move on. Sometimes bloggers won't respond to your comments but they will highlight your comment, or somehow share it with their audience; if this happens, take the opportunity to thank them and offer to do a guest post. Whenever you communicate with a popular blogger, keep your correspondence short and to the point. Most well-known bloggers are terrifically busy.

When you do get asked to Guest Blog, make sure you take advantage of the opportunity to insert a well-crafted signature by-line letting everyone know where to find you.

All of the above items are for bloggers that have well-written valuable content on their blogs, and are prepared to provide top-quality material as guest posts. You are never (at least on a popular blog) going to be offered guest-blogging spots if your guest posts are simply advertisements for your own blog or your own products, or filled with affiliate links or some other gimmicky information. Nor will you be accepted if your content is mediocre rehash that has been seen a hundred times.

QUALITY is the key word here – if your post is immensely valuable to the other blog's readers, they WILL come to your blog and see what else you can offer them.

Sometimes all it takes is one solid guest post for you to get noticed.

Ways to Create Compelling Content

Let Friends Help

Reach out to your friends if you run out of ideas on what to write about. Sometimes your off-line friends might have some ideas on topics they think you should write about. Asking your blog readership is always an option, but don't forget your friends and colleagues that you interact with when not sitting

in front of your computer. Spouses and family members might be able to come up with some good ideas as well.

Write up a “Best-Case” Study

Which products, companies, or blogs are your favorites? Think about why one of them has made such an impact on you and write about it. What kinds of things are they doing successfully? What can we all learn from them?

Write up a “Worst-Case” Study

What or who (company, product, blog) do you hate? What did they do to turn you off? What can we all learn from them (about how “not to” do something)? Venting your frustrations (tactfully) could be interesting to your readers, especially if the product/company is popular and you have to acknowledge why that is so even though you are not a fan.

Review Something

Plain old “review” posts are popular – your readers will benefit from your opinion and time investment in sharing with them – but you might consider going above and beyond the regular review by contacting the company and asking if they would donate something for you to use in a contest for your readers.

Tell Your Story

If you are looking for a way to really connect with your readers, consider writing about an experience that has shaped

your life; something from your past that deeply affected you and will touch your readers. Be open and honest.

Write About Your Success

Pick a particular successful effort or outcome that you have had and write about it. This is not necessarily going to be simple boasting (though you will be doing that a little just by the nature of the post) but kind of a “case study” of a particular accomplishment that you can share with your readers to help them teach them. Share the steps you took, and the lessons you learned on the way. Give advice and encouragement.

Write About a Failure

It seems that people enjoy reading about failures as much as success stories. Assuming you came out the other side weary but smarter, you can share one of your “epic fails” with your readers. Let them see how the experience shaped you and helped you on your blogging path. What lessons did you learn that might help your readers avoid a similar situation? How might you encourage them to do the same thing successfully?

Oldies But Goodies

Find some of your favorite old posts that might be “dated” – oldies but goodies – and list them out for your readers. Give each an explanation of what you were thinking when you wrote it, what resulted in success (or not), and how it pertains to the current business world. You might clearly add a section

of your current thoughts – things you didn't know then about the topic that might benefit your current readers.

Borrow Some Current Trends

This is kind of a “creative writing” task. Pick a popular book, movie, fictional character, or song, and write about how it relates to your business topic. The stranger the headline title, the more interested your readers will be. . . just make sure it's not a trend that is actually related to your business topic – that is going to be boring.

Make sure it is something far away from your topic – then link it. You don't necessarily have to use a current trend, just



something popular enough that people will know what you are referring to by your headline.

Do An Interview

Interview an interesting person or an expert related to your niche. Often those interviews will spawn a lot of new ideas and other post topics.

Create an outline to guide the interview so that you cover relevant and valuable topics. The person you are interviewing knows about them than you do. Let them help you create the outline or list of questions.

Collaborate With Other Writers

Get two or three other writers together and collaborate on something. Do a series and each writer can post a part on their blog so that you can share the exposure and content.

Create a List

Everybody does lists. Everybody - but for good reason. They are popular, useful, and easy to digest. When in doubt, create Top Ten, The Five Secrets, or A Dozen Key Factors. This is the type of content that gets passed around and shared.





Final Words

My wish is that you will benefit as much from reading this book as I have writing it. There is nothing like having to write down what you've learned to really clarify and confirm it.

I look forward to your questions and comments. You can write me anytime, and I'll answer you personally.

Join me at www.linkyblog.com where we will continue our journey towards blogging and online business success. I'm excited about teaching you everything I learn, and I hope you'll share your great ideas and knowledge with me as well.

I'm cheering for you!

Contact me anytime: brent@brenttriggs.com | www.linkyblog.com

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Not An “e” Book . . . This Is An EPIC Book

The EPIC Book is over 400 pages packed with information, experience, knowledge, tips, advice, lessons learned, and practical instruction. Not 400 pages of big fonts, wide margins, and huge graphics that eat up a lot space so a big page count can be advertised. The EPIC Book has over 135,000 words, dwarfing typical good eBooks that usually average 20,000 – 30,000 words.

Nor it is just a bunch of filler content and stuff you won't read so I can advertise a huge word count. Every page in this book is useful and relevant, the very best of what I have learned and experienced in the last 15+ years of being online. I was blessed to begin online way back before the general public even knew what “the information superhighway” was, much before anyone truly grasped what the Internet would become.

What you will find in this book is the experience of a long, long time online and countless rounds of trial and error, testing, learning, starts and stops, and a relentless passion to learn everything I can learn about all things blogging, internet marketing, and online business.



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Brent is a well-known Internet marketing and business expert, author, and speaker. He is the owner/creator of sites like Linky Tools, Linky Followers, and Linky Blog. Find out more at RiggsDesignWorks.com

In this guide you will learn:

Must-Have Resources, Tools, & Software, Over 100 Killer Blogging Tips, 65 Great Headlines to Get You Started, Over 110 Brilliant Blog-Writing Ideas, 80+ Online Business Tips, Digital Photography 101, A Visual Guide to Online Business, Genesis Week - First 7 Days Of Your Online Business, Over 60 Profitable Online Business Ideas, Over 50 Ways To Make Money Online, Writing, Designing, Publishing, Marketing & Automating A World-Class eBook, Mistakes To Avoid – Lessons Learned From My First Dozen eBooks, Checklist: 30 Things You Can Do To Improve, An Interview With An Online Expert, A Library of Useful Articles, And more, more, more!

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